



## President's Patch

By President Deb Blaylock; photo by the author

Spring is here, my fingers are dirty, and I have too many seedlings! Such is the dilemma of an avid gardener who loves to grow and experiment with new plants every year. I was given some micro dwarf tomato seeds a few years ago and ever since it's been my quest to try a few new dwarf and micro dwarf tomatoes every year. If you've never grown a micro dwarf tomato, you should try a few. They are ideal for those with limited space and a craving for fresh tomatoes. I grow them because they are cute, fun and very productive.

Those with limited growing space either on a deck or a greenhouse, should check out varieties from the Dwarf Tomato Project. This project started as the brainchild between a North Carolina and an Australian gardener. They desired to create tomatoes which had the traits of many of the big heirloom indeterminate varieties which take up lots of space and a few of the then known dwarf varieties. This project started in 2005 and has broadened out to over 70 varieties with more still being developed.



The large yellow ones are Confetti and the dark red and green are Sarandipity - both dwarf varieties.

The plants are distinguished by very stout central stems with a compact, tight growth which can reach to only 3 to 4 feet tall. There are both determinate and indeterminate varieties. I've grown several varieties the past few years and have enjoyed growing them. They are productive plants and will get so heavy with fruit, I advise staking the plants. I also advise heavy pruning as the thick foliage can quickly crowd out the fruit. Even though

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### GENERAL MEETINGS FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

#### NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, APR 1, 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION: MATANUSKA TELEPHONE COMPANY  
(MTA) BUILDING, MEETING ROOM (IN THE  
BASEMENT), 480 COMMERCIAL DR., PALMER, AK  
DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO ATTEND

#### SPEAKER/TOPIC

BUSINESS MEETING - 7-7:30 PM

GUEST SPEAKER - 7:30 - 8:30 PM

JILL PARSON - HOW TO MAKE A BIRD  
FRIENDLY GARDEN

PLANT SALE SIGN-UP AND PLANT LABEL PICK-  
UP - MEMBERS ONLY.

the plants are dwarf, the fruit ranges from salad size to a nice slicing size. They are an excellent choice for folks with small greenhouses or for those who like to crowd their greenhouses with a multitude of varieties. A good source of seed is Victory Seed company. Their webpage is [https://www.victoryseeds.com/tomato\\_dwarf.html](https://www.victoryseeds.com/tomato_dwarf.html).

See you on April 1<sup>st</sup> at our next meeting.

## PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE: BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

Photo submitted by the author

There is no doubt that all serious gardeners [that's us] have germinated seeds for decorative plants or for a vegetable garden. The peasant feels no need to dwell on what we often grow except for this observation pertaining to the benefits of bottom heat for plants that have a germination range above room temperature. In germinating several flats of onion seeds in the greenhouse, all of the flats were on bottom heat. Three flats had sides exposed to sunlight on one side. The additional heat from the sun caused the seed to germinate more evenly next to the exposed sides and two days faster than the ones that had bottom heat only. Please bear in mind that the sun's radiation penetrates the greenhouse covering even on overcast days. Also, the temperature of the germinating medium at the top of the container will be lower than at the bottom where it is in contact with a heated surface. Since the seed is near the top this is where the temperature of the medium should be measured for optimal germination.

In purchasing seed or looking up germination temperatures for more exotic species, germination temperatures are often given in Celsius. If you don't have a conversion table available, an easy way is to use this formula:  $F = 9/5C + 32$ . F represents Fahrenheit temperature and C is for Celsius. An example works like this: If the Celsius temperature is given at 20C, multiply 20 by nine [180] and divide that product by five [36] and add 32 for an answer of 68 for F, which can be considered room temperature. Yup, the peasant still remembers high school math and physics. Those days we did our computing with pencil and paper.

The peasant has often used a website for germination information of wildflowers and other plants that may be a little out of the ordinary. The site is <http://www.onrockgarden.com>. It will ask for the genus name in one space and the species name in the next. For example, Arctic sandwort is of the *Minuartia* genus and *Arctica* species. This can be very helpful and helps train one to be more scientific.

