

MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

Feb 2015



President's Patch

By Rhonda Bowman, President

Guess what? I have received my seed catalogs in the mail and I saw seeds for sale in the store! Could spring be far off? That is the thing about Alaska, just when you are all jazzed to get started, it snows or the temperature drops. I try to think about other things such as taxes or my winter chores but I keep coming back to planting and planning.

Don't forget to submit your gardening photos to our website and if you would like to write gardening related articles for our newsletter they would be most welcome. Planning has started for the State Master Gardeners Conference in Fairbanks on March 7 and they are requesting help to plan the event. You can submit your ideas to the website: www.interiormastergardeners.org. The 2015 Exhibitor Guides will be available on April 1 on the Alaska State Fair website so if you have any questions about submitting your vegetables, flowers, special jams or art you can access it at that time.

The Food and Nutrition Service on the USDA website (fns.usda.gov) has webinars every two weeks about the Farm to School Program giving tips on getting local nutritious food to schools. You might want to check it out it is very interesting. You can also sign up for a newsletter giving you information on food and farming trends throughout the country.

Don't forget about our upcoming meeting on February 2 at the MTA conference room at 7pm.

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CHAPTER MEETINGS FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND, 7:00 PM

LOCATION: MTA CONFERENCE ROOM

480 COMMERCIAL DR., PALMER, AK

DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO ATTEND

MEETING AGENDA

- TREASURER REPORT
- MINUTES
- OLD BUSINESS
- NEW BUSINESS

TOPIC/SPEAKER:

Mat-Su Master Gardener Lois Rockcastle
will be talking about Horticultural
Therapy



PEASANTS PERSPECTIVE

By Curt Mueller, Master Gardener

We're back to gaining daylight more quickly, and it is welcome indeed. Breathes there a gardener with soul so dead that it doesn't awaken an urge to peruse seed catalogs and dream of lush gardens and flowers? The peasant thinks it is not so.

Lois Rockcastle brought many packages of tulip bulbs to our January meeting and shared them with us. These had been liberated from a big box store where they were about to be tossed into the dumpster. These bulbs had not been exposed to cold temperatures, so would require some chilling to allow them to bloom at a chosen time.

This prompted the peasant to research some specifics on vernalization and chilling requirements. Vernalization is the process of providing the cold treatment necessary for some plants to produce flowers. Among these plants are fruit trees such as apples and peaches, nut trees and spring flowering bulbs. Since our interest was in tulips, the research was directed that way.

Chilling requirements for tulips vary somewhat depending on the variety, but within the parameters given below we should be able to successfully provide the proper environment. A temperature of 32 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit and a chilling time of ten weeks or more will likely do the job. If chilling in the refrigerator it is recommended to keep the bulbs away from fruit. The vegetable bin should be OK. Fruit gives off ethylene which will harm the bulbs and probably keep them from blooming. If a potato bin is available with room for a planter, the bulbs could be potted in soil or a reasonable facsimile thereof.

In warm climates that do not provide temperatures suitable for chilling, people chill the bulbs in the refrigerator and plant out while the temperature is still cool in order to sustain a longer bloom period. Some allow the tulip plants to grow until the bulb has

been replenished and then harvest and repeat the cooling process. It is also possible to achieve two periods of flowering in the same year.

Tulips provide brilliant early color when grown outdoors in our area. They will need some protection from temperatures much below freezing. Mice or voles can decimate a planting over winter as they move about under the snow. They find the bulbs tasty and nourishing. The peasant uses quarter inch hardware cloth securely fastened to the top of a raised bed. That needs to be removed before the tulips grow through it in the spring. Since the soil temperature in a bed that is above ground level may drop well below the freezing temperature, the bed is mulched with leaves piled around it and on it with summer's pea vines utilized to hold the leaves in place. Foundation plantings at a heated building work well and may provide earlier flowering.

Many of us plant flowering annuals in the bed after the tulips have finished blooming. The tulips may not be able to properly replenish their bulbs so it is probably best to remove the spent bulbs and purchase new ones in fall. Being reasonably priced, we can select the colors we prefer and enjoy their flowers again in spring. Thanks folks.



