



# MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Apr 2018



## President's Patch

By President Michael Kircher, photo by the author

“Spring has sprung,  
The grass is ris,  
I wonder where the birdies is?”

No, I didn't write that little, very old bit of ?poetry? It was possibly written by someone undergoing a blight of cabin fever. Thank goodness that never happens to us as we have all maintained a bright, cheery disposition all winter; haven't we?

Yesterday I dug out my beehive in anticipation of receiving bees in April. First, I had to dig out a path to get to it. We made it through most of the winter without it being buried. I left it out, so it would be exposed to maximum cold temperatures to kill any pathogens that might be present. Next year I'll either elevate it or store it in the greenhouse for the winter. My cat “Ginger” came out to help. She appreciates any paths through the yard so she can visit her forsythia bush, which she marks by brushing against it with her head. Ginger also likes to inspect for mice and voles under the shed, inside the greenhouse and the potting shed. She'll be happy when the grass has “ris.” Until then we have been growing cat grass inside in pots all winter. She loves to munch on that. She may be a little upset when I cut the forsythia bushes way back this year after they bloom. They've gotten out of control and I need to repaint the front of the shed. I think in the next day or two we'll bring in a few branches to bloom inside, as well as some apple and cherry branches. We simply smash the bottom of the branches with a hammer, then put them in water in a sturdy, deep vase. It's nice to have a little color inside in anticipation of what's to come while the snow/rain/sleet flies. Now that the local greenhouses are open, a visit should cheer us up until we can appreciate our own gardens. We brought a number of amaryllis plants out of storage and the large blooms are always appreciated at this time.

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### GENERAL MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

#### NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 2ND AT 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

SALLY KOPPENBERG WILL BE SPEAKING ON GROWING CLEMATIS

PLANT SALE LABELS WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE FOR PICK-UP



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

Photo submitted by the author

This is written on the first day of spring, and it is a gloriously sunny day. We've reached twelve hours of daylight and gaining fast. Alaska's endless long days will soon be upon us. It is a delight for all who enjoy the outdoors, and especially for gardeners whose efforts thrive on lots of sunlight. We shall make the most of these days.

Time begins to become more precious as we approach planting time. Our plans are made, seeding to be done on a proper schedule, garden seeds and tubers purchased, tools made ready; a myriad of things to be done. New life begins again. It is a great time to be a part of life.

The peasant is preparing to start sweet peas. They need an early start to produce their lovely fragrant flowers over a longer season. Once in bloom, removing spent blossoms helps to keep the flowers coming. Blooms will continue until a really hard frost puts an end to their season.

The peasant plans to start four flats of sweet peas [*Lathyrus odoratus*] in three-inch pots, at eighteen pots per flat, three seeds per pot. In past years germination has been fair, but not outstanding. The peasant has soaked the seeds overnight and planted with no further seed preparation. Germination has been sporadic, with some seeds sprouting in a week or so and others taking up to three weeks and some not germinating at all. Since the seed flats are covered for darkness, when the first seedlings show, the cover must be removed, thus inhibiting germination for those not yet showing. A further problem is that the ones that don't sprout might be a choice color that happens to have a harder and more impervious seed coat.

In an effort to allow moisture to reach the seed through the seed coat, the peasant has decided to try scarification on the

seeds this year. First, he tried emery boards to thin the seed coat in an area. That proved to be too slow and difficult to hold the seeds. Next, he tried a nail clipper which had been suggested online. Same problem. He then put a new blade in a utility knife and used that to nick the seed coat. That worked better, but sometimes the seed would go flying. The next plan is to soak the seeds overnight and then nick the coat. Wet seeds should be easier to hang onto, and at least on some the seed coat will have softened a bit.

If everything else proves too tedious, plan "A" with no preparation other than soaking overnight will be followed. You will be apprised of what transpires in this endeavor.

We do have a good bit of snow that needs to melt away. It seems to snow easily these days. But each day, Old Sol climbs higher and stays with us longer, so something's gotta give. Enjoy the breakup. Thanks, folks.

