



May 2023



President's Patch

By President Kevin Johnson

May will be here shortly, and I am still throwing snow in my front yard into the driveway and street. I have found that I do not have to take the entire pile away, just take the top two or three inches, exposing the soft snow underneath which melts a lot quicker. My back appreciates it GREATLY. This works great for the snow that the city/borough has thrown into our yard and other that has fallen off the roof. I have also worked the snow off our flower beds, looking for the early plants to emerge in a couple of weeks. The snow on the side of our house is mostly all gone, as it is a rock garden with patches of bushes and flowers throughout. The black paper works well for melting snow. With Facebook, I have seen people post their flowers are beginning to sprout.

My experiment of growing an avocado, in a zip lock bag, is progressing. I have one seed with the worms, no bag and they are helping it along. The other seed is placed in the bag with water. It is time to plant them.

The last membership meeting was great, with Carol from EweTopia Garden Farm demonstrating on making hanging baskets. Great information about petunias that you do not have to deadhead, and what to look for when arranging. EweTopia Farms is located in the Butte, a fantastic place for plants, trees, and advice.

Coming up before we know it will be our annual plant sale. The sale is on Saturday, June 3. It will be located at the Palmer Pavilion in downtown Palmer, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. From past experience, ARRIVE EARLY, as by 2:00, many members have started to clean up, since they have sold out.

Two community service projects we have are cleaning up the beds and planting flowers at the Palmer Library and Pioneers Home. After discussion with the membership, we will not be doing our annual planting at the library. This winter the roof collapsed on part of the structure and is cordoned off.

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REGULAR MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

MAY 1ST, 2023, 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

MATANUSKA EXPERIMENT FARM AND EXTENSION
CENTER, KERTTULA HALL, "BLUE ROOM"
1509 S GEORGESON DR, PALMER

AGENDA

7:00 TO 7:30 BUSINESS MEETING

7:30 GUEST SPEAKER

ELLEN VANDEVISSE, GOOD EARTH GARDEN SCHOOL
"WHAT'S BIOCHAR ALL ABOUT?"

PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE: BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY THE AUTHOR

Whenever Ma Nature is ready, the peasant is ready - for new leaves, robins, rhubarb, primroses, dandelions, bluebells, finches, juncos, apple and cherry blossoms, hoes, and lawnmowers. The perennial flower bed still has six feet of winter on it where it was blown off the driveway to protect the plants from the cold. Today, April 20, we are supposed to reach 50 degrees F for the first time since October. Ah, we have hope. Each day the sun is higher; each day is longer. It is time to break.

Speaking of perennials brings up thoughts of the moss campion that one can find on Lazy Mountain. It thrives in gravelly soil on high ridges exposed to winter winds that remove the snow and expose the plants themselves to outrageous fortune. They not only survive but thrive to produce a mass of pink flowers that cover the entire plant in due season. After the bloom period come the seeds and lovely mosslike evergreen foliage. Hardiness and beauty are combined. Some seed can be gathered in season and a plant started for your perennial bed, though it may never achieve the beauty of its mountain setting.

Indeed, we have much to look forward to. We can handle a little delay as we anticipate what spring and summer will bring.

The peasant is expecting to receive some bareroot Evans cherry trees any day. They will be started in containers and grown until they are well rooted and ready for transplanting to Alaskan soil. Bareroot stock is a good way to acquire desirable fruit trees, shrubs, and other plants at a reasonable cost. If you ask for delivery in mid-April and plant them immediately in containers when they arrive, they will have a full season to get acclimated to our seasons.

Thanks, folks. May you have a rewarding summer.



The tomato variety in this photo is Fourth of July. It is small to medium in size, early and prolific. It was seeded on January 12th along with our other greenhouse varieties. It should begin ripening in a couple of weeks. Marge's hand holding back the foliage indicates fruit size. Other favorite tomatoes we grow are Sungold, Red October, and New Girl. Sungold is a golden cherry type, very sweet and great to eat off the vine. It suckers heavily and needs to be kept under control. Red October is a fairly large type and New Girl is medium-sized. On trial are Trust and Cobra. An excellent outdoor variety is Polar Baby. They were developed in Alaska and are well adapted to our summers, producing well even in cool rainy years. We seeded those on March 20th.

Continued from front page.

We are still looking for members at our booth for the Midsummer Garden & Art Faire. Sue Glenn is heading up this committee and she will have a sign-up sheet for volunteers. This takes place in downtown Palmer on Saturday, July 8. There is great information at all the booths.

Memberships keep coming in!! Keep them coming.

Remember meetings are being held at the Matanuska Experiment Farm near the hospital on Trunk Road, on the first Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

May Guest Speaker Introduction

What's Biochar All About?

