



Dec 2013



President's Patch

By Curt Mueller

At the time when our state was being purchased from Russia it was referred to by some as "Seward's Folly" and sometimes as "Seward's Icebox". Certainly it turned out not to be folly, but recent weather events indicate the icebox designation may not be too far off for this time of year. Fortunately the purveyors of flower and vegetable seeds have seen fit to provide us with colorful catalogs of their offerings, thereby mitigating winters effects.

Our annual party will take place on December 2, with dinner being served at 6:30 PM. The meal is to be potluck with ham and turkey provided by the club. There will be a short business meeting. Election of officers for 2014 will take place. Nominations have been made and further nominations will be called for. A gift exchange will also take place, a minimum value of \$15 on gifts for those who wish to participate. See you there!

One of the things which I had hoped to get going is a greater sharing of gardening experiences on the part of our membership. Deb Blaylock shared her methods on growing garlic, and we thank her for it. There is room for us to share our acquired knowledge in the monthly newsletter, and at our monthly meetings. Perhaps Sue Wallin and Hazel Koppenberg can figure out a way to work this in as program planners. Let us spread the wealth of our experience.

Thank you all for participating in our club events.



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CHAPTER MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 6:30 PM

LOCATION: TURKEY RED BANQUET ROOM,
PALMER

DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO ATTEND

MEETING AGENDA

- TREASURER REPORT
- MINUTES
- OLD BUSINESS
- NEW BUSINESS
- ELECTION OF OFFICERS

CHRISTMAS PARTY & GIFT EXCHANGE

PEASANTS PERSPECTIVE

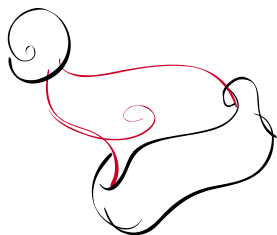
By Curt Mueller, Master Gardener

During her presentation on growing garlic, Deb Blaylock mentioned a problem in making raised beds five feet in width. It is a stretch to tend the beds at that width, and a width of four feet or less makes caring for raised beds much easier. The peasant definitely agrees with that wisdom, having also made beds of a five foot width, and finding some difficulty in reaching to the middle of them. Kneepads are in order then, as one can rest the knees on the sides of the beds. Better to make them narrower to start with.

The peasant also erred in allowing the soil in the beds to contact directly the underlying earth. A better idea is to build the beds, staple landscape fabric on the underside, and then flip them over in place. The fabric will prevent grass from encroaching on the raised beds.

Stakes driven into the ground to hold the beds in place are unnecessary and may result in the sides being raised off the ground by winter freezing of the soil. What has worked better is to use all-thread rods to keep the sides from spreading from the weight of soil. A 5/16th rod is sufficient. Extra-length nuts are available for splicing the all-thread so none is wasted. Since the peasant no longer uses a tiller on garden beds the rods do not interfere with the tilling operation. The ends of the rods may be countersunk so they do not protrude past the sides, thereby providing a smooth surface that does not catch on lawnmower wheels or clothing and body parts.

Perhaps you may find these methods useful.



Garden area before introduction of raised beds.



Garden area with raised beds. Since this photo was taken some modification has been made on this setup. Beds were aligned and in some cases narrowed to allow better mowing access. The yellow tape was used to train the dog to stay out of the garden. The contraption in upper left was built by the peasant to open automatically and provide extra warmth for winter squash and cucumbers and also allow pollinators to enter the structure.



Present view of garden area. Photos courtesy Curt Mueller

Thanksgiving & Christmas Cacti

Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*) and Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) are popular, fall- and winter-flowering houseplants native to Brazil, and are available in a wide variety of colors including red, rose, purple, lavender, peach, orange, cream, and white. These *Schlumbergera* species grow as epiphytes among tree branches in shady rain forests, and their pendulous stems make them a great choice for hanging baskets.

When grown under normal night length conditions, Thanksgiving cacti normally flower near Thanksgiving approximately a month before Christmas cacti bloom. Another member of the group sold as holiday cacti is the Easter cactus (*Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri*), which flowers primarily in the spring and sporadically throughout the year with pink or red flowers. Because of its bloom time, the Thanksgiving cactus is most predominately encountered for sale during the winter holiday season. Flowering can last up 7 to 8 weeks if the plants are kept at 68 °F.

