



President's Patch

By President Deb Blaylock

Finally! The days are growing longer, and we slowly but surely are gaining precious minutes of sunshine! According to one online source, we start January with 5 hours and 34 minutes of daylight and end it with 7 hours and 45 minutes! It isn't until March that we go over 12 hours a day. Those 12 hours will make a huge difference and the days of spring thaw will follow in April and May. Mother Nature is truly wonderful!

I plan to start my seed inventory shortly after Christmas Day. I've already got a wish list going on Pinterest for things I saw last year that others grow, and I want to try. For those who don't already have a stack of seed catalogs, page 3 has a list of favorite seed companies where you can order catalogs or peruse their webpages for seeds or plants. I always start looking under the new varieties section and then work my way through the different species. For beginner gardeners – look for key terms such as cold tolerant or long day varieties. Also, with warm weather crops such as corn, tomatoes, and peppers, look for varieties with the shortest number of days to harvest or maturity.

We anticipate our next few meetings will be held using the Zoom online meeting platform. If you're having problems logging in with Zoom, send an email to matsumastergardeners@gmail.com and we will try and find someone who can help you out. We can only guess what the future will hold but have our fingers crossed that our "old normal" will soon return. We will do our best to round up interesting and helpful guest speakers at our upcoming meetings. In the meantime, if you have garden questions, you can always shoot us an email or join one of our Facebook groups.

Our 2021 membership is open and if you haven't renewed, please consider doing so by January 15th as that is the deadline for having your name published in our annual membership directory. I've been trying to send out emails to folks who have renewed. If you

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| President's Patch | 1 |
| Next Meeting | 1 |
| Peasant's Perspective | 2,5 |
| Favorite Seed Companies or Catalogs | 3 |
| The Last Tomato | 4 |
| Organic Garden Course Info | 5 |
| Garden Links | 6 |
| Contacts | 7 |
| Calendar of Events | 7 |

GENERAL MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY, JAN 4TH, 2020, 7 P.M.

LOCATION: ONLINE ZOOM PRESENTATION

BUSINESS MEETING AT 7 P.M.

SPEAKER/TOPIC

JAIME RODRIGUEZ WILL DO A SLIDE PRESENTATION CALLED "THE WILDFLOWERS OF HATCHER PASS." JAIME IS THE OWNER OF ALPINE GARDEN NURSERY ON HYER ROAD. HE IS EXTREMELY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT PLANTS IN GENERAL, BUT ROCK GARDEN PLANTS ARE HIS SPECIALTY. YOU WILL FIND THAT HE IS ALSO A GOOD PHOTOGRAPHER!

ZOOM MEETING INFORMATION WILL BE EMAILED OUT AS SOON AS ITS AVAILABLE.

renew online, you should receive an email with a copy of your membership application. We appreciate each and every member. A quick thanks to David McCorkell for his great article. Wishing you all a VERY Happy New Year!

PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE: BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

Photo submitted by the author

This being written on the long-awaited turning point of the winter solstice, we now look forward to six months of gaining daylight. Our newspaper (on 12/21/2020), says we gain one second today. Wow!

To the peasant, the winter solstice should really be the beginning of the new year, but anyway January first is close enough. The peasant has selected New Year's Day as the day to seed tomatoes and has done so for a number of years. Tomatoes are started in the house and moved to the greenhouse in mid-February. By that time, we are getting more daylight and with luck the temperatures are beginning to moderate a little. We shoot for some ripe tomatoes by May. Greenhouse temperatures are kept at a cool 55F to better accommodate other plants that are being started, so that tends to slow down development of the tomato plants. They'd like a balmy temperature in the 70-to-80-degree range. At any rate, keeping that high a temperature would require more costly heating.

The peasant has attempted to mitigate heating cost by installing a row of water-filled barrels which are exposed to the low angle sunlight we experience in mid-winter. The idea is for the water to be warmed by sunlight during the day and subsequently giving off some heat during nighttime. The north side of the greenhouse is insulated with a material faced with shiny aluminum foil to help distribute light inside. The south slope of the structure is a long slope so as to capture more of the light and heat from the sun. A layer of clear vinyl on the inside with a layer of Sun-Tuff glazing material on the outside creates an insulating space. The whole structure is built on a fairly steep south-facing slope, which is an advantage in that it allows for the long slope to the south on the greenhouse and also allows

for varying levels inside so one shelf doesn't shade the next. The north side of the greenhouse is well protected from winds by heavy woods.

By early March, the greenhouse exhaust fan is put into use as inside temperatures can quickly climb to 90F or warmer. Daytime temperatures are regulated to 75F. The cooler nighttime temperatures at 55F keep plants that need cooler temperatures from stretching out too much. Most of the vegetable and flower plants do best with the cool night temperatures.