In the past the peasant made a goodly number of trips up Lazy Mountain. One plant that he often admired was "quaking grass," a plant with lovely nodding seed heads. He thought this could be an interesting addition to a

flowerbed and collected seed from it. It turns out not to be a grass but is a sedge by the moniker of *Carex mertensii*. It forms a neat clump and hasn't been invasive and is quite attractive at the back of a flowerbed, growing about twenty inches tall.



Quaking grass, *Carex mertensii*, also known as Merten's sedge. It needs no support. The mesh in the background was used to support sweet peas. The nodding seed heads tremble and move in a breeze.

Lazy Mountain has a number of wildflowers that get crowded out by more aggressive species at low elevations. One of these is moss campion, *Silene acaulis*. The peasant seems not to be able to do the mountain trek anymore, so he purchased seed online for this plant. eBay had a reasonable price. Lo! The seed came from a source in the British Isles. The peasant has some germinated and hopes to get some sturdy plants, however the seed from a milder climate will probably not produce a plant as hardy as that from a local source. Perhaps our hiker daughter will gather some seed from Lazy Mountain for me.

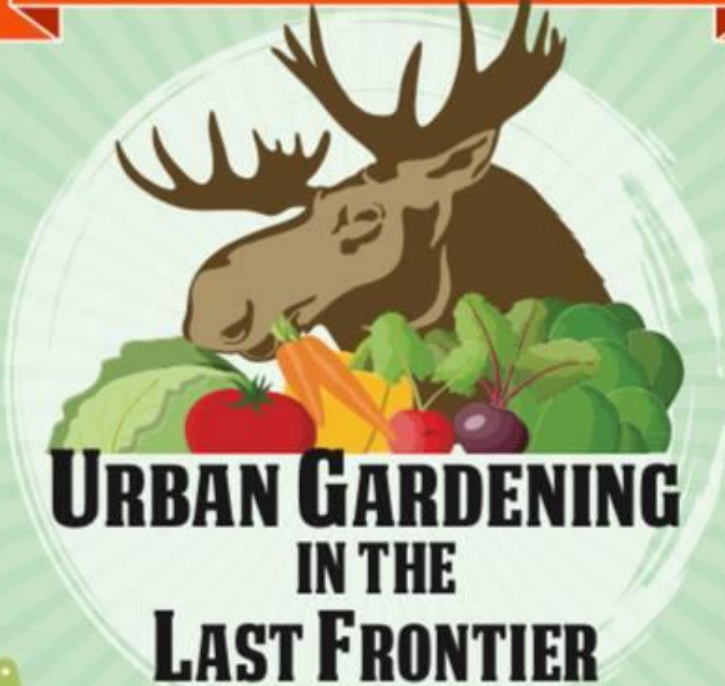
One other point to make when searching for information on germinating and growing exotic species. There is much information available online, but some of it comes from other climes. It's wise to look at several sources and make your decisions as you weigh what may be varying advice.

Thanks, folks. Enjoy the season.




**2019 Alaska Master Gardener  
Statewide Conference**

**April 6 • UAA Lucy Cuddy Hall**



**URBAN GARDENING  
IN THE  
LAST FRONTIER**





**Garden Market  
Silent Auction  
Door Prizes**

**Robert Kourik, keynote speaker**

Early Registration (Before March 15).....	\$85
Registration.....	\$95

**www.alaskamastergardeners.org • Lunch included**

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2019 State Master Gardener Conference Website:  
<https://www.alaskamastergardeners.org/conference.html>

### MMGA Minutes, March 4, 2019 - Minutes submitted by Dorte Mobley, Secretary

Meeting was called to order by President Deb Blaylock at 7:04.

Treasurer report was given by Cathy Crew. We have \$4,764.65 in available funds and \$7,741.69 in the savings account. Cathy brought the 2019 budget; motion to accept the budget as presented, was seconded and motion carried.