To distinguish between the Thanksgiving and Christmas cacti, look at the shape of the flattened stem segments, which are botanically called phylloclades. On the Thanksgiving cactus, these stem segments each have 2 to 4 saw-toothed serrations or projections along the margins. The stem margins on the Christmas cactus are more rounded. Note that there are no true leaves on either of these holiday cacti, so photosynthesis occurs within the green phylloclades.

A second method to distinguish between these two *Schlumbergera* species is based on the color of the pollen bearing anthers. The anthers of the Thanksgiving cactus are yellow, whereas the anthers on the Christmas cactus are purplish-brown.

Culture

Light & Temperature: The holiday cacti grow best in light shade. Full sunlight is beneficial during fall

and winter, but bright sun during the summer months can make plants look pale and yellow. Ideal spring and summer growth occurs at temperatures between 70 to 80 °F during its growing season from April to September. During the fall, the Thanksgiving and Christmas cacti depend upon shorter day lengths (8 to 10 hours) and cooler temperatures to set their flower buds. Do not let temperatures rise above 90 °F once the flower buds are set in the fall.

Continuous warm temperatures can cause flower buds to drop. Do not leave these cacti outside if temperatures will drop below 50 °F.

The secret of good flower bud production during the fall involves temperature regulation and photoperiod (length of day and night) control. To initiate flower buds the plants need:

- Bright light.
- Long nights. Fourteen hours or more of continuous darkness each day is required before flower bud set will occur. Long nights should be started about the middle of September and continued for at least 6 continuous weeks for complete bud set. Note that as little as 2 hours of interrupted lighting will inhibit flower bud set. Buds normally will be visible in 3 to 4 weeks. The photoperiod has no effect on flowering once the buds are set.
- Fall growing temperatures should be kept between 60 and 68 °F, but as close to 68 °F as possible for maximum flower production. Plants grown with night temperatures between 50 and 59 °F will set flower buds regardless of day length, but growth will be slower and bud drop may occur at 50 °F.
- Pinching back the stems in early June to promote branching and more terminals for more flowers.
- Pinching (also called leveling) at the end of September to remove any terminal phylloclades that are less than 1 cm (0.4 inch) long and to make all stems approximately the same length. These short and immature stem segments will not initiate flower buds until mature. After a short phylloclade is removed, a flower bud forms on the previous, more mature stem segment.

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Watering & Fertilizer: Water the growing medium when it is dry to the touch. The holiday cacti are tolerant of dry, slightly under-watered conditions during the spring and summer. Do not let the soil become waterlogged, especially during the dark days of winter, but do not let the soil completely dry out either. However, following bud set in the fall, the growing medium must be kept evenly moist to prevent flower bud abscission. Never let water stand in the saucer beneath the pot.

Fertilize plants monthly from the time new growth starts in late winter or early spring, and throughout the summer using a one-half strength soluble fertilizer, such as a 20-10-20 or 20-20-20 with trace elements. Holiday cacti have a higher requirement for magnesium than many plants. Fertilize monthly during the growing season with Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) mixed at 1 teaspoon per gallon of water, but do not apply the same week as the regular fertilizer. Stop fertilization during the late summer for greater flower bud production in the fall.



Thanksgiving cactus with pale pink blossom. James Blake, ©2011 HGIC, Clemson Extension

Growing Media: The holiday cacti flower best when kept somewhat pot bound. Repotting is necessary only about once every three years and is best done in the spring. The potting medium must be well-drained with good aeration, as these epiphytic cacti do not grow well in heavy, wet potting mixes. A good mix may contain 60-80% potting soil with

40-20% perlite. Choose a good brand of potting soil which is pH balanced.