Sun-Tuff is a trademark brand name for a transparent polycarbonate which transmits light well and is tolerant of sub-zero temperatures. The peasant has used translucent fiberglass in the past but has observed that even the best grades darken after a few years and do not transmit light well. The polycarbonate material is still clear after 20 years of use. It is more expensive but worth the extra cost. The south slope of the greenhouse is such that sunlight at the equinox is at right angles to the light gathering material.

Our greenhouse is heated using natural gas. The system uses a water heater and zone valves and a circulating pump for separate systems. A perimeter system using finned radiators is on one zone and is controlled by thermostat. There is a concrete slab on about a third of the structure. There is a series of loops of copper pipe laid in sand over foam insulation and under the concrete. This operates on a second zone and temperature is controlled by a probe in the concrete. Tomato plants are grown on the slab which is heated to 75F. This helps to mitigate the cooler air temperatures, especially once the tomato plants have formed foliage heavy enough to trap the heat.

(Continued on page 5)

Favorite Seed Companies or Catalogs

Here's a list of some our favorite seed companies and catalogs in no particular order:

- Johnny's Selected Seeds: <https://www.johnnyseeds.com/>
- Victory Seeds: <https://www.victoryseeds.com/>
- Territorial Seed Company: <http://www.territorialseed.com/>
- Fedco Seeds: <https://www.fedcoseeds.com/>
- Pinetree Garden Seeds: <https://www.superseeds.com/>
- Seeds and Soil Farm - Palmer (Alaska company): <https://seedsandsoilorganics.com/>
- Best Cool Seeds aka Denali Seed Company (Founded in Alaska by an Alaskan): <https://www.bestcoolseeds.com/>
- Foundroot (Alaska company): <https://www.foundroot.com/>
- Veseys (Canada & US): <https://www.veseys.com/>
- Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds: <https://www.rareseeds.com/>
- Richters Herbs: <https://www.richters.com/>
- Row 7 Seed Company: <https://www.row7seeds.com/>
- High Mowing Organic Seeds: <https://www.highmowingseeds.com/>
- Strictly Medicinal Seeds: <https://strictlymedicinalseeds.com/>
- Kitazawa Seed Company: <https://www.kitazawaseed.com/>
- Ohio Heirloom Seeds: <https://ohioheirloomseeds.com/>
- Renee's Garden Seeds: <https://www.reneesgarden.com/>
- Renaissance Farms: <https://www.renaissancefarms.org/>
- Eden Brothers: <https://www.edenbrothers.com/>
- Seed Savers Exchange Heirloom Seeds: <https://www.seedsavers.org/>
- Burpee: <https://www.burpee.com/>
- Park Seed Company: <https://parkseed.com/>
- Ed Hume Garden Seeds: <https://www.humeseeds.com/>
- Stokes Seeds: <https://www.stokeseeds.com/us/>
- Osborne Quality Seeds: <https://www.osborneseed.com/>
- Adaptive Seeds: <https://www.adaptiveseeds.com/>
- Sow True Seed: <https://sowtrueseed.com/>
- Turtle Tree Seed: <https://turtletreeseed.org/>
- Hudson Valley Seed Co: <https://hudsonvalleyseed.com/>
- Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply: <https://www.groworganic.com/>

Is your favorite seed catalog or company missing from the list? Send the business name and website to matumastergardeners@gmail.com and we'll add it to our list!

THE LAST TOMATO BY DAVID MCCORKELL, MASTER GARDENER

Photo submitted by the author

I asked would you like a salad for lunch, and she said sure. As I prepared our salads, I noticed that this was our last tomato from our greenhouse for 2020. That was December 4th, almost exactly 2 months after I had to take in my tomatoes from the greenhouse due to an early, cold snap.

Back in October, I found 3 fruit boxes, some newspapers and went to the greenhouse to take care of the annual "closing of the greenhouse." It is normally a sad time, the vines are usually struggling against the cool evenings, but the season requires an end to the outside growing time. Most of the tomatoes were big, some baseball size, some smaller like golf balls, but they were green and hard. I proceeded to load a layer into the box, then covered it with paper to start the next layer. I get 3 layers that way. I ended up with about 60 pounds of tomatoes that I hauled out to our heated garage.

This process worked well this year. Every few days I would go out to the garage, unwrap the ripest box and bring in a new bowl of red tomatoes. It was like opening Christmas gifts every few days! I love home-grown tomatoes and often had 2 or 3 a day. Box by box, we used them up until December 4th.

Due to COVID I was home every day this past growing season, every single day. As tiring as that was, it works well with a greenhouse where you need to manage the watering and the ventilation constantly. Every single day, I tended the plants, no vacation for me. I had a bumper crop of Sun Gold; every day I would bring in a bowl full and my wife would snack on them constantly, her favorite. The ones that were green in October tended to be the longer season, determinate plants that produce a lot of green tomatoes all

about the time we are looking at a hard frost here in Alaska.