Biochar is a charcoal for agriculture that, once inoculated and activated, is a rich source of compost and beneficial microbes. Compost lasts a season; biochar lasts for decades compared to compost. Biochar serves to drought-proof your soil and provide a steady, rich, diverse bank of valuable beneficial soil food web workers.

Come learn:

- –what it is
- –how to activate it
- –why you want this amendment



Ellen Vande Visse, MS, somewhere in her shady past, served as Environmental Education Consultant in West Michigan. Since 1987 in Alaska, she has operated Good Earth Gardens as a market garden, a CSA, a demo garden, and now a home garden. Ellen is especially fond of all things decaying and is known in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley as The Compost Queen. She is known to mysteriously brew compost tea for farmers, stores, and markets. She provides consultations on eco-agriculture growing systems (when she is not playing in her multiple bins of red wiggler worms).

ATTENTION
Thrifty Gardeners
May 6th and 7th
9 am—5 pm
Larsen's Nursery is selling off 40 years
of accumulated gardening supplies!!

Pots		Bamboo
Flats &		Stakes
Inserts		Custom
Vases		Cedar
Fencing		Planters
Material		Building
Land-		Materials
Scape		Tomato
Fabrics		Cages

... and much more!!!
CASH ONLY
All proceeds will benefit MY House, a local charity
working to end homelessness in the MatSu.
5000 W. Lone Duck Trail
Call 907-671-7766 for details & directions

2023 Standing Committees

- Monthly Newsletter - Deb Blaylock
- Website Manager - Eva Cohnen-Brown
- Guest speakers - Deb Blaylock
- Membership Directory - Kristina Tornqvist
- Rebarchek Farm Project - Isaac Vaughan
- Annual Plant Sale - Dorte Mobley
- Palmer Library & Pioneer Home planting - Dorte Mobley
- Midsummer Garden & Art Faire - Sue Glenn
- Summer Garden Tours - Dorte Mobley
- Alaska State Fair Special Awards - Deb Blaylock
- State Fair Parade - Vacant
- Nominations Committee - Vacant
- 2023 Christmas Party- Vacant

A few hours of your time will help all the committees meet their goals. Have questions or want to volunteer? Send us an email at matsumastergardeners@gmail.com.

Thank you!

CONTAINER IDEAS

BY ISAAC VAUGHAN, MASTER GARDENER

As we progress into the growing season, planters become more of a scarcity...especially when more seedlings sprout than anticipated. Fortunately, plants are not too fussy about what they are growing in. I included a few ideas I have come across and came up with to keep things growing without spending too much money. Hopefully, these ideas will be helpful to y'all.

Community pots: The most economical way to use wide, shallow containers; seedlings or cuttings of the same species are grouped together in one container. This works well for small, slow-growing seedlings. Anything too large will quickly outgrow this setting.

Repurposed food tubs: Depending on the size, these can be used as community pots or otherwise. I have used yogurt cups, sour cream tubs, and cut-off milk cartons in the past. This is an area where you can get creative, but make sure to punch drainage holes.

Aluminum pans: These are really nice seedling trays, as they are cheap (when salvaged), can be straightened out and reused, and are of a pretty uniform size.

Toilet paper tubes: Living with eight siblings, these are never in short supply. I have found the easiest ways to use these as a temporary planter are to 1.) Stand as many as you can fit upright in a tray or dish (the dish will need to be sacrificed for a few months...double check that your housemates will not mind!), and 2.) Buckle one end of the tube halfway inward, as shown in the included picture. There are many ways of cutting and folding, but these two methods work well enough for me. Note: Even though the TP planters are biodegradable, they take

a while to fully break down and do not add much worthwhile to the soil.

Egg cartons: These work well as cell-packs and are practically free. They do lose a lot of strength when they get wet, though.

Buckets: The ubiquitous 5-gallon buckets make sturdy, semi-long-term homes for perennials and young trees and shrubs. The slightly smaller, square 4-gallon kitty litter buckets may be more readily available to some and work just as well. Again, make sure they have proper drainage.

Grocery bags: The newer, more sturdy plastic bags are nice for this purpose, but by no means long-term. UV rays from sunshine will quickly degrade the plastic, causing it to stiffen and crack. However, it makes a good guest house for bare root or B&B plants whose permanent home has not been prepared. Once the plastic bag is filled with soil, it should hold its shape pretty well.

Whether these ideas seem to you to be redneck or ingenious, the adage still holds true: Necessity is the mother of invention (either that or there is more than one way to skin a cat!). I have found that when my plants are in containers of a consistent shape and size, they tend to get more uniform care. I hope you will find these ideas helpful, and 'til next time, happy growing!





Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center

May/June Classes

May Theme: AK Agriculture

June Theme: Summer In Alaska

May 1	Drive Your Tractor to Work Day – Jodie Anderson – In Person/FB Live
May 9	Glacial History of the Lower Matanuska River – Joe Moore – Hybrid
May 15	Avian Flu Update – Dr. Bob Gerlach – Hybrid
May 23	Pest Barriers and Trap Crops – Theresa Isaac – In Person
May 30	Community Garden Planting Day – Steve Brown – In-Person
June 6	Making and Using Firewood Dry Kiln to Speed Firewood Curing & Seasoning Glen Holt – Zoom
June 15	Community Gardens Across the State – Theresa Isaac – Facebook Live
June 20	Research on Managing Weeds & Pests – Gino Graziano – In Person
June 21	Alaska's Insect Diversity – Alex Wenninger – Hybrid
June 27	Exploring Trails in Your Community – Revel Treks & Tours – In-Person

Watch our Facebook, Instagram and website

for up-to-date info & registration links!

<https://www.facebook.com/matanuskaexperimentfarm/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MatsuExtension>

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

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2023 State Master Gardeners Conference

A few of our MMGA members attended the State Master Gardener Conference on April 8th. It was a great conference and was well attended.

Some members who attended: Ken & Deb Blaylock, Ellie Hurley, Isaac Vaughan, Steve Brown and Debbie Austin. Photo from Nickel LaFleur taken during one of the break-outs.



May Seeds to Start

First week of May:

If you did not start your squash-type plants in late April, get them going now!

It is finally time to think about direct sowing and transplanting! Remember, soil temperatures are key and also remember our Mat-Su Valley winds. Hardening off those tender plants you have babied indoors the last few weeks/months is important to their survival. Soil temperatures are a must to consider when direct sowing and transplanting. Seeds will sit dormant until they reach their ideal soil temperature. Some will slowly germinate over a longer period in cooler soils.

Seeds to consider for direct sowing/planting:

Carrots, Potatoes, Beets, Swiss Chard, Lettuce Peas, Spinach, Turnips, Cilantro/Dill, Onion bulbs

Seedlings to transplant:

Cauliflower, Cabbage, Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Herbs (except Basils), Onions/Scallions plants, Leeks, Kohlrabi, Romanesco, Flowers, Lettuce, Kalettes, Celery

Hold off on planting the more tender seedlings until the soil is much warmer – like cucurbits and corn.

Links to information on hardening off plants:

<https://lanaster.unl.edu/hardening-transplants>

<https://extension.sdstate.edu/harden-your-transplants-prior-planting-your-garden>

Two UAF-CES Publications which are helpful:

Seed Starting and Transplanting, HGA-00032

Procedures for the Wet Paper Towel Germination Test, FGV-00249

You can download these publications (and more!) at <https://cespubs.uaf.edu/>.

MMGA Meeting Monday, April 3, 2023

Submitted by Secretary Georgiana Gooch

Members present:

Ellie Hurley	Jasmine McFadden
Ken Blaylock	Janice Maestas
Deb Blaylock	Susie Hayes
Craig Lisonbee	Tom Cappiello
Gregory Kalal	Lois Rockcastle
Helen Wiggins	Belinda Lovejoy
Sue Glenn	Dorte Mobley
Carol Symonds	Isaac Vaughan
Eva Cohnen-Brown	Amielyn Vaughan
Dawn Wolski	Sandy Bohling
Curt Mueller	Georgiana Gooch
Marge Mueller	Kevin Johnson
Angelica Lynn	
Regier	

Meeting opened at 7:04 pm

Last month's meeting minutes will be presented at the next meeting.

There was a discussion on vacant committee chairs. We need someone for the Mid-Summer Arts Fair. Sue Glenn volunteered. Kevin received an email from the Chamber of Commerce. Non-profits can attend as long as they do not solicit donations or sell anything; then there will be no fee. If they do, they will pay half price at \$42.50.

The planters at the library are cordoned off due to the roof collapse. Brad Hanson (Community Development Director, City of Palmer) says we can still gain access to the planters. Ken Blaylock motioned regarding the planters at the library, to let them be demolished when they start work on the library and for the club to rebuild new ones when the future rebuilding of the library is decided; also, to retrieve our plaque on the box before demolition. (Kevin Johnson would help if it were in the morning). Dorte seconded that motion. Motion passed.

Meeting location for the June 12th meeting needs to be determined. Ideas that were presented were the Senior Center (since we

will be there planting anyway). The Valley Annex offers \$200 for 2 hours and a discount for non-profits and more if we advertise for them, and Rebarchek Farm was another possibility (however, there is no date set yet for their official opening). The meeting is June 12th instead of the first Monday to allow Cathy Crew time to process the checks from the plant sale.

The plant sale is Saturday, June 3. The set-up will be between 7:30 am and 8:30 am and we will close when everything is sold (usually we are out of there before the 3:00 pm close). The sale will be held at the downtown Palmer Pavilion. A sign-up sheet for the plant sale was circulated.

A treasury report will be put in the newsletter as Cathy Crew is out of town.

Lois Rockcastle offered that if there was a special request for seeds from her trip to the National Peony convention in New York that we should see her before she leaves. The convention starts May 31.

Raffle tickets for the presentation were passed around. A raffle was held after the presentation for two hanging baskets.

Carol Symonds of EweTopia Farms Greenhouse presented. Here are a few notes from that presentation: Hanging baskets are essentially container gardening. Carol begins in September by browsing through seed catalogs and considering what to purchase by envisioning what she wants the baskets to look like. She also checks out culture tips. To make a basket, she first visualizes the finished basket, then orders accordingly. She likes to obtain seeds that are not easily available. Then she prepares the greenhouse (cleanup, reorganizing, etc.) In January she starts her seed rooms to grow geraniums and begonias for baskets and to start seeds. She plants seeds so the seedlings will be ready in March. Meanwhile, she attends to the planted seeds. In March she turns on the greenhouses and begins making baskets.

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To get started, she ensures that the insert in the hanging basket is firmly in place (to allow water to drain away from the roots). She uses Promix HP Soil. Use good soil with good drainage. Add mycorrhizae, Osmocote™ (flower and shrub = 20-20-20 or whatever you can get your hands on) and a systemic insecticide that has an 8-week window (so it will not kill the bees when the baskets are hung outside).

Next, choose good sturdy plants. Carol suggests we visit the various greenhouses and get the sturdiest plants we can find. She does use her own seedlings along with plugs for baskets because there are some varieties that she uses that are unavailable as a plug. Also, she uses plugs when available as she finds them sturdier and more consistent.

When she works with plugs, she can plant more plants per basket because they are smaller. As plants get larger, less plants will fit per basket.

In choosing flowers, she decides whether the basket is a basket for the shade or for the sun.

Then she chooses the colors and textures that make her happy. Remember: Filler, Thriller, Filler.

Then she arranges about 15 plants in the basket. Her demonstration included a 12" basket with 3-4 different plants in one basket (Begonias, Lobelia, Diascia). Point the begonia leaves outwards as that is the direction of the bloom. Careful not to water the leaves of the begonias nor to overwater them. They are low-light plants. She also likes to add Wave Pansies and Petchoas is also a great substitute for Wave Petunias. Another 12" basket was solely made up of Wave Petunias (they go crazy, and she planted only four plants in the entire basket).

Fertilize once a week. Then, watch the magic happen! As the basket grows out, she carefully trims them with scissors to keep them full looking.

EweTopia Farms Greenhouse
3879 S. Caudill Road
Butte, Palmer, Alaska
(907) 746-4134

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

MMGA Annual Plant Sale

The annual plant sale is scheduled for Saturday, June 3rd, 2023, from 9 am through 3 pm or earlier if everything is sold. Dorte Mobley is the plant sale chair this year. She has a list of quite a few folks who have volunteered to help. Contact her if you would like to help out.

The instructions for the plant sale are on our website. If you have any questions, let us know. Remember, to participate as a vendor in the plant sale, you must be a current member and sign up for the sale by the May meeting. The sign-up list will be at the May meeting. Plant labels will be available to those who have signed up at the May meeting - last chance!!

Kevin developed this QR code for the plant sale. Share it with your friends!



Garden Links (updated March 2023)

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 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 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 *New*
<https://georgesonbotanicalgarden.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
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)
<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/>

Alaska Non-Native Species List
<https://accs.uaa.alaska.edu/invasive-species/non-native-plant-species-list/>

Palmer Soil & Water Conservation
<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>



CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Kevin Johnson	907 775 2808
Vice President:	Lois Rockcastle	907 632-1137
Secretary:	Jana Gooch	907 746-2891
Treasurer:	Cathy Crew	907-632-4401
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

MAY 2023 AND BEYOND

May 1, Palmer, Regular Meeting, Ellen VandeVisse, What's Biochar All About?
May/Jun, Palmer, Palmer Veterans and Pioneers Home Planting (TBD)
Jun 3, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale
Jun 12, Palmer, Matanuska Experiment Farm flower bed clean-up and planting (tentative)
Jul 8, Palmer, Palmer Midsummer Garden and Art Faire
Jul/Aug, Summer Garden Tours (TBD)
Sep 11, Palmer, Regular Meeting, Bob Van Veldhuizen, Soil Testing Basics w/hands-on demonstration
Oct 2, Palmer, Regular Meeting, 2023 Garden Year Recap Slideshow & Discussion and Potluck.
Nov 6, Palmer, Annual Meeting, Dr. Jeff Smeenk
Dec, Palmer, Christmas Party

Don't forget to check out the photos tab on our webpage! Eva updates it periodically 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 January 15, 2023, 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--



May 2023



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

**MAT-SU MASTER GARDENERS
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