



President's Patch

By President Jenny Weaver, photos by the author

Has Spring Sprung?

Spring brings such a busy time for avid gardeners! Some of us sow seeds, continuously, for weeks. Others visit local greenhouses to fill our hanging baskets or plan window boxes, deck planters, and garden rows.

While chatting with some of you I have learned that Jana Gooch is a busy bee—sowing seeds and planting bare root strawberries. Kristen Buchta commandeered garage space for her seedlings, and Deb Blaylock is entirely unavailable until after the plant sale! Sue Glenn shared her ideas for her husband's tribute garden, Sandy Hinton is anxious to get back into her lovely greenhouse, and Eva Brown tells me she has mixed results with seed starting (who knew?!?).

This is the time when my grow tent is busting, all my windowsills are full, the bay window has two sets of portable shelves stacked with seedlings; my great room is a temporary greenhouse, and my fingernails are constantly dirty!



Every day Pearl helps me plant more seeds. She stirs soil mixes and fills water bottles. She uses a sharpie with depth markings to make holes for seeds, helps me drop those tiny buggers into each

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REGULAR MEETINGS

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

MAY 4TH, 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

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

AGENDA

BUSINESS HIGHLIGHT, PALMER FOOD BANK
SPEAKER, MELISSA LYTWYN, GREENHOUSE GROWING IN THE
VALLEY

BUSINESS MEETING

PLANT SALE SIGN-UP AND PLANT TAG PICK-UP

hole, and waters when we are done. I am so lucky to have such a good helper!



Continued on page 4.

SOMEWHERE IN THYME

WAYBACK ARTICLES FROM PAST MMGA PUBLICATIONS

Originally published - May 2010 MMGA Newsletter

Building Brick Garden Walks

**By: Dr. Stephen Brown,
Mat Su/Copper River District Agriculture
Agent**

Bricks in sand make an attractive, durable, and pleasant outdoor paving. They are easy to install — the easiest to handle of all paving materials. Individually, bricks are small and lightweight. A brick walk or patio can be installed piecemeal or as you get to it.

Bricks have other attractions: a non-glare surface, pleasant texture, mellow color, and pleasing contrast. On the other hand, weeds and grass may grow up through the joints, freezing and thawing may cause heaving and bricks may need resetting. Bricks are absorbent and can hold stains. They also seem to suffer seasonal damage from snow shovels and snowblowers.

Choose hard-burned brick for paving. Soft bricks crack too easily. If available, slick-surfaced face brick or cleaned old brick may be used. A hard-burned brick will give a clear, high-pitched metallic sound when hit with a hammer. Soft bricks will give a dull thud like a block of wood. Get enough bricks to do the entire job. There is enough variation in bricks that those from another batch may not match the color or size of those previously purchased.

The following materials will be needed to lay a closed-joint brick surface over an area of 100 square feet:

- 500 bricks
- 1 ton of 1/4-inch crushed rock
- 5 cubic feet of coarse sand (about 500 lbs)
- 2" x 4" or 2" x 6" redwood lumber
- 1" x 2" x 12" stakes
- Round point shovel
- Flat point spade
- Hammer (heavy)
- Level
- Iron tamp or heavy post
- Brick set
- Broom

The lumber is used for edging and the amount necessary will depend on the shape used and also the closeness to structures where an edging may not be necessary. The stakes are used to brace the edging. Cedar, cypress, or wood that has been treated with a preservative may be used instead of redwood lumber.

Steps for laying a patio or walkway:

1. Measure the size of the patio or walk desired and order all materials necessary to complete the job. Remember, walks should be at least 4 feet wide. Patios of about 500 square feet will provide enough space for most family functions.

2. Grade the area to be paved. Dig out existing soil if necessary or fill where appropriate. The paving of gravel, sand and brick will require a depth of about 6 inches. Use a 2- by 4-inch board of convenient length to level the grade after digging is complete. A level attached to the top of the board will help to guide the leveling operation. For patios, there should be a drop in grade away from the house of about 1 inch in 8 feet. Install the redwood lumber to edge the patio or walk. Use enough stakes to firmly hold it in place. Make sure edging is level.

3. Lay a level, 3- to 4-inch layer of crushed stone and tamp firm.

4. Spread a 1/2-inch layer of coarse sand over the stone.

5. Level the sand carefully, using board and level. If edging has been carefully leveled, it will act as a good guide for leveling the other area. Do not step on the leveled sand.

6. Set bricks on sand. Place them slightly higher than desired as they will settle. On patios, lay a strip of the desired pattern through the center, and work toward either side. Try to plan to end up with whole bricks whenever possible.

7. Tamp bricks firmly as they are set with either an iron tamp, a heavy post or the wooden end of a heavy hammer.

8. Lay all bricks that do not need cutting.

9. Cut bricks to fit wherever needed. Most people find a brick-set the easiest brick cutting tool to use. Place the brick to be cut on a firm base. Hold the brick-set as shown below and give it one hard knock with a heavy hammer. Keep the brick-set sharp.

10. Cover the paved surface with sand and sweep it into the cracks.

Based upon University of Missouri Extension bulletin Building Brick Walks and Patios by Denny Schrock. Link: <https://bit.ly/4sHSyK7>

May 4th Monthly Meeting Greenhouse Growing in the Valley



Meet Melissa Lytwyn, who will address Greenhouse Growing in the Valley during our Monday, May 4 meeting, 7 pm at Rebarchek.