Now I must switch to buying tomatoes from the grocery store. They don't compare, but I have a habit of a salad daily. Soon, after the holidays, I will start looking at the seed catalogs, shifting gears, talking myself into new tomato seeds to try. Less is more; every year I have planted fewer plants and still get the same or better output. 2021 will be year 4 on my quest to learn more about growing in my greenhouse in Alaska!

And I think eating home-grown tomatoes in December in Alaska was pretty cool!



(Continued from page 2)

The slab works well for germination and also for starting plants such as winter squash and cucumbers, which like warmth.

A ceiling fan runs continuously to create air movement to all parts of the greenhouse, thereby helping prevent mold and mildew on plants. The exhaust fan, when it runs, creates enough air movement to move the tomato plants and pollinate them.

The greenhouse and heating and cooling systems work well for starting and growing plants. Sufficient light and heat are needed to grow plants successfully. The peasant has developed these ideas over the years and finds a winter greenhouse a pleasant wintertime environment. The designing was done in such a way as to save on heating costs and not overly use fossil fuels, working with nature as much as possible. Design and construction, including mechanical aspects, were done by the peasant, using information from several sources. There are some tradeoffs.

Perhaps you may find some usable ideas in all this. Happy holidays and a prosperous new year.

Thanks, folks.



This photo is not current but is to show some features of the Mueller greenhouse. The tomato plants are shown on the heated concrete slab and will be spaced on the slab later. The insulated material with reflective foil is shown on the north side. The heat sink drums are shown with the ends painted with a flat black for heat absorption and a plant shelf above them. The exhaust fan at upper left is boxed so a cover can be placed over it at night to prevent heat escaping. The drums collect solar heat directly from the sun and also heat from the air during increased daytime temperatures. They give off heat at night and are good insurance for power failures. Wiring is done so the heating system can operate from a generator. The photo was taken in early March.

Happy
Holidays



Organic Gardening

The Six-Session Comprehensive Course

Mat-Su College UAA Six Fridays + optional Field Trip

Agri 138 section 35571 -afternoons 1:30pm to 4:00pm, or
Agri 138 section 35572 -evenings 6:00pm to 8:30pm

Six sessions, 15 hrs, 1 credit
Fridays Jan 29, Feb 5, 12, 21, 26, & March 5, 2021
Optional Field trip on Friday April 2nd from 3pm to 6pm

Learn how to:

- Fertilize organically
- Build powerhouse soil
- Manage pests & weeds non-toxically
- Pack nutrient density into your food
- Compost successfully



To Register:

1 credit, audit, or Senior Waiver

Mat Su College - Unless you are a full time student, it is easiest to register

either by stopping by or by calling **907-745-9746**

Tuition plus all fees \$275. Might you qualify for Senior Waiver status? Call 745 9746.

Once a year, I offer

this foundational training. You go home with an armload of practical knowledge to grow delicious vegetables, fruits, flowers, herbs, & grains on any scale of production. You'll learn how to put all the parts of sustainable growing together. If you're ready to grow more food organically, this is the comprehensive course to take. Come join the fun! -instructor Ellen Vande Vosse
Questions? Also see www.GoodEarthGardenSchool.com

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://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

<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/>



*Happy New Year
2021*

CLUB CONTACT INFO

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| President: | Deb Blaylock | 746-6045/kdblalock@ak.net |
| Vice President: | Kristina Tornqvist | 797-6393 |
| Secretary: | Dorte Mobley | 232-5422 |
| Treasurer: | Cathy Crew | 632-4401 |
| Member at Large: | Sue Glenn | 671-0252 |

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

JANUARY 2021 AND BEYOND

Jan 4, Zoom Presentation, MMGA meeting, Jaime Rodriguez, The Wildflowers of Hatcher Pass

Jan 29 – Mar 5, Palmer, Good Earth Garden School Organic Gardening course, <https://ellenvandevisse.com/events/>

Feb 1, Palmer, MMGA meeting, TBD

Mar 1, Palmer, MMGA meeting, TBD

Mar 4-5, Via Zoom, 2021 ABG Virtual Spring Garden Conference, <https://www.alaskabg.org/>

Apr 5, Palmer, MMGA meeting, TBD

May 3, Palmer, MMGA meeting, TBD

Jun 5, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale

Jun 14, Palmer, Palmer Library Planting

May/Jun TBD, Palmer, Palmer Veterans and Pioneers Home Planting

Jul/Aug, Member-Only Summer Garden Tour(s)

Aug 26 – Sep 6, Palmer, Alaska State Fair

Aug 28, Palmer, Alaska State Fair Parade

Sep 13, Palmer, MMGA meeting, TBD

Oct 4, Palmer, MMGA meeting TBD

Nov 1, Palmer, Annual MMGA meeting, TBD

Dec 6, 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, 2021 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--



January 2021



Like us on
Facebook

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

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

