



MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

May 2016



President's Patch By Rhonda Bowman, President

There is a lot of emphasis on the consumption of local foods. There are many movements that embrace knowing where your food originates. Even restaurants have now chosen to grow herbs and sometimes vegetables right on the premises or make a daily visit to local farmer's markets in their area. We are bombarded daily by messages about eating healthier. More people than ever have created a little patch of vegetables for their families to eat on a daily basis. Lots of kitchens now have fresh herbs in pots to use on a daily basis. This trend is not lost on advertisers who exploit our need for healthier items. Although the FDA does not have a definition or regulations set up for the term "natural," it is listed in over \$41 billion worth of groceries that are sold each year. If you feel there should be help to consumers to navigate this term, then you can make comments until May 10, 2016 by going to <http://www.regulations.gov> and inputting FDA-2014-N-1207 in the search box.

I attended the State Master Gardeners Conference held in Anchorage on April 16, and it was an action-packed day. The theme was "Grow Your Own from the Soil Up." The speakers were interesting and shared their life gardening experiences throughout the day. They did have two sessions going on at the same time and it was hard to choose which one to attend. There was a large variety of items available at the Silent Auction and the Garden Market had many vendors. Next year will be the Mat-Su Master Gardeners turn to host this event in Palmer and we have a lot to live up to. I loved the center pieces with the use of fruits, vegetables and flowers in unique ways.

We have an action-packed summer ahead of us with our Annual Plant Sale and various plots to plant at the Palmer Library, Experiment Farm and the Pioneer Home, in addition to our own flowers and vegetables!

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CHAPTER MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 2ND, 7:00 PM

LOCATION: MATANUSKA TELEPHONE COMPANY (MTA) BUILDING, CONFERENCE ROOM (IN THE BASEMENT), PALMER, AK

DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO ATTEND

MEETING AGENDA

- **TREASURER REPORT**
- **MINUTES**
- **OLD BUSINESS**
- **NEW BUSINESS**

TOPIC/SPEAKER:

KEVIN FOCHS, ALASKA STATE FFA DIRECTOR

PRESENTATION ON THE FFA PROGRAM AND POTENTIAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANTS

GREG KALAL WILL HAVE SEED POTATOES READY FOR PICK UP IF YOU ORDERED FROM HIM AT THE MEETING

LABELS FOR THE PLANT SALE WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PICK-UP

PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE: BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

Photos by the author

No complaints on the weather, but a good rain would surely be a boon to plant life. Sooner or later we'll break out of the cycle that we've been in. Was it Mark Twain who said, "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it?" Maybe it was Will Rogers. A couple of witty observers of the human condition, those two.

There is still time to seed cucumbers and squash; after all it is still April. The peasant would like to share some thoughts and experiences on these warmth-loving plants.

Success in germinating these crops will certainly be enhanced by using bottom heat. The peasant has also found that excessive moisture is not beneficial and tends to cause the seed to rot before it sprouts. Shallow planting also helps, although the seed must be well covered. It works well to put three seeds into a pot, thinning to one plant later. Allowing the plants to form a good mass of roots before moving to a larger container makes transplanting easier.

The peasant grows winter squash in five-gallon plastic bags and cucumbers in two-gallon bags for bush type varieties and three-gallon bags for full size plants such as Northern Pickling. Certainly pots of a comparable size work well, as does planting in beds. Plastic bags are inexpensive and may be reused in succeeding years.

Winter squash varieties favored by the peasant are Cha-Cha and Confection. These produce small fruit of a couple of pounds. They are very tasty and store well. This year seed for Confection was not to be found but had been replaced by Winter Sweet.

Greenhouse squash will need to be hand pollinated by brushing pollen from male flowers onto the stigma of the female flower. The female flower is readily recognizable by a forming fruit at the base of the flower. Pollen will be visible on the

anthers of the male flower. Simply pick the male flower at the base of the stem, remove the petals, then rub the pollen onto the stigma of the female flower, no paintbrush needed. This style of pollination has been referred to as "pimping for pumpkins."

Varieties of cucumbers that have done well in the greenhouse are Katrina, Excelsior, and Diva. These are parthenocarpic and do not need pollination. Varieties that require pollination are grown in an automated cold frame which opens with temperature rise to admit pollinators. Varieties grown in the cold frame are Bush Pickle, Bush Champion, and Northern Pickling. Bush Pickle is an amazing very small plant which produces sizable cucumbers. Bush Champion is a somewhat larger plant which produces large slicers.

Please forgive the peasant for wishing for a rain.

Thanks folks.



Squash and cucumber seedlings.

GARBAGE FOR YOUR GARDEN

LAURA EMERSON, 907.733.4303, ALASKAUU1@GMAIL.COM

Whether you are a wholly organic gardener or not, your kitchen produces gallons of garbage that your yard would love. Why toss out free plant food? Besides, some gardeners may save time and money on purchased fertilizers, bug sprays, and trash services.

I have not had good luck with compost piles – they just seem to attract voles and are hard for me to turn. Nevertheless, almost every piece of leftover food that I cannot feed to our ducks, chickens, and rabbits goes into the gardens.

TECHNIQUE

Throughout the year, I keep a small plastic container behind my kitchen trash can. Every day, I toss into it garbage that my animals won't eat, like coffee grounds, banana peels, onion and garlic paper, slimy vegetables, and any citrus peels that we do not save for other purposes (like flavoring my husband's home brewed chimay). Although I occasionally grind up egg shells for the birds (to strengthen their shell development), most calcium-rich egg shells are also destined for the gardens.

It is certainly possible to segregate items for particular chemical and physical benefits, and I do some of that in the summer (see citrus peels, below). But during the winter, I simply dump a few days' accumulations into a 5-gallon lidded bucket stored on the back porch. (Our household of two adults fills the can in 3 months.) In prior years, I have just trenched the bulky garbage into raised bed gardens, but I have been surprised that many components - even egg shells! - did not degrade after a year, and the large pieces attracted birds, squirrels, and voles. So this year, when the weather warmed up in late March, I minced the

garbage in a Cuisinart (which has the added benefit of reducing the volume).

During the summer of course, because of bears, I do not store any food/garbage outside. Instead, I make a "garbage slushy" once a week from the kitchen container and pour it into my compost tea or around established plants.

BENEFITS

COFFEE GROUNDS: Most of us know that coffee is acidic, so I used to spread the coffee grounds only around potato and berry plants. (In fact, the Alaska Botanical Garden plants potatoes in plots filled ONLY with coffee grounds!) However, I recently read an Oregon State University paper that describes the used grounds as nearly neutral, so this year, I will spread it anywhere, since it improves the soil tilth, as well as delivering potassium, magnesium, and phosphorous. I till my winter accumulation into my earliest gardens (in the greenhouse), and subsequently pour smaller volumes around established plants.

EGG SHELLS: The ground-up egg shells deliver calcium to deter end rot in tomatoes and peppers and heat stress, black spot, brown spot, and hollow heart in potatoes. I always pour some pulverized pieces into the holes or pots of these plants. In addition, sprinkled around tender young plants, the sharp shell pieces can discourage snails and slugs from approaching. (Various studies indicate that adding the calcium at the root level, and at hilling, confer different sorts of advantages, for example, to the tuber development or to the skin of the potato.

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MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER 4/4/16 MEETING MINUTES

The April 4, 2016 meeting of the Mat-Su Master Gardeners convened with 16 members present.

It was announced that the April Master Gardener Conference registration is closed because it is full.

The Plant Sale is June 4. It was discussed and voted to keep the club's share of proceeds at 20 percent.

The Pioneer Home bed repair planning is completed. The Repair Committee was Curt, Mike, Wayne, Chuck, Ken, and Edie. The Planting Committee is Joan, Deb, Cathy, Carolyn, Phyllis, and Rhonda. The plants have been ordered for Spring planting.