The Hardy Amaryllis

by Wendy Wesser, Last Frontier Magazine

If you received an amaryllis bulb or two for Christmas this year did you know you can enjoy them for years to come? I tried to find out just how long an amaryllis bulb will live and found answers ranging from 10 to 75 years. They live much longer than a few months for sure. I made this discovery by accident a few years ago. After the huge showy flowers had withered away, the long green leaves of my plant were still striking and thriving with our increasing daylight—so I kept watering it. After summer began my attention was diverted outside and the amaryllis experienced some watering neglect. I moved my wilted plant to a dark corner of our cool entryway where it remained untouched for a few months. In October, when I was fall cleaning, I rediscovered the bulb. It still seemed healthy enough so I cut off the dead leaves and kept it to see if I could restart the bulb in December. I even left the bulb in the same pot and soil it came with. At the end of January I was rewarded with another set of gorgeous blooms! As it turned out, I had accidentally given my amaryllis nearly ideal conditions for it to rebloom. Who knew a little neglect and procrastination could result in such beauty?

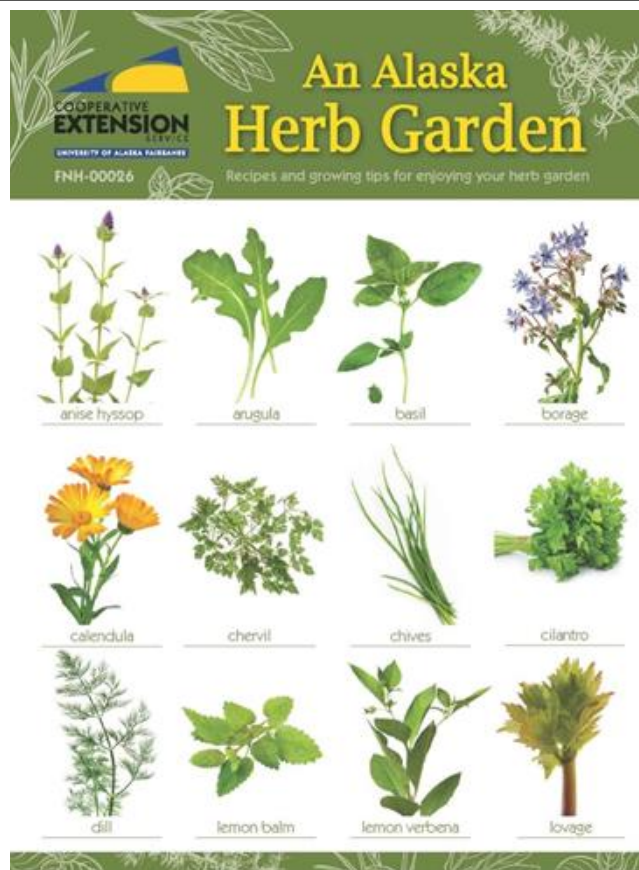
Friends of mine recently moved and gave me one of their amaryllis plants they estimated at 10 to 15 years old. Usually amaryllis bulbs are gifted in a 4 to 6 inch pot. The plant they gave me was in a 16 inch pot with multiple bulbs! It is huge! Even my grandsons noticed and commented on the beautiful gigantic blooms that towered over their heads. My friends would bring their collection of amaryllis plants up from their cool basement in mid-winter and start fertilizing them once a month. Once you figure out your plant's cycles you will easily be able to time your blooms for the month you want. I like mine to bloom anytime from January to April when I crave colorful flowers. My friends put their amaryllis plants outside in late June for most of the summer and fertilized them twice a month. In late August they brought them inside and placed them in their basement for the winter. They would give them a little water, but in their cool basement the bulbs were allowed to rest while the leaves withered. Too much water

will cause the bulbs to rot. Sometimes their amaryllis bulbs would even bloom twice a year.

To be honest, I have had trouble with pests when I've put any of my inside plants outside for the summer, so I prefer the lazier gardener's method of putting my amaryllis bulbs in a cool place inside. The important stage is once the flower is done blooming to cut off the stem, then leave the plant in a sunny location so the leaves can photosynthesize and feed the bulb before storing it in a cool place during its dormant phase. Amaryllis bulbs don't mind being in small pots so they don't need to be replanted every year. They will eventually outgrow their pots when well cared for. When you do repot them remember the top $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the bulbs should always be above the soil. Some people remove the bulbs from the soil for the dormant period, but they are fine left right in their planters. There really is a wide variety of methods for amaryllis care and different strategies work for different home situations.