Minutes have been emailed out in the newsletter. Motion to accept the minutes as printed, was seconded and motion carried.

No news from the membership chair.

Rebarchek report – They are still working on fencing in the property. The original house has had the foundation shored up and the house is getting ready for more work. Rhodiola, My House and a veterans' group are getting ready to grow stuff there in addition to our group. Plan for event barn has been changed to new location. If you have an idea of what to do with "our" plot, please contact Michael Kircher.

Flowers have been ordered from local businesses for the Pioneer Home and library plantings. Arlene passed around a weeding sign-up sheet for these two areas.

We still need gardens for the tour which will be in the Palmer area this year. Please contact Dorte if you would like to have your garden on the tour.

The State Fair float committee needs 2 people to ride on the float and help out. Curt has a plan that is lighthearted and educational.

Still trying to find out how many plant labels we need between the different clubs – if we put in a larger order, it will be cheaper. We have enough yellow ones and will buy 5000 white. If you get labels, they are for the MMGA plant sale use and not for personal or other clubs' plant sales. We still need people to get the tables and chairs at the farm, set up, man cash registers and clean up.

Registration for the state master gardener conference is open. We have asked that we don't host the conference next year in 2020 but will host it in 2021 instead. It hasn't been confirmed yet, but it's possible the 2020 conference will be in Juneau.

We are working on getting the organization a 501(c)3 status, which might require us to rewrite our bylaws. We are also looking at getting insurance for the organization.

The rose bush at the Colony Museum will probably need pruning again this year. Maybe we also can help with planting of their containers. Ginger Sweeney is the point of contact for this project.

Guest speaker next month will be Jill Parsons, who will talk about bird friendly gardens.

The meeting adjourned at 7:32.

The business meeting was followed by a seed exchange and an excellent presentation from Don Moore of Fire Lake Orchard on fruit production in Alaska.

### REBARCHEK FARM

Master Gardeners have designed impressive looking gardens, including flower and plant beds, vertical gardens and various garden structures such as raised beds, decorative fences, pergolas and arbors. We need to focus those artistic skills on our plans to develop our presence at the Rebarchek Farm Project. This has the potential to become a major outreach program for us. If anyone has information concerning the original plants of the pioneers, or has any of the plants available, let me know. Please email me with any information or suggestions at [mkircherak@gci.net](mailto:mkircherak@gci.net).

### STATE FAIR PARADE FLOAT PLANS

The plan for a float for the Alaska State Fair is a simple one that won't require much preparation but should get our message across. We'll start with a tractor and trailer. On the trailer we'll have a scarecrow with a cutout raven or two perched on his shoulders and eyeing a single plant, perhaps an outdoor tomato loaded with fruit. There will be a couple of gardeners relaxed in chairs enjoying a mint julep or other libation. Surrounding the whole will be an assortment of gardening tools and items used in the pursuit of our avocation. We'll pay heed to the Fair theme of "Crazy Good" along with our Master Gardener banner.

What we'll need from our members are a couple of people to ride the float and items such as a bale of Promix or coir and various types of fertilizer, such as organic, chemical, water soluble, dried steer manure, lime, etc. I'll furnish what I have available and ask for other items. Tools such as rakes, hoes and shovels can be displayed in a garbage can weighted with sand with the working end of the tool displayed. Hand tools can be hung on the sides of the can. Waterers, a tiller, and a lawnmower will be part of the scenario. No chemical insecticides or herbicides. We could include a container of non-toxic slug killer. There you have the general idea. Any other ideas or embellishments will be welcomed. Items donated for the float will be returned to the owners. We will display items used by organic gardeners as well as other products.

