



President's Patch

By President Deb Blaylock

If there is one good thing about this pandemic, it's the opportunity to dedicate ourselves to our seedlings and planning out the garden for 2020. Mother Nature, as always, is an unpredictable variable in this planning. We have been spoiled the last two or three years with earlier and earlier springs. I recall three years ago, Curt and Marge visiting my greenhouse in March and there was no snow on the ground and I even had tomatoes out there.

This year it seems we have moved back to what most of us consider a typical Alaskan spring. With at least two feet of snow on the ground and cooler night temperatures predicted for the next week or so, I guesstimate spring ground thaw is going to be a bit late this year. On a good note, there is lots of sunshine predicted. The downside of that though is pools of icy water which will freeze at night. It will be interesting to see what survives this winter. One thing for sure, the Alaska growing season is never predictable.

Unfortunately, we have had to cancel our April regular meeting. Given that it is unknown how long social distancing requirements will last, this might extend into May. Hopefully not, and we will continue to plan on our May activities. One of those is our annual plant sale. We'll see how things go in April before we consider doing any type of sign up for the plant sale or to distribute labels. If you are in dire need of labels, you can send an email to matsumastergardeners@gmail.com and we can try and accommodate you. But you MUST be a current member of the association. I am marching forth with starting seedlings for our plant sale and would ask that you consider doing the same.

In the meantime, we really need a few volunteers to help out with the plant sale. Here are the jobs we need to fill:

- advertising (contact radio stations/newspapers)
- plant sale signs (put around Palmer & at Pavilion on the day of the sale)
- plant tags (help count after the plant sale)
- bring tables and chairs from the Extension office

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GENERAL MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

OUR APRIL MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC AND GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO LIMIT GATHERINGS AND MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING.

SPEAKER/TOPIC

N/A

- day of sale check out (cashier/help customers check out/carry plant to cars for those who can't)

Send an email to matsumastergardeners@gmail.com if you can help out with any of these.

I look forward to hopefully seeing folks at our May meeting, which will be a presentation from State Fair Crops Department Superintendent Kathy Liska. She will speak to us about entering in the Alaska State Fair and a bit about the crops and flower entries. Stay safe and disinfect often!

PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE: BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

Photo submitted by the author

Once again, the peasant and Marge have cleaned up a snowfall, three inches or so. More precipitation is forecast for Saturday the twenty-first. Perhaps it will be in liquid form so it will not need help getting rid of it. The forecasters have been right mostly, so we'll see what develops. Temperature is in the 40s on Friday afternoon, definitely welcome. Our day will come; meanwhile, there is much to get ready. Some things that could be seeded now are tomatoes and sweet peas to be followed soon by winter squash and cucumbers.

There are varieties of cucumbers that don't require pollination and do well in a greenhouse environment. The peasant has built a contraption that opens and closes automatically to hold the temperature within in a range suitable for warm weather crops. It allows entry to pollinators during the daytime and works well for crops that require such. It closes when the temperature drops to maintain the warmth. The mechanism uses a 12-volt deep cycle battery as its power supply, the battery being recharged by a solar panel. The contraption has seen more than 40 years of use with occasional repairs and modifications. Opening and closing temperatures are controlled by two adjustable thermostats.

A simpler device could be constructed using an automatic vent which operates on the expansion and contraction of a type of wax. There are several of these available at varying prices. The big advantage is low cost and no power supply needed other than temperature increase. A disadvantage is the limited

amount of push provided and the temperature range is not adjustable, although the opener is available in a temperature range useful for plant growth. They can be found on the internet as automatic vent openers as well as in some seed catalogs.

Folks, may you enjoy the warming spring weather, and may you stay healthy.



This is the contraption mentioned in the peasant's essay. The photo was taken a year or two ago before it was put into use in the spring. The structure is of welded 1/2-inch square tubing. Inside dimensions are 5 feet by 20 feet. The top and ends are of six mil clear vinyl and the sides are of six mil polyethylene. Side not shown is in two removable sections for access. The sloping roof panels are hinged at the top and when fully open are about level, allowing ample access to pollinators and for watering and other plant maintenance. The solar panel is inside at the north end. All plants will be in plastic bags set on landscape fabric.