Here is an example of just how hardy amaryllis plants are. Last year I received another amaryllis for Christmas to add to my collection. I left on an extended trip right after Christmas and did not take the time to plant my new bulb. When I returned home a few weeks later I opened the box and was surprised to see the poor flower stem had grown over a foot and was badly kinked up. I carefully removed the bulb, with its misshapen stalk almost ready to bloom, potted it and placed it near a window to see what would happen. Happily, within a couple days, the flower stalk was straight and a few weeks later it bloomed. You can have a 'brown thumb' and still successfully grow amaryllis. Give them a try!

If only poinsettias were as easy to keep over until the next year. I know it is possible, and I have tried, but being the impatient gardener I am, I have yet to be successful. Once I figure out a lazy gardener's method to bring out poinsettias' beauty year after year I will most definitely share. In the meantime the hardy amaryllis is my favorite plant for bringing cheery colors into our dark winter months.



The University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service has published a comprehensive Alaska guide for herb enthusiasts.

“An Alaska Herb Garden” features information about cultivating, harvesting, storing and using herbs. The 74-page guide includes color illustrations, recipes and detailed information on 25 herbs and general information on nearly 40 more.

The guide is a collaboration between Extension and the Georgeson Botanical Garden. The garden’s director, professor Pat Holloway, wrote the section about cultivating herbs, which includes research conducted by the garden and by volunteers.

The publication is dedicated to Barbara Fay, a longtime gardener who taught community herb classes in Fairbanks for more than 20 years. She worked with

Holloway on herb research at the garden and enlisted other gardeners to join her and tend the herb beds.

Fay’s notes and class materials formed the guide’s framework. Extension home economist Roxie Dinstel and two of Fay’s fellow herb enthusiasts, Virginia Damron and Marsha Munsell, provided information on preserving and storing herbs, edited the guide and tested recipes.

Holloway said the guide will be a great asset to gardeners and others interested in growing and using the herbs. She credits Fay.

“This is her idea, her baby,” she said. “She is the one who got us all riled up about herbs.”

Copies are \$15 and available at Extension district offices or by calling 1-877-520-5211.

I just got back from our first mtg on the Midsummer Garden and Art Faire. July 11th this year! We are looking for volunteers on that day to help out. We have old duffer level tasks and plenty for the younger fit crowd.

Also, Sally Koppenberg and other vendors and I have taken over the Matsu Farm mkt. as the former mkt is defunct. We are now the **Depot Farm Mkt.** and are a non-profit, locally/AK made only mkt...Mondays 12-6. We are closed for January due to renovations in the depot this month. But, we are looking for vendors now. We have a much fairer pricing structure that is vendor friendly. Jan Newman has expressed an interest in Grow Palmer working with us. We have a spot for noncommercial, community-oriented groups to set up ...garden clubs, etc.. free of charge. Sally and I want to reprise the seed swap a la the Dirt Divas. So...late Feb or early March? Any ideas? Let me know! And we are actively seeking board members and some who would like to be on a 3 person vendor application committee. We’d like some non-vendors on our board and especially that application committee to vet the apps..Feel free to pass it on!

Happy New Year,
Brooke, email: woolwood@mtaonline.net

Wasilla & Palmer Soil & Water Conservation Districts WINTER CONSERVATION SERIES III

Jan 15- April 16, 2015 • 7:00-8:30 pm • Thursdays @ Mat-Su College

SERIES GOAL: solid, practical, informative, action-oriented sessions

PREREGISTRATION: Contact ChuckKaucic: distmgr@wasillaswcd.org
or call 357-4511 between 10am - 4pm weekdays • FREE • Space is limited!

Sessions	Presenter(s)	Date
• Introduction to Alaskan Gardening	Carol Kenley	January 15
• The "Down & Dirty" on COMPOST & Soil	Jeff Smeenk	January 22
• Choosing the Right Greenhouse for Alaska	Steve Brown	January 29
• High tunnels: Compatible plantings/retrofitting	Dave Ianson	February 5
• Vegetable Production the Organic Way	Bob Shumaker	February 12
• How-To's of High Tunnels	Keith Griswold & Jeff Smeenk	February 19
• Planting for Beauty & Wildlife	Julie Riley	February 26
• Gardening with MOOSE - How to enjoy both Moose and Gardens together	Rosa Meehan	March 5
• ATV Salmon Stream Crossings: the Intersection of Machines & Man	Chuck Kaucic	March 12
• Wild Edible & Medicinal Plants	Rachel Bobka	March 19
• 3 W's: Wallin's Wonderful Worms	Paul & Sue Wallin	March 26
• Intro to Alaskan Gardening	Carol Kenley	April 9
• Tree Care, Maintenance & Pruning	Steve O'Sullivan	April 16

WSWCD is a tax exempt advisory conservation organization... serving neighbors since 1948!

Need something
to while away
the rest of the
winter?
Here are a few
upcoming
classes hosted
by some fine
local
organizations!

Let's Get Growing!
Good Earth Garden School's
Courses for 2015

To Register: Go to
www.goodearthgardenschool.com
Questions?
Email information@goodearthgardenschool.com

Organic Gardening:

The Comprehensive Growers' Course
5 Friday evenings Feb 20-Mar 27 + field trip

Start Your Own Seeds

I supply all the materials for you to sow 2 flats
Weds March 11

How To Grow Organic & Nutrient-Dense Veggies

Thurs March 12

Season Extension & High Tunnels

--Grower Training

3 Mondays: March 16, 23, 30

Basic Soil Fertility:

Organic Amendments for Powerhouse Soil

Fri April 3

Garden Links

Alaska Botanical Garden

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

Alaska Community Agriculture

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

Arbor Day Foundation

www.arborday.org

Alaska Natural Heritage Program – Botany

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

Alaska Garden Clubs

<http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org>

Alaska Grown Source Book (online)

<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 Orchid Society

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

Cooperative Extension Service, Palmer

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

Eat Local Alaska

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

Good Earth Garden School

<http://ellenvandevisse.com/>

Integrated Pest Management Program

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

Junior Master Gardeners

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

Landscape Plants for Alaska

www.alaskaplants.org

Local Alaskan Plants Clearinghouse

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

Mat-Su Borough Rain Garden Program

<http://www.matsugov.us/raingardens>

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/>

Sustainable Agriculture – UAF***NEW***

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/ah/sare/>

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!

BOARD MEMBER OPENING

The position of Club Secretary is still open. The job involves taking minutes at meetings and attending board meetings. If you are interested, please contact Rhonda Bowman for further details and information.



Club Membership

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

Membership forms are available to download on the club's website, www.matsumastergardeners.com

thank you

CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Rhonda Bowman	746-2948
Co-VP	Curt Mueller	745-6144
Co-VP	Hally Truelove	376-0909
Secretary:	Vacant	
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: kdblaylock@ak.net

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2015

Feb 2, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Horticulture Therapy
Feb 7, Palmer, Seed swap, 1pm at Spring Creek Farm

<https://facebook.com/springcreekfarmalaska>

Feb 21, Palmer, Alaska Produce Growers Conference,

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

MARCH 2015 AND BEYOND

Mar 2 Palmer, MMG Mtg, Seed Swap

Mar 3-5, Fairbanks, 11th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference,

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/ah/sare/conference/>

Mar 7, Fairbanks, State Master Gardener Conference,

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

Apr 6, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Apr 10-11, Anchorage, Alaska Botanical Garden's Spring Conference,

<http://alaskabg.org/>

May 4, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

May 30, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale (tentative)

Jun 3, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Palmer Library Planting

June 22-24, Anchorage, Alaskan Plants as Food and Medicine Symposium,

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

Jul 11, Palmer, Midsummer Garden and Art Faire, <http://www.palmergardenandart.org/>

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 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.

Deadline for submission of articles and info:
20th day of each month ~~ Thank you~~



February 2015



Like us on
Facebook

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

MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S CLUB
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