### ALASKA GOTHIC





## Seed Starting & Transplanting

The use of transplants enables the gardener to grow warm-season vegetables to maturity outdoors, hasten maturity of cool-season vegetables and achieve a longer bloom period for many annual flowers. Based on usual home temperatures (68° to 72°F) with at least 10 hours of daylight, the average number of weeks needed to grow transplants to the proper sizes are indicated below. Subtract the number of weeks listed from the average date of the last spring frost in your locality to determine planting dates. Less favorable growing conditions may require the longer period of time.

### FLOWERS

Flowers marked with an asterisk (\*) do well in cooler temperatures of 50° to 55°F. Beginners will do well to try flowers from this group.

#### Six to Eight Weeks

Butterfly flower	<i>Schizanthus</i>
English daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Feverfew	<i>Chrysanthemum parthenium</i>
Lobelia	<i>Lobelia</i> sp.
Nemesia	<i>Nemesia</i> sp.
Flowering tobacco	<i>Nicotiana</i> sp.
*Petunia	<i>Petunia hybrida</i>
*Snapdragon	<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>
*Sweet alyssum	<i>Lobularia maritima</i>
Verbena	<i>Verbena laciniata</i>

#### Four to Six Weeks

*African daisy (cape marigold)	<i>Dimorphotheca</i> sp.
*Ageratum (floss flower)	<i>Ageratum</i> sp.
Aster	<i>Aster</i> sp.
Godetia	<i>Godetia</i> sp.
*Larkspur	<i>Delphinium brownii</i>
*Nasturtium	<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>
Stocks	<i>Matthiola</i> sp.
*Bachelor button	<i>Centaurea cyaneus</i>
*Candytuff	<i>Iberis sempervirens</i>
*Clarkia	<i>Clarkia pulchella</i>
Dahlia	<i>Dahlia pinnata</i>
*Marigold	<i>Tagetes erecta</i>
*Phlox	<i>Phlox</i> sp.
Zinnia	<i>Zinnia elegans</i>

For more detailed information on seed starting and plant propagation, see "Alaska's Sustainable Gardening Handbook," Chapter 4, Plant Propagation.

#### Four Weeks in Individual Containers

Canary bird vine	<i>Tropaeolum peregrinum</i>
Mignonette	<i>Reseda odorata</i>
*Nemophila	<i>Nemophila</i> sp.
Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>

### VEGETABLES

Vegetable	Weeks	Remarks
Broccoli	4-6	
Cabbage	4-6	
Cauliflower	4-6	
Celery	10-12	Slow growing.
Corn	2-4	
Cucumbers	3	Start two seeds in individual containers; remove the weaker one after they germinate.
Lettuce (head)	4-6	Start inside for early harvest.
Onions	8-10	
Vegetable	Weeks	Remarks
Peppers	6-7	
Winter squash	3-4	Start two to three seeds in individual containers and remove the weaker one after they germinate. Plant directly from pots.
Tomatoes	7-9	Transplant when near bloom. Do not subject to frost.

### SEED STARTING SCHEDULE CALCULATOR

Alternatively, plug-in your spring frost-free date into this online calculator: <http://www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/seed-planting-schedule-calculator.html>

Note that not everything in the seed starting calculator will reach maturity in Alaska, e.g., okra or watermelons. Crops with long maturity periods should be started earlier than suggested in this calculator.

### MATERIAL NEEDED FOR STARTING TRANSPLANTS

#### Container

Almost any type of container can be used as long as it has adequate drainage and will last for up to three months when damp. Some possible choices include wood flats, plant pots, peat pots, peat pellets, tin cans, milk cartons, foil pie plates, plastic freezer cartons, etc.

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### Germinating Media

Although soil and potting mixtures may be used, they are **NOT** necessary to ensure germination. Vermiculite, sphagnum moss, sand, perlite or other **STERILE** material that can be kept uniformly moist is satisfactory. If a soil mixture is used, moisten and bake in the oven to sterilize (one-half hour at 180°F is sufficient). Sterilized media is required to prevent "damping off" disease from killing seedlings. Fill containers to within ½ inch of the top. Seedling surface should be firm but not hard to provide good contact between soil and seed. All containers, tools and the working area must be clean and sterile to prevent reinfection. Wood and plastic can be sterilized with a mixture of one part chlorine bleach to nine parts water. Clean containers first and let stand in bleach solution for 30 minutes. Dry before reuse.

### Seed Treatments

Many seeds from commercial sources are already treated with fungicides to prevent damping off. If they are not or if they are home-grown seeds, they should be treated. Contact your local district Extension office for recommendations on seed treating.

## SEEDING AND GROWING TRANSPLANTS

### Seeding

Space or scatter seeds well apart. Nearly everyone plants many more seeds than can grow for even a short time. Plant in rows if more than one type of seed is used.

### Covering Seeds

Cover very lightly. Fine seeds need no cover at all if kept moist. If covered, the surface should be firmed to insure good seed-soil contact. Cover should be to a depth of two times the seed diameter. Lettuce and celery seeds require light for germination.

### Watering

Water seeds gently but thoroughly. Fog or mist is ideal to keep the surface moist. The container can also be put in a pan of water to absorb moisture from the base, which helps to avoid damping off by keeping the surface dry.

### Covering the Container

A plastic cover, plastic wrap, or wet newspaper may be used to keep seeds moist until they germinate.

### Heat

Place in an area where the temperature is about 70°F. Heat at the bottom of the container hastens seed germination. Avoid placing covered containers in direct sunlight. A few

plants such as larkspur, snapdragon, sweet pea, cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower start best at about 55°F.

### After Germination

New seedlings need light and fresh air. Remove newspapers, glass or plastic covers as soon as seedlings appear. If not all seeds germinate at the same time, keep ungerminated rows covered until seedlings appear. Strips of newspaper work well for this.

### Light

Adequate light is essential for healthy transplants. Lights should be placed 2-4 inches above the plants. For more information on providing an artificial source of light, see "Controlling the Greenhouse Environment," HGA-00336.

### Damping Off

This is the major problem to watch for with new seedlings. Poor air circulation and/or crowded plants create ideal conditions for damping off. Increase air circulation and thin the plants at the first sign of trouble. Plants should have circulation of air at the soil surface. Cool, soggy soil and insufficient light also create conditions favorable for damping off.

### Transplanting

If you didn't plant in individual cells, transplant seedlings to individual containers or flats filled with sterilized garden soil as soon as the first true leaves appear. Larger growing plants should be placed in individual containers. Handle plants gently by the upper leaves. Use a pointed stick (dibble) to roll out or "prick off" the seedlings. **DO NOT PULL THE PLANTS.** Avoid tearing the roots and replant at the same depth as the plant was growing in the seed flat.

## SETTING PLANTS OUT IN THE GARDEN OR YARD

### Hardening Off Plants

Before transplanting outdoors plants should be hardened off. Withhold water and carry them outside for progressively longer periods of time each day. As plants start to harden off, they may become slightly yellow with tinges of red at the edges of the leaves. Allow a week or more for this process. A cold frame works well for this procedure. Avoid wind or temperatures below 45°F. This transition period is important in harsh climates.

### Starter Solution

Use a starter solution when transplanting to get plants off to a good start in their new environment. Follow mixing directions on the container carefully. Use ½ to 1 cup of solution per plant. A good solution is 1 tablespoon of high phosphorus water soluble fertilizer in 1 gallon of water.

Heidi Rader, Extension Faculty, Agriculture and Horticulture



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[www.uaf.edu/ces](http://www.uaf.edu/ces) or 1-877-520-5211

Revised February 2018



**Alaska Rock Garden Society presents:  
Kit Strange, International speaker and plant explorer**

- **Monday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm - Palmer - Mat-Su College, FSM (Fred & Sarah Machetanz) Building, 8295 College Dr.**
- **Tuesday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm - Anchorage - Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova St.**

**Cost: \$5 donation at the door**

"Kit Strange is a horticulturist at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, working in the Alpine Department where she oversees much of the extensive collections of plants that comprise Kew's world famous collections, particularly the challenging bulb collection including the world's most extensive collection of Scorpiris--the exquisite "Juno" iris of the Mediterranean, Western and Central Asia.

She also helps stage many fine displays that include these plants at Kew and around Britain--such as at Chelsea Flower show and the numerous shows staged by the Alpine Garden Society and sister societies.