PEONY ARTICLE FROM AXEL RABELL – HASTINGS, MINNESOTA

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Good Morning, Peony Lovers! Today we'll address the ants on peonies issue. It's not my favorite topic but it seems to always come up, so let's deal with it. Out of all the peony myths, this one seems to have the strongest staying power. It is deeply rooted in folklore and passed down for generations. I often hear gardeners tell me that they heard it from their grandmothers or other family members. The myth is that peony buds need ants to open, as if they had some sort of symbiotic relationship. I'll try to explain today the relationship between ants and peonies.

First, it is a myth that peonies require ants to bloom (sorry, grandmas). The relationship between peonies and ants is not quite a symbiotic one, but rather a type of mutualism in which two organisms of different species (peonies and ants) benefit from the activity of one another. For instance, peony flowers provide food (sugar) for ants and, in turn, the ants protect the blooms from other floral feeding insects (like thrips). Now that we've explained that a little, let's get into a few more details.

Peonies, much like other flowers and plants, have nectaries. Nectaries are essentially glands that secrete nectar in flowers or plants. Nectaries are present at the base of the green sepals that surround peony flower buds. The nectar they secrete is composed of sugars (sucrose, glucose and fructose), amino acids, lipids and other organic compounds that are a great food source for ants. It's just irresistible to them. Here's what happens: when a scout ant finds the nectar on the peony, she emits a pheromone

that sends an odor trail all the way back to her nest. At the nest, the scout alerts other ants of the food source. The recruited ants then follow the odor trail back to the peony nectar.

While the ants are feeding on the peony nectar, they protect their food source by swarming and chasing away other insects that come to feed on the flower buds. In this way they help each other. As each ant feeds on the peony nectar, the odor trail is reinforced until the food source is gone.

Because the presence of ants on peonies is temporary, there's really no need to worry about it. They leave as soon as the sugar is gone. If you'd like to cut and bring your flower buds inside the house, I recommend you turn them upside down and submerge them in cold fresh water and the ants will come right off or you can rinse them in the sink.

So, let me summarize for you: ants are attracted to and love to eat the nectar secreted by peony buds. Ants do not harm the plants, and plants do not require ants to open. Ants and peonies have sort of a mutualism relationship, as both species derive a benefit from each other. Peonies offer the food and ants take it and while there, they protect their food source from other insects, but let's be clear once and for all - they do not need each other to survive or bloom.

*If ants bother you that much, you could gently pour some water on the buds and they'll go away.

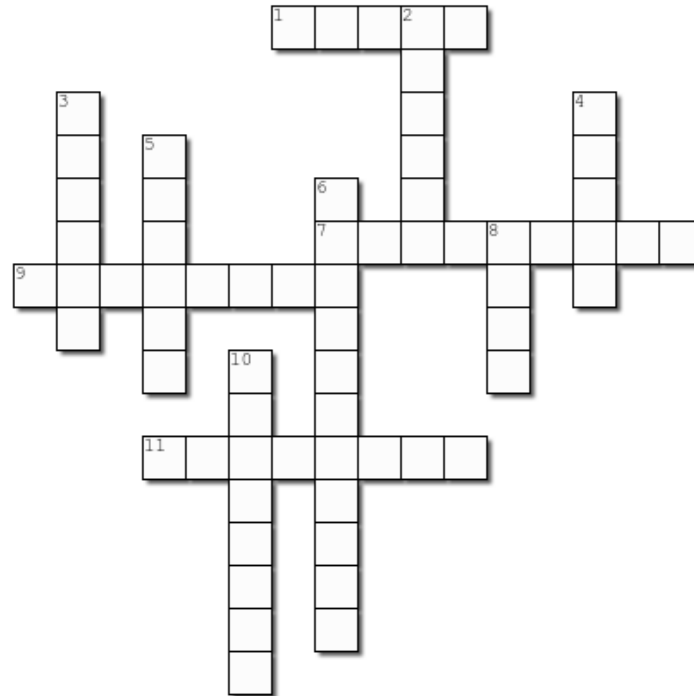
*There are some peony cultivars that do not secrete as much nectar and don't attract ants, especially Itohs.

*Hopefully this clarifies this issue.