The Palmer Public Library bed planting is scheduled for June 6, 2016.

Submitted by Secretary Joan Redlin

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We can always use help in planting for those who need their 40 hours to obtain their certification to be a Master Gardener. Also, "Grow Palmer" will need lots of help moving their beds to a new location this year. You may reach them on Facebook if you want to help out.

Don't miss our next meeting on May 2 at 7 p.m. at the MTA conference room.

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BANANA and CITRUS PEELS: Aphids, ticks, fleas, and ants are repelled by banana peels and citrus peels, both of which provide additional chemical benefits below ground, too: nitrogen, potassium, calcium, sulfur, phosphorus, magnesium, and sodium in a convenient, quickly bio-degradable package. The banana peel is recommended at root level. The d-limonene in citrus peels destroys the waxy coating of the aforementioned critters that touch it, killing them. Thus citrus is better laid on the surface of the garden, or even sliced and wrapped around vulnerable stems.

NUT SHELLS: Unsalted nut shells help aerate soil.

ONIONS AND GARLIC PAPER/PIECES: Onions and garlic can be boiled in a solution and sprayed on plants as an insecticide. Burying pieces (or planting them among your other vegetables) may confer similar benefits. In any case, I certainly generate a lot of skins, ends, and gunky pieces throughout the year - all go in the garden.

For me, kitchen garbage is a convenient resource for my gardens, collected and saved, even in winter.

Note: Laura is a remote member of the Mat Su Master Gardeners Association. She lives 42 miles from the nearest road, at the base of Mt. Susitna.



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

<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 Pioneer Fruit Growers Association

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

Alaska Plant Materials Center

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

Alaska Rhodiola Products Cooperative

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

Alaska Rock Garden Society

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

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.jmgkids.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

<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 Georgeson Botanical Garden

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

UAF CES Citizen Pest Monitoring Portal

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

UAF School of Natural Resources ***New***

<http://www.uaf.edu/snre/>

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

The club is desperately in need of someone to coordinate speakers for our meetings.

We need a volunteer coordinator to track the many volunteer opportunities we have this summer. Duties would be to coordinate with volunteers and create an Excel spreadsheet to track volunteers. This will be posted on the webpage. Please contact Rhonda if interested.

PLANT SALE INFO

Labels will be available at the May 2nd Meeting. Plant sale instructions are on the webpage.

GK "RAISING IT UP FARM" SEED POTATOES

If you ordered seed potatoes from Greg Kalal, he will have them available for pick-up at the May 2 meeting.

CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Rhonda Bowman	746-2948
Co-VP	Curt Mueller	745-6144
Co-VP	Hally Truelove	376-0909
Secretary:	Joan Redlin	206-604-4676
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: kdblalock@ak.net

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY 2016

May 2, Palmer, MMG Mtg, FFA Presentation
May 16, Alaska Arbor Day
May 28, Wasilla, Valley Garden Club Plant Sale
May 30, Memorial Day
May - TBD Planting Date for the Pioneer Home - All Hands on Deck!!

JUNE 2016 AND BEYOND

Jun 4, Palmer, MMGA Annual Plant Sale
Jun 6, Palmer, Palmer Library Planter Planting
Jul 9, Palmer, Midsummer Garden and Art Faire, <http://palmergardenandart.org/>
Jul 11, Palmer, Spring Creek Farm Tour, 4 p.m.
Aug 1, TBD, MMG Mtg, TBD
Aug 25 - Sep 5, Palmer, Alaska State Fair
Sep 12, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
Oct 3, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
Nov 7, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
Dec 5, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Christmas Party

Please let Rhonda know if you have any ideas for future meeting topics. Members are welcome to offer to speak or reach out to speakers of interest to the club's membership. The club would welcome a speaker coordinator - if interested contact Rhonda. Our club is only as good as we the members make it!

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

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--



May 2016



Like us on
Facebook

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Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

**MAT-SU MASTER GARDENERS
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