Propagation

Holiday cacti are easy to propagate by cuttings, which are taken in May or June. Pinch off sections of stems with 3 to 5 phylloclades (stem segments) on each. Allow the cut ends of the sections to callus by placing them outdoors in the shade for a day or two. Choose a well-drained potting soil and new or disinfested containers for rooting. Place three cuttings at approximately one inch deep into the potting soil of a 4-inch container, or use 5 cuttings in a 6-inch container. Water the soil well, and cover the plants and rooting container with a clear plastic bag secured with a rubber band around the container. The plastic bag will act as a miniature greenhouse to keep the relative humidity at 100% to enhance rooting. Place the container in bright, indirect light until roots have formed in three to eight weeks. At this time the plastic bag can be removed, and a dilute fertilizer solution can be used at watering.

Problems

The Thanksgiving and Christmas cacti commonly drop unopened flower buds, which may be induced by an excessive number of buds or a sudden change in temperature, light or other environmental factors, such as drying out of the growing medium. Lack of flowering is often due to light interrupting the long night period (14 hours) that is required for flowering initiation to occur. Street lights, car lights or indoor lighting can disrupt the required dark period.

The major disease is root rot, which can be prevented by avoiding excessive watering. Insects and related pests include mealybugs, soft brown scale, red spider mites, aphids and fungus gnats.

Adapted from:

<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/indoor/flowering/hgic1554.html>

Revised by Joey Williamson, HGIC Horticulture Extension Agent, Clemson University, 11/11. Originally prepared by Nancy Doubrava, HGIC Horticulture Specialist and Al Pertuit, Extension Floriculture Specialist, Clemson University, 05/99.

Matsu Master Gardeners Meeting November 5, 2013

Attendance: Curt Mueller-President, Cathy Crew-Treasurer, Marg Mueller-Member at Large, 18 regular members in attendance.

**Meeting was called to order @ 7:05pm by President Curt Mueller
Minutes from October 7, 2013 were read by Jan Bass-at President's request.
Treasurer, Cathy Crew, read the treasure's report.
Report was accepted and seconded by membership.**

Old business:

- **Membership Drive-updated by Lenita Deda. General discussion of various ways to contact members and update membership information. General discussion regarding the membership application - updating to include additional information.**
 - **Website updates-Eva Brown volunteered to update our website.**
- **Holiday float/parade is being handled by Curt Mueller and Jerry Story parade is on December 14, 2013, @t 5PM. Location on S. Alaska St. (Palmer's main street) wnad will go by the Veterans Home. Members are invited to participate and cheer our float on.**

New business:

- **December 2, 2013 meeting will take place at Turkey Red Restaurant. The meeting will take place at 6:30pm. General meeting and election to take place. Holiday meal and gift exchange to follow. Turkey & Ham will be provided by the club-potluck dishes were requested. Members present were asked to sign up for gift exchange with a minimum gift value of \$15.00, contact Marge Mueller for more details.**

Adjourned regular meeting at 7:30 pm.

Guest speaker, Deb Blaylock-Master Gardener spoke about growing Leeks and Garlic in Alaska.

Respectfully submitted by Jan Bass



"I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"
– [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#)



Message from President Curt Mueller

The time draws nigh to renew membership for 2014. Dues remain at \$10.00 for an individual and \$12.00 for a family. Application/Renewal forms are available on our website www.matsumastergardeners.org and will also be available at meetings, including the December get-together. We ask that you return the forms to the club with address, phone, and email address. It is important that we have contact information for everyone as individuals as well as an email list for newsletters and other pertinent information.

We've had an excellent response for people to fill various slots for tasks necessary to keep our organization operating smoothly. Volunteers are as follows:

Wayne Bowman- maintain gmail account
 Sharon Story- maintain Facebook page
 Phyllis Kircher- reserve MTA meeting room
 Lenita Deda- maintain membership list
 Eva Brown- update website
 Marge Mueller- Christmas party
 Curt Mueller and Jerry Story- parade float

Nominees for offices as follows:

President- Rhonda Bowman
 Secretary- Jan Bass
 Treasurer- Cathy Crew [incumbent]
 Co-vice-president- Hally Truelove
 Co-vice-president- Curt Mueller

Further nominations will be asked for at the December meeting and acted upon accordingly.



PROGRAM INTEREST FOR 2014

Please make a wish list for YOU !

Write three gardening topics you'd enjoy having presentations about at our monthly meetings. You can email them to: Matsumastergardeners@gmail.com or bring the WISH LIST to our Dec. 2 Christmas Potluck. We want to plan programs of interest to our members.

Thanks and Merry Christmas To ALL !

Annual Christmas Get Together and Gift Exchange

On December 2 at Turkey Red banquet room in downtown Palmer, at 6:30 PM, we are having our annual Christmas get-together. This will include a short business meeting to elect officers, a pot-luck supper with ham and turkey provided by the club, an optional gift exchange with \$15.00 minimum on the gifts, and good fellowship. If you plan to attend please email your intent to mueller@mtaonline.net.



Garden Links

Alaska Botanical Garden

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

Alaska Community Agriculture

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

Arbor Day Foundation

www.arborday.org

Alaska Exotic Plants Information Clearinghouse (AKEPIC)

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

Alaska Garden Clubs

<http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org>

Alaska Grown Source Book (online) ****New****

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/sourcebook/index.htm>

Alaska Master Gardeners Association, Anchorage Chapter

<http://alaskamastergardeners.org/>

Alaska Master Gardener Blog

<http://alaskamastergardener.blogspot.com/>

Alaska Native Plant Society

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

Alaska Peony Growers Association

<http://alaskapeonies.org>

Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Assoc..

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

Alaska Plant Materials Center

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

Alaska Rock Garden Society

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



Cooperative Extension Service, Palmer

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

Eat Local Alaska

<http://akfood.weebly.com/index.html>

Integrated Pest Management Program

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

Junior Master Gardeners

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

Landscape Plants for Alaska

www.alaskaplants.org

Local Alaskan Plants Clearinghouse

<http://www.localplants.org/Home>

Mat-Su Borough Rain Garden Cost Share Program

<http://www.matsugov.us/planning/environmental-division/rain-gardens>

Mat-Su Master Gardener Website

www.matsumastergardeners.org

Master Gardener Research Link

<http://search.extension.org>

Master Gardeners of the Tanana Valley

<http://interiormastergardeners.org/>

Palmer Soil & Water Conservation

<http://palmersoilandwater.org/>

South-Central Alaska Beekeepers Assoc.

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

Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners

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

UAF Cooperative Extension Service Publications

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

UAF Georgeson Botanical Garden

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

UAF CES Citizen Pest Monitoring Portal

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

University of Saskatchewan Fruit Program

www.fruit.usask.ca

USDA/NRCS Plant Data Base

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

Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation

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

Announcements

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Know of an upcoming event or organization which needs our help? Let a board member know!

TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

It's that time of year again! Yes, it is time to renew your annual club membership. You can renew online at the club's website using the PayPal payment option or you can download a renewal form and send your payment in. If you do use the online PayPal option, please print a renewal form and mail it or bring it to the next meeting. We need to make sure we have current information on everyone.

Club Membership

The membership year runs from January to December each year. Annual individual memberships are \$10 and family memberships are \$12.

It is easy to join or renew online, please visit:

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

Membership forms are available to download and print out - please send one in even if you pay with PayPal.

thank you

CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Curt Mueller	745-6144
Co-VP	Verna Euwer	746-7585
Co-VP	Kristina Tornqvist	745-2443
Secretary:	Hally Truelove	376-0909
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 @Email: djblaylock@alaska.edu

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2013

DEC

Dec 2, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Annual Christmas Party and Officer/Board Member Election

Dec 13-15, Palmer, Colony Christmas - Welcome Back to the Past

Dec 14, Palmer, Colony Christmas Parade, 5 p.m.

JAN 2014 AND BEYOND

Tentative Club Meeting Schedule

Jan 6, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Jan 31 - Feb 1, Anchorage, Winter Peony Growers Conf

Feb 1, Palmer, Produce Growers Conference

Feb 3, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Mar 3, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Apr 7, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

May 5, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

May 31, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale - TENTATIVE

Jun 2, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Library Planter

July 7, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Aug 4, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Sep 8, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Oct 6, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Nov 3, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Dec 1, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

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. If you don't have computer access, please submit your article or item neatly and clearly written so the newsletter editor can easily read it. 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 editor 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. -- Thank you--



December 2013



Like us on
Facebook

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



Matsu Master Gardeners Club
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Palmer, AK 99645