Born in Denmark, Kit has native command of English and is an accomplished, entertaining and polished speaker.

She is a plant explorer who's ranged across much of Europe and Asia and has many other keen interests including fishing, motorcycles and her husband!"

## 3-5-2018 Meeting Minutes

## Mat Su Master Gardeners

Submitted by Dorte Mobley, Secretary

Present were Michael & Phyllis Kircher, Ken & Deb Blaylock, Dorte Mobley, Curt and Marge Mueller, Wayne & Arlene Bowman, Anita Chase, Eva Cohnen-Brown, Christine Ashurst, Chris Wood, Greg Kalal, Rhonda Bowman, Jana Miller, Kristina Tornqvist, Theo Marcia, Marcia Clemons, Cathy Crew, Mark & Robin Webb

Meeting called to order at 7:05 by President, Michael Kircher

Treasurer, Cathy Crew, gave report and suggested that we amend the budget to include \$50 for the yearbook and amending the plant sale to \$250, and that we add a community item line to \$250. Motion by Dorte was seconded and discussion followed. Motion carried.

Minutes were sent out in newsletter. Motion to approve them by Ken, motion seconded and approved.

Ken and Deb sent a sign-up sheet around for the Art and Garden Faire July 14. They will set up the booth and could use some help. Manning the booth will be in 2-hour increments. Extension office has table cloth that we pick up when we pick up table and chairs. Kristina will make membership forms to have available for the event.

Dorte has contacted the Experiment Farm to find out what the scoop is on the flower beds at the farm. They haven't decided yet, but they will contact Dorte once they do.

Rhonda has labels for plant sale.

Kristina moved that we amend the bylaws to the wording that was read at the previous meeting and sent out in the newsletter. Motion was seconded and carried.

Kristina moved that we amend the standing rules to the wording that was read at the previous meeting and sent out in the newsletter. Motion was seconded and carried.

Phyllis informed us that the meeting room might not be available next month, but a different room would be. It will still have a screen.

After the meeting, the Kirchers showed beautiful slides and talked about their trip to Israel.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30.

**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](mailto:matsumastergardeners@gmail.com).

Time:	Name
9 – 10 am Set-up	Ken & Deb Blaylock
10 am - Noon	Kristina Tornqvist
Noon – 2 pm	
2 – 4 pm	Anita Chace
4 – 6pm	
6 pm Take down	Ken & Deb Blaylock

Email [matsumastergardeners@gmail.com](mailto:matsumastergardeners@gmail.com) with your name and contact info for the shift you would like to sign up for. First come - first serve. Thanks!

## 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.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](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 \*\*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](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 a committee
  - Colony Days Parade
  - Alaska Veterans & Pioneers Home Planting
  - Demonstration Bed at Experiment Farm
  - Palmer Library Planting
  - Grant/scholarship coordinator
- Help at the Alaska State Fair
- Help with the Midsummer Garden and Art Faire MMGA booth

## CLUB CONTACT INFO

<b>President:</b>	<b>Michael Kircher</b>	<b>745-1459</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Curt Mueller</b>	<b>745-6144</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 2018

**Apr 2**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Growing Clematis, Sally Koppenberg

**Apr 7**, Anchorage, Sears Mall Spring Garden Show

**Apr 19**, Palmer, Third Thursdays with Extension: Garden Soil Essential

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

### MAY 2018 AND BEYOND

**May 7**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Espaliering trees and why, Dan Elliott & Debbie Hinchey, APFGA

**May 17**, Palmer, Third Thursdays with Extension: Raised Garden Beds, Container Gardening,

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

**Jun 2**, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale

**Jun 4**, Palmer, Palmer Library Planting

**Jun 9**, Palmer, Colony Days Parade

**Jul 2**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Garden Tours

**Jul 14**, Palmer, Midsummer Garden & Art Faire

**Aug 6**, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Hypertufa troughs, Jaime Rodriquez, Alpine Gardens

**Aug 23 - Sep 3**, Palmer, Alaska State Fair

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





April 2018



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Website: [www.matsumastergardeners.com/](http://www.matsumastergardeners.com/)  
Email: [matsumastergardeners@gmail.com](mailto:matsumastergardeners@gmail.com)

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

