



MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

June 2018



President's Patch

By President Michael Kircher, photo by the author

The poet Alfred Austin said, "Show me your garden and I will tell you what you are" (*The Garden That I Love*, 1905). I don't know about you, but that would make me slow, cold and wet. Last year I harvested my first asparagus on May 14: this year they are just now (May 19) peeking thru the soil. The same for other perennials, most of which are about a week or more late this year despite temperatures being about the same as last year. My Nanking cherry bush was in full bloom on May 16 last year but is still in the bud stage, waiting to open. The same with my apple trees. They all seem to be in a stage of suspended animation, waiting for that hot sunny day to pop.

Until they do I will have to keep feeding my bees a sugar solution. The cloudy skies and high humidity has caused some mold to form in the hive, aggravated by my use of an internal feeder (inverted jars method). I ventilated the hive a little more to see if the increased circulation helps. I hope to be able to stop feeding them in a few days. They are bringing in a lot of pollen, however.

The good news is that the late spring allowed us to complete several other tasks that came up before gardening kicks into high gear. We replaced the shingles on our shed roof and had to remove and reinstall the solar panels up there. I dug out and repaired a leak in our underground hose line from our greenhouse to the raised beds. Yard cleanup is completed in time to tackle the dandelions and *Equisetum*, so we can continue with the other tasks that we all do at this time.

I hope everyone is getting ready for the plant sale by hardening off your plants and making labels for them. That's coming up fast, as well as the planting at the Pioneer Home. Also, there is in progress a plan to restore the Rebarchek Colony Farm located on the Alaska State Fairgrounds. The Project Manager, Bill Allen, has asked if we would like to use a part of the subject site in the Community Gardens.

Stay warm, everyone.

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GENERAL MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, JUNE 4TH AT 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION: PALMER PUBLIC LIBRARY, 655
SOUTH VALLEY WAY
PALMER, ALASKA

DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO ATTEND

SPEAKER/TOPIC

WE WILL BE SPRUCING UP AND PLANTING AT
THE PALMER PUBLIC LIBRARY FLOWER BED.
BRING ANY ANNUAL PLANTS (FLOWERS, HERBS,
VEGGIES) YOU WANT TO DONATE TO THE
PROJECT. DRESS FOR THE WEATHER AND BRING
A GARDEN TOOL TO WORK WITH.



PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE: BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

Photo submitted by the author

The robins and other smaller birds arrived on Lazy Mountain in early May, the day the wind died down after some powerful gusts. The robins wasted no time in selecting nest-building sites. They were in a nesting mode, a nesting mood, if you will. Where did they decide to build? Leaves were just starting to emerge on the trees, so there were no good places hidden from sight. The first ones built a nest under the eaves of our back deck and on top of an outdoor light fixture. It's amazing how quickly they can put a nest together. The female is sitting on the nest now, presumably on eggs.

The lady robin had a couple of harrowing days. A few feet from her nest is our kitchen window with a thermometer attached to the outside wall next to the window. She would perch on the thermometer, and lo! there would be a reflection of a robin in the window. This bird would brook no rivals near her nesting site and would savagely attack the image time after time after time. This went on for a couple of days, and since it didn't seem to be successful she still takes some time from sitting on the nest to fight off this would-be interloper. We hope she doesn't spend too much time away from her eggs so they don't hatch well.

Meantime, another pair has decided to build under the eaves on the front side of the house, also on a light fixture above the front deck. There doesn't seem to be a problem with an encroaching pair, so they are quietly going about the vital business of raising a family.

Yes, these birds make a mess. So far it has been only extra building material that gets dropped onto the porch, but after little ones hatch and are being fed it'll probably take some scrubbing. The nest on the back is close to the back door and gets considerable traffic, what with begonia baskets being hung on both sides of the nest and some upright begonias grown on the

shaded north-facing deck. We try to disturb these tenants as little as possible and haven't attempted to discourage their efforts.

Another little quirk of nature is the emergence of a pasque flower plant in an unlikely place between two rocks. Ordinarily the seed drops from the parent plant and occasionally one or two will sprout there. This one has found a place to grow a couple of feet up in a vertical rock wall behind the perennial flower bed. It must have been blown there by a wind, and for such a tiny seed to sprout and grow wedged between two rocks is truly fascinating. Indeed, nature abhors a vacuum.



This hardy soul found a niche between the rocks and was exposed to the slings and arrows of an Alaska winter. The face of the rocks is vertical, making a difficult place for a small pasqueflower seed to germinate, much less thrive and bloom. Nature has a way of doing things.

Spring continues to develop slowly, but it does continue to do so.

Thanks, folks, and hope for a good summer season.

FRESH SPRING TEA: BY HAZEL KOPPENBERG, MASTER GARDENER

Spring is very late in my yard this year! Just this week, I found three small fireweed shoots, some tender wild dock leaves, and two tiny horsetail sprouts. I plucked them into a tea infuser, placed it in a bright yellow mug, added boiling water, waited five minutes, and enjoyed my first fresh tea of the season. Now I have a few dandelion leaves to add, but nothing more.

The beauty of fresh spring herbal tea is that any edible wild plant can be used - mix and match. Just take a tea infuser or strainer to your yard in the morning and collect the day's offering. This tea has an exceptionally high nutritional content, a real spring "tonic" of Vitamin C, minerals, and much more. Did I mention flavor?

Here is a list of my most common early tea herbs. Later, in summer, there will be more and different herbs available. Your yard will have its own selection.

My list, including Latin names:

- Dandelion leaves and flower petals (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Fireweed shoots, and later in summer the leaves and flowers (*Chamerion augustifolium*)
- Horsetail shoots up to 6-8 inches, better small (*Equisetum arvense*)
- Small wild dock, also called yellow dock, leaves (*Rumex crispus*)
- Tiny new spring spruce tips - I have white spruce (*Picea glauca*)
- Chickweed, all the aerial parts (*Stellaria media*)
- Stinging nettle leaves - I have a pot set in the ground (*Urtica dioica*)
- Raspberry leaf, wild or tame (*Rubus idaeus*)
- Strawberry leaf (*Fragaria sp.*)

CAUTION - Raspberry and strawberry leaves must be used fresh or dried. They may be toxic when wilted.

- Lambs quarter, also known as pigweed, leaves (*Chenopodium album*)
- Mint leaves - I have wild mint in pots. Mint is great with all the other herbs, particularly horsetail (*Mentha arvensis*)

Children especially love to take a strainer and pick their own cup of tea. Making fresh tea is a good learning tool for identifying wild plants.

Mat-Su Master Gardener Booth Shift Sign Up Midsummer Garden and Art Faire, July 14, 2018

If you would like to sign up for an unclaimed time slot, email matsumastergardeners@gmail.com.

Time:	Name
9 – 10 am Set-up	Ken & Deb Blaylock
10 am - Noon	Maureen Campbell
Noon – 2 pm	Michael Kircher
	Lydia Wood
2 – 4 pm	Anita Chace
4 – 6pm	Marge Mueller
	Curt Mueller
6 pm Take down	Ken & Deb Blaylock

THE REAL DIRT ON SOIL: BY JOE MOORE, MASTER GARDENER CANDIDATE

We rely on soils for many things, but perhaps, most importantly, their ability to support plant growth. Our natural soils developed from a complex interaction between geologic materials, plants and animals of all sizes, temperature and precipitation, and land shape and slope, all acting over time. Soils are dynamic and constantly changing - physically, chemically, and biologically. If anything changes in a part of the soil-forming process, the soil responds by changing.

As farmers and gardeners, we alter the soil forming process by our activities (e.g., clearing the native vegetation, tilling, irrigating, etc.). If our efforts are to be productive and sustainable, we need to understand how our actions impact the soil. We can improve the soil, maintain it, or destroy it. The results will be apparent in our gardens and crops.

As soils develop, vegetation grows, shading the soil, and affecting the soil temperature and moisture, as well as protecting the soil from erosion (Fig. 1). Each year, dying vegetation covers the soil surface, is decomposed by microbes, and is incorporated into the upper soil layers. This natural composting continually increases the soil organic matter content and available soil carbon. This, in turn, improves the fertility status of the soil, as well as the ability of the soil to hold and release moisture, and to support organisms. This cycle continues each year as the vegetation grows, dies, and decomposes.



Fig. 1 Soil under native vegetation, Experiment Station

Alaskan soils can be very deep, but only the near-surface layers are suitable for plant growth. Due to cold temperatures, the rooting depth of native plants is limited to about 10 inches and micro-organisms important for plant decomposition thrive only near the surface. Organic carbon content and natural fertility decrease rapidly below only a few inches, although pH usually increases with depth.

Over time, undisturbed soils begin to develop distinct layers, or horizons (Fig.2). In our Alaskan soils there is typically a surface layer (O horizon) of both living and decomposing plant matter. Next is a thin dark mineral layer (A), which is relatively high in organic matter and is the most fertile layer. Below the A horizon are layers (B and C horizons) that begin to grade into the un-weathered geologic materials.

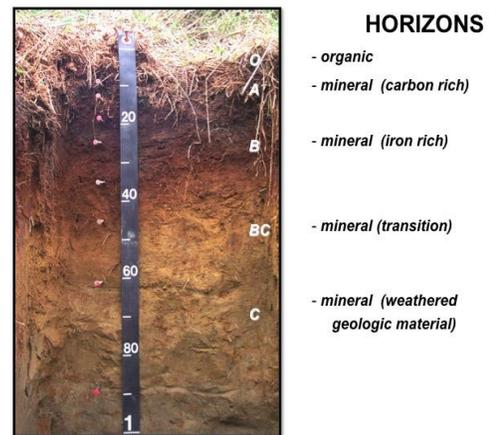


Fig. 2 Soil horizons

As soon as we clear a soil of native vegetation, we stop the cycle of natural decomposition and the natural addition of organic matter into the soil. If we are not careful in clearing, we may also remove the thin A horizon which is the most fertile soil. When we begin tilling, we mix the natural soil horizons, thus blending the pH level, organic matter content, and fertility of each horizon. The plants we grow will do well - for a while. Soil nutrients, however, will soon deplete, and properties of the soil important for water availability, drainage, and workability will degrade.

If we have a basic understanding of our natural soils we can maintain the organic matter and carbon content, as well as nutrient and moisture status, in our in-ground gardens. We can successfully grow cool season crops with basic management. With more intensive management, we can grow many specialty crops.

This is the first in a series of articles on the characteristics and properties of Matsu area soils. The intent is to provide a basic understanding of the variation in soils across the area, their key properties for gardening, and how to maintain or improve them through either natural or "man-made" methods.



MATSU MASTER GARDENER'S ASSOCIATION

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PLANT SALE

Each plant or item offered for sale is to be marked with two tags - a white tag and a color tag. Tags are available at the May 2018 Mat-Su Master Gardener's Association meeting or from the Plant Sale Coordinator, Rhonda Bowman @ 746-2948.

Choose an ID to mark your tags with. Most use their initials (two or three). Indicate your tag ID on the Plant Sale Sign-In sheet when you arrive at the morning of the plant sale. Please ensure your tag ID is unique. Remember, your ID tells who gets paid for the sale of the item.

Use permanent marker or #2 pencil to label the tags:

White tag has common or botanical name of plant and any optional information.

Yellow tag - the item price (**in \$1 increments ONLY** - please **no 25¢, 50¢, 99¢, etc.**) and your unique tag ID

Yellow Tag - Front
Price



Yellow Tag - Back
Unique ID



White Tag Plant Name



The MMG Association receives 20% of the sale from each plant or item and you receive 80%. If there is no yellow tag or the unique tag ID is unreadable, it is assumed that all proceeds go to the MMG Association (Thanks for the donation!)

Members often ask how to price plants, but you may want to price yours other than the suggestions below. Price them to sell. Plants that have not sold by noon may be reduced in price.

SUGGESTED PLANT PRICING (These are just suggestions - you may price plants as long as it seems reasonable and prices are in \$1 increments)

Perennials, including herbs:	3" pot	\$3 - \$4
	4" pot	\$4 - \$5
	6" pot	\$5 - \$6
	Gal. pot	\$6 - \$8
Annuals, including herbs	4/6 cell pot	
	3" pot	\$3 - \$4
Vegetables	4/6 cell pot	
	3" pot	\$3 - \$4
Tomatoes (plant size, variety, and post size determine price)		\$3 - \$10
Strawberries		\$1 - \$2
Raspberries, Currants, Rhubarb	gallon pot	\$5 - \$10
Shrubs trees	2 gallon pot	\$10 - \$15

PLEASE BRING EMPTY BOXES TO THE PLANT SALE!



MATSU MASTER GARDENER'S ASSOCIATION

2018 PLANT SALE PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

The Plant Sale will be held on June 2nd, 2018 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Palmer Pavilion (across from the Palmer Visitor's Center).

1. All Mat-Su Master Gardener Association (MMGA) members who have joined or renewed their **membership AND signed up to participate in the plant sale by May 7th, 2018** can participate in the plant sale. Many helpers are needed to set up tables, arrange plants and boxes, receive money sort tags, answer buyer questions, and direct buyers to the appropriate tables.
2. Plants should be brought to the Pavilion between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. on the morning of the plant sale. Please check in, sign your name and verify your unique tag ID. No one may sign up on the day of the plant sale to participate as a vendor.
3. All plants for sale must be tagged with a white tag, showing the common name and/or botanical name of the plant. All items will have a yellow/lavender tag showing the item's price and the seller's unique ID. If there is no ID on the yellow/lavender tag, the item is assumed to be a donation to the Association. For all sales, the MMGA retains 20% from the sale of each item. The MMGA member will receive 80% from the sale of each item.
4. Native plants should be garden grown (PLEASE, no digging in the wild!). Please avoid bringing invasive plants like orange hawkweed, spotted knapweed, butter n' eggs, etc. The Cooperative Extension Service offers a lengthy list and description of suspected invasive species.
5. Inspect all plants carefully to ensure no plants have evidence of insects or disease.
6. MMGA members may also sell crafts, arts, or garden-related items by providing and staffing their own tables. These items will also have the appropriate yellow price tag attached.
7. **All sales** will be made through the central check-out stand. Volunteers are needed to staff this.
8. There are some tables available at the Pavilion; however, it is recommended that you bring your own table. It is highly recommended that you bring items for your own comfort such as chairs, warm clothing, beverages, snacks and a lunch.
9. **All unsold plants need to be picked up after the sale.** If you can't be there at 3 pm, please make arrangements for someone to take your plants. **Don't just drop off plants and leave them.**
10. You may also donate your excess plants to the MMGA for the various Association planting projects. Donations must be coordinated **prior to the closing of the plant sale.**
11. Proceeds from the sale will be calculated after the plant sale has ended. Normally, our treasurer will either mail each individual's 80% to their address on file with the association or hand out checks at the following MMGA meeting. Please indicate on the sign-in sheet how you would like to receive your check.

New and Renewing Members

While the deadline for being listed in the 2018 directory was January 15, 2018, we want to welcome the following new and renewing members to our club: Maureen Campbell, Brooke Wilson, Joanne Stevens, and Donna and Gregg Peters, who all signed up after the deadline. We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and welcome your ideas and expertise!

**5-7-2018 Minutes
Mat Su Master Gardeners
Submitted by Secretary Dorte Mobley**

Minutes were sent out, motioned to approve, seconded and passed without corrections.

Treasurer reported we have \$11,445.14 as of May 7 and explained details in the report.

Old business:

We still have a few open slots in the schedule for manning the booth at the Midsummer Garden and Art Faire. See Deb to get signed up.

Plant sale: Labels are available to pick up and paperwork to use the pavilion has been taken care of. Cathy reminded us that all plants must sell for a full dollar amount. No cents!

Colony House Museum's request for help: Curt and Marge stopped by. They reported that there is a good-size rose that needs some TLC and some other odds and ends that need to be taken care of. Cathy moved that we take it on as a project, it was seconded, and motion carried. Ginger Sweeney knows the people there and will contact them for more information (where to put cut-off canes etc.). Jeanette Willis will donate flowers for the two very small window boxes.

Flower bed at Experiment Farm: Dorte explained that we will need to make raised beds happen as the area is in the middle of a bunch of grass. Kristina moved that we postpone until we know if they will put in a raised bed that we can plant in. Dorte will contact them again. Motion was seconded and carried.

Pot recycling: Kristina reported that pot recycling is from now until end of September. She has already brought home some stuff and the people getting the pots need to totally empty the bins when they are there.

Christine Ashurst requested help with getting plants to sales and to please contact her if you can help her.

Garden tour: Will be July 16. Suggestion had been made to Dorte to go see root cellars

(Carney, Caswell, Kircher have one) and blue poppy farm.

State Fair float: Curt needs help and Michael can help him. We need to think about planting some flowers in pots that can be used on the float. We can use our MG banner. Bring suggestions to next meeting when Curt will bring a sign-up sheet.

Palmer Veterans and Pioneers Home garden and flower beds: Madonna Gerber has requested vegetables (cucumber, seed potatoes, squash, zucchini, herbs) for the garden. Marge will inform us when the flowers are in and hardened-off, so we can go plant them in the front flower beds. We are not doing the gardens in the back - the residents do those themselves. We will gather plants at the plant sale, too.

Greg Kalal sells seed potatoes.

We were informed that this will be the last season for Aurora Nursery unless they find a buyer.

Deadline for the newsletter is the 20th of every month.

Presentation by Debbie Hinchey and Dan Elliott about espaliering of trees followed the meeting.

- Many things can be grown this way, including red currants
- When you cut off a branch, you need to cut it right outside the "collar" for improved healing
- Suckers need to be cut off, so they don't steal energy from the tree
- Don't plant heavy feeders under trees
- If you want to grow something in a pot, it needs to be able to handle at least one zone colder temperatures
- If you plant something under the trees and leave it in the winter, the dead leaves will keep the ground cold longer

CLEAN UP AT THE COLONY HOUSE MUSEUM: PHOTOS BY KEN BLAYLOCK



The Colony House Museum, Palmer, Alaska
May 15, 2018



The "rose bush" at the Colony House Museum - before



The "rose bush" at the Colony House Museum - after



The Crew

Need Pots?

Through the Valley Garden Club, I am overseeing the pot recycling at the recycling center this summer, so if you need pots, flats, or cell packs, feel free to contact me at 907.795.6393, and I can probably steer you in the right direction for what you need. This summer will be a good time to stock up on supplies for next year, too, as the recycling effort will go from now through the end of September.

Kristina Tornqvist

Garden Links

Alaska Botanical Garden

<http://www.alaskabg.org/>

Alaska Center for Conservation Science

<http://aknhp.uaa.alaska.edu/botany/>

Arbor Day Foundation

www.arborday.org

Alaska Division of Agriculture

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/>

Alaska Farm to School

<https://www.farmentoschoolalaska.org/>

Alaska Garden Clubs

<http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org>

Alaska Grown Source Book (online)

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/sourcebook/sourcebookindex2016.html>

Alaska Master Gardeners Association, Anchorage

<http://alaskamastergardeners.org/>

Alaska Master Gardener Blog

<https://alaskamastergardener.community.uaf.edu/>

Alaska Native Plant Society

<http://www.aknps.org/>

Alaska Orchid Society

<http://www.akorchid.org/>

Alaska Peony Growers Association

<http://alaskapeonies.org>

Alaska Peony Society

<https://alaskapeonysociety.wixsite.com/alaskapeonysociety>

Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association

<http://www.apfga.org/>

Alaska Plant Materials Center

<http://plants.alaska.gov/>

Alaska Rhodiola **New**

<https://www.akroseroot.com/>

Alaska Rock Garden Society

<http://www.akrockgardensociety.org/>

Good Earth Garden School

<http://ellenvandevisse.com/>

Grow Palmer

<http://growpalmer.org/>



Integrated Pest Management Program

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/ipm/>

Junior Master Gardeners

<http://www.jmgkids.us/>

Landscape Plants for Alaska

www.alaskaplants.org

Mat-Su Borough Rain Garden Program

<http://www.matsugov.us/environment/raingardens>

Mat-Su Master Gardener Website

www.matsumastergardeners.com

Master Gardener Research Link

<http://search.extension.org>

Master Gardeners of the Tanana Valley

<https://fairbanksmastergardeners.wordpress.com/>

Palmer Soil & Water Conservation

<http://palmersoilandwater.org/>

South-Central Alaska Beekeepers Assoc.

<http://www.sababeekeepers.com/>

Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners Association

<http://seak-mastergardeners.org/index.html>

Sustainable Agriculture – UAF

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/ah/sare/>

UAF Cooperative Extension Service, Palmer

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/districts/matsu/>

UAF Cooperative Extension Service Publications

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/pubs/catalog/>

UAF CES Citizen Pest Monitoring Portal

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/ipm/cmp/>

UAF Georgeson Botanical Garden

<http://www.georgesonbotanicalgarden.org/>

UAF Herbarium **New**

<http://www.uaf.edu/museum/collections/herb/>

UAF School of Natural Resources & Extension

<http://www.uaf.edu/snre/>

University of Saskatchewan Fruit Program

www.fruit.usask.ca

USDA/NRCS Plant Data Base

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/>

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Submit an article to the newsletter
- Volunteer to chair or help a committee
- Help with the float for the Alaska State Fair Parade
- Palmer Veterans & Pioneers Home Planting
- Palmer Library Flower Bed Planting
- Grant/scholarship coordinator
- Help at the Alaska State Fair
- Help with the Midsummer Garden and Art Faire MMGA booth

CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Michael Kircher	745-1459
Vice President	Curt Mueller	745-6144
Secretary:	Dorte Mobley	232-5422
Treasurer:	Cathy Crew	632-4401
Member at Large:	Marge Mueller	745-6144

If you have gardening news, photos or information you'd like to share in the newsletter, please contact Deb Blaylock at her email: kdblalock@ak.net

Website: www.matsumastergardeners.com/

Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JUNE 2018

- Jun 2**, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale
- Jun 4**, Palmer, Palmer Library Planting
- Jun 21**, Palmer, Third Thursdays with Extension: Pests in Your Garden

JULY 2018 AND BEYOND

- Jul 14**, Palmer, Midsummer Garden & Art Faire
- Jul 16**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Garden Tours
- Jul 19**, Palmer, Third Thursdays with Extension, Alaska Wild Berries
- Aug 6**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Hypertufa troughs, Jaime Rodriquez, Alpine Gardens
- Aug 23 - Sep 3**, Palmer, Alaska State Fair
- Aug 25**, Palmer, Alaska State Fair Parade
- Sep 10**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
- Oct 1**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Hydroponics, Southside Garden Supply
- Nov 5**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Annual Meeting/Worm composting, Ellen VandeVisse, Good Earth Garden School
- Nov 5 - 7**, Anchorage, Alaska Sustainable Agriculture Conference
- Dec 3**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Christmas Party

Club Membership

The membership year runs from January to December each year. Annual individual memberships are \$10 and family memberships are \$12. Family memberships are only for family members living in the same household.
Join or renew online

Thank you

How and What to Submit for the Monthly Newsletter

Your submissions are greatly appreciated and make our newsletter what it is - so don't be shy about submitting items for publication.

However, there are a few rules which we all must pay attention to:

Articles, stories, poetry, upcoming events, and pictures (garden-related) are gladly accepted for inclusion in the newsletter. Please submit pictures in JPEG format and other items in Word format with no special formatting other than paragraphs. When submitting pictures, please provide a brief caption or explanation as to who or what is in the picture. I do not have a scanner to copy pictures, so I cannot accept hard copies.

If you are not the author or photographer, please ensure you have permission of the author or photographer to use their material in the newsletter. The newsletter publisher is not responsible for obtaining this for you.

Please do not provide magazine articles or pictures from the internet unless they are public domain items.

Deadline for submission of articles and info: 20th day of each month -- Thank you--



June 2018



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Facebook

Website: www.matsumastergardeners.com/
Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

**MAT-SU MASTER GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 598
PALMER, AK 99645**