Bio: I'm a second-generation farmer in Wasilla, Alaska, and the production manager at our family business, MidValley Greenhouse. In the spring, I plant and design all of our hanging baskets and containers, along with growing our annuals, perennials, and herbs. In the summer, I shift into tomato and vegetable production for our farmers market, where we grow many tomato varieties my family has created and still continue to create more.

I'm currently working toward my Bachelor's in Horticulture through Colorado State University.

I've been gardening my whole life and am motivated to improve systems, growing better crops, and pushing what's possible to produce in Alaska.

Summary: In this presentation, I will briefly cover the materials needed and a few styles of greenhouses I am familiar with and use. I will cover how to organize the interior of a greenhouse and whether to choose raised beds, container gardening, baskets, or tubs, in addition to the medium and fertilizer applications associated with each style.

Watering methods according to life stage, crop, and weather will also be explained. I will address climate control, including heating methods, humidity, and airflow.

Lastly, tackling common pests like aphids, spider mites, and slugs will be addressed as well.

May Business Highlight



The Business Highlight for our May 4th meeting features Jennifer Brandt, Executive Director of the Palmer Food Bank. The Palmer Food Bank continues to be a vital resource for individuals and families across the Mat-Su Valley, providing consistent access to nutritious food in times of need. As our community grows, so does the demand for services.

Recently, the food bank moved into a larger facility at 101 S. Denali Street in Palmer. The new building allows for expanded storage, improved distribution, and the ability to serve neighbors more efficiently and with dignity.

At the heart of the Palmer Food Bank is a dedicated network of volunteers whose compassion and commitment make this work possible. Together, they distribute thousands of pounds of food each month, from fresh produce to pantry staples.

Link to website:

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

Link to Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61583466864343>

Bring a Can or Two to Support the Palmer Food Bank

For our Monday, May 4th meeting, how cool would it be if everyone brought a donation for the food bank? We will have boxes available to deposit the food you bring. If you visit the Palmer Food Bank Facebook page closer to May 4th, they post which foods are currently in short supply. Jennifer also noted that they are almost always in need of pasta, bread, canned veggies, and reusable shopping bags.

Continued from page 1.

As usual, there are always a couple mishaps....pots that didn't get labeled, seeds that ended up in the wrong pot, and just recently almost an entire flat of soil blocks didn't germinate. Dang it! Did I press my blocks too tightly or not water thoroughly enough? Possibly both.

Daily I hear Ellen Vande Visse's mantra...."Label EVERYTHING!"

It serves to remind me that no matter how much I learn and how much I practice this hobby (life sport?) called gardening....I still make mistakes. I have a pot labeled "Morning Glory, Blu," that grew a green bean. A 4" pot that produced nothing. It wasn't bad seed; I just never added any seeds! Do you ever have these issues?



This year I am trying to figure out when to start heating my greenhouse. I use a small, internal oil heater that looks like an old radiator. It does a great job of heating up my greenhouse, but we are still sub-freezing at night on Lazy and the greenhouse doesn't get much above 40 degrees at night but blasts full-on summertime heat during the day. Should I add a second heater and absorb the electric bill? Or should I just wait another week ... or two?

How do I figure out the seed sowing start date inside my house for peppers, cukes, and tomatoes to align with when the greenhouse WILL be ready to keep seedlings warm through the night? I am also planting kale, rudbeckia, new delphinium colors, and herbs for Rebarckek. When should I harden off those seedlings to plant at the farm, which may be two weeks before the garden soil is warm enough on Lazy? Am I making it more difficult than I need to? Probably!

One thing I do know. It is wonderful to wake up each morning and witness all the vibrant green! Seeds popping up like crazy! Seedlings seem to grow before my very eyes. Planting is such hope for the future; a faith that life is prosperous, and good things are yet to come. How lucky we are to experience such magic?! Happy Spring, fellow gardeners!

Annual Plant Sale

SIGN UP ROSTER AS OF THE APRIL 2026 MEETING

NAME	TAG ID
Debra Blaylock	DB/DJB
Kristina Tornqvist	KT
Sue Glenn	SG
Todd Weaver	MTW
Dorte Mobley	BDLM

The deadline to sign up for the annual plant sale is May 4th, 2026. The sign-up roster will be at the meeting as well as plant labels. The labels are available to those who have signed up for the plant sale. If you can't make the meeting, please send an email to matsumastergardeners@gmail.com and you will be added to the list if you are a current member of the MMGA.

Please consider helping out with one of the many tasks that make the plant sale a success. This is our one and only fundraiser of the year.

Here's a list of tasks we need help with:

- Dorte needs helpers for the cashier duties and check out.
- Help is also needed after the plant sale with counting funds and sorting and totaling price labels.
- Craig Lisonbee will collect 3 tables, chairs, and plant sale signs from the Extension office.
- Boxes need to be collected and brought to the plant sale for shoppers to take home plants in.
- Spread the word to family and friends!

The Annual Plant Sale is May 30th from 9 am to 3 pm at the Palmer Pavilion - across from the Palmer Visitors Center.

Advice from a Physical Therapist

A recap by Jenny Weaver



Our April meeting featured Carla Vizzerra, Physical Therapist from Body in Balance. Carla presented several points that I think are worth reiterating to those who attended and also to share with those who did not. Here are some key ideas I took away from Carla's talk that I am incorporating into my spring tasks.

1. After our past winter (that we continue to experience), with extended periods of cold temperatures and many windy days, we need to ease back into the physical tasks of gardening. I will personally admit to a sedentary winter, with little outside activity and minimal exercise. Take it slowly! Instead of going all out and spending the entire day working, work just an hour, next day do a bit more, and increase your physical activity each day.
2. