



President's Patch

By President Jenny Weaver

How I Came to Love Gardening

How did you become interested in gardening? Did a teacher or friend introduce you? For many of us, a family member, maybe a parent or grandparent, passed on their love of gardening. Perhaps they showed us how to sow seeds, or shared their harvest with us, that in turn piqued our interest.

My love of gardening began when my father, then a U.S. Marine, began a 13-month tour in Japan. During my father's deployment, my mom, along with my three brothers and I moved to live with my grandmother, Myrtle, on the south fork of the Clearwater River in Idaho. When we arrived in Idaho, I was but a child, in the middle of my first-grade year.

The gardens surrounding granny's small, nondescript, shed-roofed house were absolutely amazing! The evolution of the land and soils, part of the Nez Perce Indian reservation, provided an outstanding fertile ground to grow all manner of vegetables, fruits, flowers, and nuts. The Clearwater River offered a clean and abundant water source. Granny irrigated via ditches and deeply furrowed rows throughout her gardens. She utilized a gas-driven water pump, and small, strategically placed cedar dams, that she removed slat by slat to direct the flow. Occasionally the river flooded, which provided more organic silt to the soil.

The fences surrounding the front of her house were filled with lilacs, snowballs, and other bushes and shrubs. She made a circular planter from galvanized corrugated roofing, with 4 tiers that got larger as they descended; each level filled with delicious strawberries. She planted raspberry and blackberry bushes along the side fences. Cedar poles strung with wire held up a long row of robust green and purple grapes. Brambles of blackcaps flourished beneath. The rhubarb was prolific.

Granny planted all manner of vegetables in Idaho's hot summer sun. There were no transplanted seedlings; everything was direct-sowed. Beautiful tomatoes, assorted beans, and tall stalks of corn

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REGULAR MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

FEBRUARY 2ND, 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

REBARCHEK FARM, SOJDIN BARN, EAST REBARCHEK ROAD,
PALMER, ALASKA

AGENDA

BUSINESS HIGHLIGHT, RACHEL SCHOONOVER, PEAK FEED &
SEED

GUEST SPEAKER:

BECKY MYRVOLD, PRIMULAS

dotted the garden. Cucumber vines abounded, entwined along the garden rows with asparagus, potatoes, beets, zucchini, and acorn squash.

Fruit and nut trees dotted the back lot. Included were several varieties of apples, planted along with Bing and tart pie cherry trees, plums, and pears. Both black and English walnuts trees rounded out her orchard. I recall one task of mine was to pick up the many apples that fell from the trees. It helped keep the bee population down and we fed the spoiled ones to our farm animals.

The wonder of granny's garden was locally acclaimed. Myrtle was known as the Iris Lady. Her front garden displayed a mass of iris clusters that included every color and variety of iris imaginable.

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SOMEWHERE IN THYME

WAYBACK ARTICLES FROM PAST MMGA PUBLICATIONS

Food for Thought

By Master Gardener Curt Mueller
Originally published February 2014

For several years it has been the habit of this peasant to seed tomatoes on New Year's Day. There is no particular advantage to using this day, but it signals the New Year and a new start on the gardening season. The aim is for the first ripe tomatoes during the month of May with production from then until the close of the greenhouse season in early October.

In past years production has slowed in late summer and fall. The peasant attributes this to the senescence of the plants which by October have been growing for nine months and producing for more than half of that time. Certainly, the shortening days and often overcast skies in late summer are a factor as well; still, younger plants should be more vigorous and productive.

Usually, fourteen tomato plants have been grown in the limited greenhouse space allotted for them. They have all been started and grown at the same time, filling that space. No more space is available in which to put new plants. It's easy enough to grow replacements from cuttings, but who has the heart to remove producing plants in midsummer? The plan then is to grow only enough plants to provide fruit early, take cuttings in late April, and fill the space left with plants that will hit their flush of production in August. A collateral effect is to reduce crowding in the greenhouse as other plants are grown for the summer season.

This method will of course reduce the amount of fruit produced during early summer but will help to extend the season later on. When the greenhouse is shut down there should be considerable fruit to pick and store for several weeks, extending the season further in the fall.

In the last few years there has been increasing interest in grafting tomato plants. There are vigorous and disease resistant rootstocks available from seed. Heirloom varieties are often desirable for quality of fruit but lack disease resistance and productivity. They can be grafted to the rootstocks to provide those advantages. There are several websites which provide information on tomato grafting along with photos and videos.

While seeds for rootstocks are expensive and so are the clamps used for holding the grafts in place,

there may be an inexpensive alternative available. Many vigorous hybrids have excellent disease resistance. They can be used as rootstocks and other varieties grafted to them.

As an experiment which requires no purchase of additional seeds or equipment, the following method could be tried:

Two tomato plants are grown side by side in the same pot. One serves as rootstock and the other as scion. When they have both reached a diameter of about one quarter inch a V-shaped notch is cut into the side of the scion. The rootstock is cut off and an inverted vee shaped to fit into the scion is made. The rootstock is cut at a level slightly higher than the notch in the scion. When the matching cuts are put together there will be a bend in the rootstock which will put some pressure on the graft. When the graft has healed the scion is cut off below the graft and is now growing only on the rootstock. A photo on a grafting website will explain this process well. It might be fun to try!

Thanks, folks.



2014 tomato starts. Seeded January 1 - photo taken January 6



Tomato starts - photo taken January 22.

Starting Fresh and Clean: My New Year's Resolution for 2026

Submitted by Jana Gooch
Photos by the author

Decluttering for Peace of Mind and a Renewed Space

This year, I broke my long-standing tradition of never making New Year's resolutions. Something shifted for me over the holidays—Christmas felt more significant than ever before, and it inspired a profound change. I started celebrating earlier, blasting festive music even before Thanksgiving and decorating with more enthusiasm than I'd shown in years. I hosted my club's holiday party, bought a cozy new sweater to add to my collection, and savored each moment of the season as if it were my last. This sense of renewal carried seamlessly into 2026, and for the first time in my 73 years, I committed to three meaningful resolutions.

Embracing Positive Change in 2026

One resolution had already begun before Thanksgiving: I decided to stop letting family members' hurtful words affect me. It was a promise to protect my own emotional well-being. Another goal was to cultivate more compassion and understanding toward those who brought negativity into my life, striving to empathize with their actions and quirks instead of reacting with frustration.

The Resolution That Transformed My Mindset

Most transformative, however, was my commitment to decluttering the upstairs portion of our house. For years, the third floor had become a catch-all for anything I didn't know where to put—magazines, unused gadgets, supplies, and half-finished projects. Out of sight, out of mind, until the clutter began

to weigh on me every time I walked past the office. Determined to start fresh, I broke the massive project into small, manageable steps, cleaning one section at a time. When it felt overwhelming, I'd pause, recharge, and return to the task. Gradually, the mountain of clutter shrank, giving way to open space and a sense of order. The success upstairs motivated me to tackle my bedroom closet and drawers, making even more room in my home and in my mind.

My Decluttering Approach

I began with items I hadn't used in over six months. Unless there was a compelling reason to keep something, it went into the donation pile. I asked myself whether each object brought me joy or served a real purpose; if the answer was no, it was time to let it go. I also found joy in gifting fabric and other supplies to friends who appreciated them, knowing my things would find new life elsewhere. This process not only freed up valuable space but brought happiness to others as well.

Decluttering for Wellness and Joy

The more I decluttered, the lighter and happier I felt. Each day's progress brought a unique sense of accomplishment. My stress levels dropped, my mood lifted, and I found myself sleeping better at night. The momentum from cleaning and organizing even gave me the motivation to tackle long-neglected paperwork in the office.

A Fresh Start for the New Year

Cleaning and purging wasn't just about making my home look nicer—it was a powerful act of self-care. A tidy space led to a brighter outlook and set the tone for a positive year. If you haven't made any resolutions for 2026 yet, consider adopting cleaning and purging as your goal. It's a practical, attainable commitment that will reward you with clarity, happiness, and a more organized life—long after January has passed.

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Decluttering1: The upstairs pantry



Decluttering2: Finally, a bed for the occasional visitor



Decluttering3: Supplies stockpiled in an organized, easy-to-find stack



Continued from page 1.

They were a sight to see: a big and beautiful flood of slender, green leaves at the base of tall stalks topped with an array of color.

I remember granny rose early to pick raspberries before the yellow jackets came out. She always wore a dress, an apron, and a wide-brimmed hat tied beneath her chin. She carried a metal bucket with a handle that she slipped over her left wrist to collect her treasures. Many an evening she sat in a lawn chair in the shadow of the front porch, apron spread across her knees, as she would trim the ends and snap beans for dinner or canning.

Her indoor pantry abutted the well house, which helped keep it cool during the hot summers. A thick, insulated door also contributed to the cool and I remember it closed with a soft “whoosh!” Inside was an absolutely magical place. Both sidewalls held wooden shelves, and those shelves boasted a rainbow of colors. Ruby red raspberries, golden peaches (one fruit she purchased, which required a special drive down to Riggins), green beans, pickles and relish, burgundy beets, yellow corn, bright red tomatoes, applesauce, apple butter, grape and raspberry jellies, and jams. It was a bounty I had never seen before, and I marveled at the beauty and abundance of her hard work.

My actual lessons on gardening from granny were limited to visual memory. We never talked about how she did things or why. It was learning by sight, watching her garden flourish, witnessing the bounty of crops, her hard work to process the harvest, and the gleaming results on the shelves of that cool pantry. How I wish I could ask her now, about her actual methods of gardening!

Do you have a story to tell of how you became interested in gardening? Could you, would you share with us by sharing your story of gardening discovery? We would love to hear from you!



February 2 Monthly Meeting - 7pm at Rebarchek past the Red Gate, Alaska State Fairgrounds.

This meeting will also be provided via Zoom (and hopefully, work this time for all attendees, including sound and visuals). Members should look for log-on information through email soon.

Please join us for a fun and informative meeting including...

Business Highlight - Rachel Schoonover of Peak Feed and Seed will share details about her newly opened business along the Old Glenn Highway in Palmer. Rachel will share what they have to offer gardeners, business hours, location, and other info about her store.

Guest Speaker - Becky Myrvold, presenting on "Primula" (see bio and summary).

Business Meeting - To include updates on the 2026 Master Gardener Conference, Committee Progress, Chair positions, and "What do you predict for the 2026 Gardening Season?"

Photo courtesy Jenny Weaver - taken May 2025, at the Jenson-Olson Arboretum primula collection.



Featured Guest Speaker Becky Myrvold, to present on "Primula"

Becky Myrvold is a long-time Alaska Gardener, mostly known for her position as the Alaska State Fair Head Gardener.

Becky grew up on a farm and spent time playing in the grove surrounding the farm. It was there she fell in love with dirt and soil and growing things. She holds a degree in Horticulture from the University of Minnesota and moved to Alaska right after graduating from college. Amazingly, she has been with the Fair ever since then, experiencing all the changes the Fair has made over those years.

Her love of primula is purely personal and separate from her position at the Fair. Primula is one plant that thrives in her home location, and she has collected many primula over the years and wants to start a small business providing people with these lovely plants. She definitely does NOT claim to be a primula expert but harbors a love for that genus which she will share with us.

Photo courtesy Jenny Weaver - taken May 2025, at the Jenson-Olson Arboretum primula collection.



MMGA January 5, 2026, Meeting Minutes, submitted by Secretary Rebecca Emerson.

Member Attendance:

Deb & Ken Blaylock, Eva Brown (online), Kristen Buchta, Cathy P. Crew (online), Rebecca Emerson, Gregory Kalal, Michael and Phyllis Kircher (online), Craig Lisonbee (online), Dorte Mobley, Marjorie Mueller, Stephanie Nowers, Rhonda Schneider, Steven Spurger (online), Kristina Tornqvist, Ellen VandeVisse, Isaac Vaughan, Jenny and Todd Weaver, Dawn Wolski, David Thompson

Guest Attendance:

Angela Baker, Lois Rockcastle (online)

Approval of November Minutes

Motion: A motion was made to approve the November meeting minutes as distributed in the newsletter. **First:** Dorte. **Second:** Ken. **Result:** None were opposed and the motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Presentation: Cathy Crew provided the financial report. **Discussion:** The report showed the club ended the year with a deficit of \$402, primarily because membership and plant sale income had not yet been fully realized. **State Fair Prize:** It was noted that a State Fair prize check for Ryder West has not yet cleared the account. **Consolidation:** The board decided that future financial reports will be a consolidated summary rather than copies of bank statements.

Note: It was discussed that the Treasurer's report does not require a formal motion to accept.

President's Report President Jenny Weaver provided updates on board activities and club business:

Business Highlights: The board is introducing 15-minute "business highlights" at future meetings to feature local businesses. Rachel from Peak Feed and Seed will present in February.

Post Office Box Management: Management of the PO Box is transitioning to Rebecca Emerson from the Kirchers.

Webmaster Transition: Eva has resigned as webmaster, and Isaac has volunteered to take over the role.

Refreshments: The club is transitioning to a rotational system for refreshments. Rhonda

volunteered to provide them for the February meeting.

Fair Department Heads: The fair is seeking superintendents for the crops and flowers departments. Lara Stanley from the fair will attend the March meeting to discuss the need for these positions.

Membership Survey: The board plans to send out a survey to understand member engagement and volunteer availability.

Old Business

Update on AK State Fair Garden: Kristina reported the name will remain the "Forget-Me-Not Garden." Donated benches were discussed, with a requirement that they be sturdily cemented in place if pursued.

Master Gardener Conference: This event is planned for 2027. Jenny would like to chair the committee and is asking for volunteers to organize and coordinate the conference.

Committee Chair Review: Several chair positions remain open, including the Plant Sale, Veterans and Pioneers Home Planting, and Rebarchek Planting. Kristina would like to chair the Garden Tour committee. If you are interested in any of the committees, please let Jenny know.

Guest Presentation: Sun Circle Farm Operations The business meeting adjourned for the guest speaker Anne-Corinne Kell of Sun Circle Farm and continued after her presentation.

Announcements

Anchorage Advanced Master Gardeners Course: A six-session online soil management course starts January 15th. The cost is \$75 for members and \$85 for non-AMGA members.

Free Classes: MidValley Greenhouse and Ken's Garden Center have free classes coming up soon.

Upcoming Speakers: Becky, the "Primula Queen," will speak in February, and Margaret Adsit will speak in March.

Farm and Garden Show: Scheduled for January 30th - February 1st; member Deb & Ken Blaylock will present on raised beds.

Drawing The meeting concluded with the scheduled drawing.

It's that time of year – seed starting! Here are some resources to help you out.

Johnny's Seed Starting Date Calculator:

<https://www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/seed-planting-schedule-calculator.html>

Johnny's Seed Starting and Transplanting:

<https://www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/methods-tools-supplies/seed-starting-transplanting/seed-starting-transplanting-guidelines.html>

Fedco Flower Planting Guide:

<https://www.fedcoseeds.com/seeds/flower-chart>

Interior Alaska Seed Starting Schedule

<https://frostygarden.com/interior-alaska-seed-starting-schedule/>

Procedures for the Wet Paper Towel Germination Test:

<https://www.uaf.edu/ces/publications/database/gardening/procedures-wet-towel-germ.php>

Palmer/South Central Alaska Seed Starting Chart 2026

January	February	March	April	May	June
Jan	Early Feb	Early March	Early April	Direct Sow	Direct Sow
Echinacea	Hot Peppers	Bell/Sweet Pepper	Kale	Carrots	Beans
Rhodochiton	Catnip	Marigolds	Cilantro	Potatoes	Sweet Corn
Leeks	Parsley	Alyssum	Sweet Corn	Beets	Zucchini
Shallots	White Sage		Lettuce	Swiss Chard	All Squashes
Onions	Lemon Balm	Mid March	Dill	Lettuce	Need Warmer Soil
Lemon Grass	Thyme	Dahlia bulbs	Nasturtium	Peas	
Rhodiola	Stevia	Tomatoes	Beets	Spinach	Transplants*
Rosemary	Hyssop	Late March	Sunflowers	Turnips	Sweet Corn
Artichokes	Lavender	Broccoli	Late April	Cilantro/Dill	Zucchini
Super Hot Peppers	Horehound	Cauliflower	Zucchini	Transplants*	Winter Squash
Slow growing herbs	Oregano	Cabbage	Winter Squash	Cauliflower	Summer Squash
Chives	Leaf Fennel	Kohlrabi	Summer Squash	Cabbage	Tomatillos
Asparagus (seed)	Eucalyptus	Romanesco	Cucumbers	Broccoli	Tomatoes
		Alyssum	Pumpkins	Herbs	Pumpkins
	Mid to Late February	Basil	Melons	Onions/Scallions	
	Sage	Calendula		Leeks	
	Celery	Tomatillos		Kohlrabi	
	Celeriac	Lily bulbs		Romanesco	GARLIC
	Brussel sprouts	Collards		Flowers	Garlic is planted in the fall. Usually late September to mid-October. Wait for a hard frost or two to plant. Don't plant if its raining a lot! Garlic doesn't like soggy soil.
	Scallions			Lettuce	
	Bulb Fennel			Beets/Chard	
	Strawberry (seed)			Celery	
				Brussels sprouts	
			* These should be hardened off before transplanting.		

This is my personal seed starting schedule - it is not written in stone and can be modified to work for you. I start some things early as they are very slow growing. Others, I schedule because of my available seed starting space. Memorial Day weekend is the target date I use for planting outdoors. Remember – ground temperatures are just as (or more) important than air temperatures. Growing zones are based on air temperatures and don't account for Alaskan cold soils. Hardening off is a must for plants started indoors or in a protected greenhouse. environment. Expect your plants to take a "pause" after transplanting. They need to establish new roots and adjust to the cooler soils. Happy Gardening! Deb Blaylock, Alaska Master Gardener, Palmer, Alaska.

Last modified January 2026.

Garden Links (updated March 2024)

Alaska AgrAbility Program ****New Mar 2024****

<https://www.uaf.edu/ces/agriculture/agrability/index.php>

Alaska Botanical Garden

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

Alaska Center for Conservation Science

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

Alaska Community Forestry

<https://forestry.alaska.gov/community/index>

Arbor Day Foundation

www.arborday.org

Alaska Division of Agriculture

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

Alaska Garden Clubs

<http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org>

Alaska Grown

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

Alaska Master Gardeners Association, Anchorage

<http://alaskamastergardeners.org/>

Alaska Native Plant Society

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

Alaska Non-Native Species List

<https://accs.uaa.alaska.edu/invasive-species/non-native-plant-species-list/>

Alaska Orchid Society

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

Alaska Peony Society

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

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/>

Flora of North America

<http://floranorthamerica.org/>

Good Earth Garden School

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

Georgeson Botanical Garden

<https://georgesonbotanicalgarden.org/>

iNaturalist *****New May 2024*****

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

Integrated Pest Management Program

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

IPM Alaska Pest Reporter

<https://plw.man.mybluehost.me/>



Junior Master Gardener

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

Landscape Plants for Alaska

<https://visionplusapps.com/alaska-plants/>

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)

<https://extension.org/search/>

Master Gardeners of the Tanana Valley

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

Mat-Su/Copper River Cooperative Extension Service

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

Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Services

<https://www.uaf.edu/afes/places/palmer/>

National AgrAbility Program ****New Mar 2024****

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

Palmer Soil & Water Conservation District

<http://palmersoilandwater.org/>

Society of American Foresters, Cook Inlet Chapter

<https://forestry.org/cook-inlet-seedling-sale/>

South-Central Alaska Beekeepers Assoc.

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

Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners Association

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

Sustainable Agriculture – UAF

<https://www.uaf.edu/ces/agriculture/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 Herbarium

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

UAF Alaska Master Gardener Program

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

University of Saskatchewan Fruit Program

www.fruit.usask.ca

USDA/NRCS Plant Database

<https://plants.usda.gov/home>

Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska

<https://wildflowergardenclub.org/>

BOARD OF DIRECTOR CONTACT INFO

President:	Jenny Weaver	907-982-5446
Vice President:	Kristin Buchta	907-350-4429
Secretary:	Rebecca Emerson	334-207-5217
Treasurer:	Dorte Mobley	907-232-5422
Member at Large:	Deb Blaylock	907-746-6045

If you have gardening news, photos, or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please send to the MMGA email.

Website: www.matsumastergardeners.com/

Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2026 AND BEYOND

Feb 2, Regular Meeting, Becky Myrvold, Primulas. Business Highlight, Rachel Schoonover, Peak Feed & Seed

Mar 2, Regular Meeting, Margaret Adsit, Alaska Farmland Trust. Business Highlight: (in process)

Apr 6, Regular Meeting, Carla Vizzerra, Body In Balance - How to Warm Up Before & Cool Down After Gardening. Business Highlight - Carol Symonds, EweTopia Farms.

May 4, Regular Meeting

May 30, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale

Sep 14, Regular Meeting

Oct 5, Regular Meeting

Nov 2, Regular Meeting

Dec TBD, Holiday Party

Don't forget to check out the photos tab on our webpage! It is periodically updated with photos from activities our Association participates in.

<https://www.matsumastergardeners.com/photos.html>

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 **March 2, 2026**, 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 appreciated and make our newsletter what it is - so do not 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 needed 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.

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--



February 2026



Like us on
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Website: www.matsumastergardeners.com/

Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

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