APRIL CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Plant Propagation (Sexual)

Questions and answers to this puzzle were taken from the April 2011 edition of the Alaska Sustainable Gardening, The Alaska Master Gardener Manual, HGA-00339.



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

1. This can stimulate or inhibit germination of some seeds.
7. The part of the seed which is a food reserve.
9. Open pollinated plant varieties which have been saved and replanted for a minimum of 50 years..
11. This prevents a seed from germinating until a favorable environment occurs.

Down

2. The result of the cross between two different species.
3. Respiration of seeds increases during germination, it is important to have a loose planting medium to provide this compound.
4. An adequate supply of this is important to seed germination.
5. The young plant contained within the seed coat.
6. This affects both the speed of germination and germination percentage.
8. The result of the union of pollen and an egg within a flower.
10. To provide an artificial chilling period for plants to help break dormancy.

Answers to March 2020 Puzzle

Across

2. An atom or molecule with either a positive or a negative charge. (**ion**)
5. Often listed as the first major plant nutrient on fertilizer packages. (**nitrogen**)
8. A measure of soil alkalinity or acidity. (**ph**)
9. An important secondary nutrient - often deficient in Alaska's acidic soils. (**calcium**)
10. Listed as 'P' on the periodic table. (**phosphorus**)
12. The second largest (or smallest) soil particle. (**silt**)
13. Soil _____ is how coarse or fine the soil is (percentage of sand, silt and clay particles.) (**texture**)
14. A soil ____ is important to determine levels of nutrients and soil pH. (**test**)

Down

1. Too much of this micronutrient is toxic to plants. (**boron**)
3. A natural or synthetic product added to the soil to supply plant nutrients. (**fertilizer**)
4. The coarsest/largest soil particle. (**sand**)
6. The product created by the breakdown of organic waste under conditions manipulated by humans. (**compost**)
7. The smallest type of soil particle. (**clay**)
8. Listed as 'K' on the periodic table. (**potassium**)
11. The end product of decomposed animal or vegetable matter. (**humus**)

Garden Links (updated Nov 2019)

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.farmtoschoolalaska.org/>

Alaska Garden Clubs

<http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org>

Alaska Grown

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

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

<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 Gardener

<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 (Extension)

<http://search.extension.org>

Master Gardeners of the Tanana Valley

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

Palmer Soil & Water Conservation

<http://palmeroilandwater.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

<https://www.uaf.edu/ces/>

UAF Cooperative Extension Service Publications

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

UAF CES Citizen Pest Monitoring Portal

<https://pestreporter.alaska.edu/>

UAF Georgeson Botanical Garden

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

UAF Herbarium

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

UAF Alaska Master Gardener Program

<https://www.uaf.edu/ces/garden/mastergardeners/>

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

<https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Volunteer to serve on the Board of Directors for 2021.
- Volunteer to chair one of our committees or serve on a committee. There are several vacancies for chairs and most all will need members to help.
- Volunteer as the State Master Gardener Conference Committee chair.

CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Deb Blaylock	746-6045/kdblalock@ak.net
Vice President	Gregory Kalal	339-1966
Secretary:	Carolyn Johnson	619-857-6614
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 send to the MMGA email.

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 2020

Apr 6, Palmer, MMGA meeting CANCELLED

APRIL 2020 AND BEYOND

May 4, Palmer, MMGA meeting, Kathy Liska, State Fair Entries

May 30, Palmer MMGA Annual Plant Sale

Jun 8, Palmer, Palmer Public Library Planting (Note date change!)

Jul 11, Palmer Midsummer Garden and Art Faire

Jul 22, Summer Members-Only Garden Tour, High Tunnels, Gardens & a Root Cellar and Alpine Plants.

Aug 27 - Sep 7, Palmer, Alaska State Fair, "Seeing is Believing"

Aug 29, Palmer, Alaska State Fair Parade

Sep 14, Palmer, MMGA meeting

Oct 5, Palmer, MMGA meeting

Nov 2, Palmer, Annual MMGA meeting

Dec 7, Palmer, Christmas Party

Club Membership

The membership year runs from January to December each year. Annual individual memberships are \$15 and family memberships are \$20. Family memberships are only for family members living in the same household. The deadline to join is January 15, 2020 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: 20th day of each month -- Thank you--



April 2020



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Facebook

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