I'd still like a person to work with me on this. It's fun doing these. Contact is by email [mueller@mtaonline.net](mailto:mueller@mtaonline.net) or phone 745-6144. Curt Mueller



**Free**

# Mat-Su Spring Fling with Extension Saturday, April 13

1509 S. Georgeson Drive, Matanuska Experiment Farm • Palmer

## 1-2 p.m.

- Seed Starting with Steve Brown
- Fun with Agriculture with Lee Hecimovich (Family friendly!)
- Soils with Jodie Anderson
- Gardening Myths and Myth-information with Bob Van Veldhuizen

## 2-3 p.m.

- Understanding Fertilizers with Steve Brown
- We All Need Trees with Lee Hecimovich (Family friendly!)
- Compost with Jodie Anderson
- Agronomic Crops for Your Garden with Bob Van Veldhuizen

## 3-4 p.m.

- Emergency Prep: Canine Care with Steve Brown
- Spring Craft Fun with Lee Hecimovich (Family friendly!)
- Controlling Bird Vetch with Gino Graziano

For more information or questions, please contact Melissa Clampitt at 745-3360 or [mrclampitt@alaska.edu](mailto:mrclampitt@alaska.edu)

**Classes are FREE but space is limited so please register by April 10.**  
To save your seat, go to <https://bit.ly/2FcYzJp>

Cooperative Extension Service  
Mat-Su/Copper River District Office  
1509 S. Georgeson Drive, Palmer  
907-745-3360 • Email: [matsu.ces@alaska.edu](mailto:matsu.ces@alaska.edu)

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## 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](http://www.arborday.org)
**Alaska Division of Agriculture**
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/>
**Alaska Farm to School**
<https://www.farmtoschoolalaska.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](http://www.alaskaplants.org)
**Mat-Su Borough Rain Garden Program**
<http://www.matsugov.us/environment/raingardens>
**Mat-Su Master Gardener Website**
[www.matsumastergardeners.com](http://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**
<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](http://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 – Curt needs help with the State Fair float; Michael needs ideas for the Rebarchek Farm project; the plant sale needs help with set-up, take-down, cash register, cash count, and equipment pick-up

## CLUB CONTACT INFO

<b>President:</b>	<b>Deb Blaylock</b>	<b>746-6045/kdblalock@ak.net</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Gregory Kalal</b>	<b>339-1966</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Dorte Mobley</b>	<b>232-5422</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Cathy Crew</b>	<b>632-4401</b>
<b>Member at Large:</b>	<b>Marge Mueller</b>	<b>745-6144</b>

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](mailto:kdblalock@ak.net)

Website: [www.matsumastergardeners.com/](http://www.matsumastergardeners.com/)

Email: [matsumastergardeners@gmail.com](mailto:matsumastergardeners@gmail.com)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### APRIL 2019

**Apr 1**, Palmer, MMGA Meeting, Jill Parson. How to make your garden bird friendly.

**Apr 6**, Anchorage, State Master Gardener Conference, Lucy Cuddy Center, UAA

**Apr 20**, Anchorage, Spring Garden Show, Mid-Town Mall

### MAY 2019 AND BEYOND

**May 6**, Palmer, MMGA Meeting, TBD

**May 6**, **Deadline to sign up for plant sale.**

**Jun 1**, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale

**Jun 3**, Palmer, Palmer Library Planting

**Jun TBD**, Palmer, Palmer Veteran and Pioneers Home Planting

**Jul - TBD**, **Garden Tours**

**Aug - TBD**, **Local Business Tour**

**Aug 24**, Palmer, Alaska State Fair Parade

**Aug 22 - Sep 2**, Palmer, Alaska State Fair, "Crazy Good"

**Sep 9**, Palmer, MMGA Meeting, TBD

**Oct 7**, Palmer, MMGA Meeting, TBD

**Nov 3**, **Day Light Savings time ends**

**Nov 4**, Palmer, MMGA Annual Meeting

**Dec 2**, Palmer, MMGA Annual 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. The deadline to join is January 15, 2019 to be listed in the annual membership directory.

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: 20<sup>th</sup> day of each month -- Thank you--**



April 2019



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**Facebook**

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Email: [matsumastergardeners@gmail.com](mailto:matsumastergardeners@gmail.com)

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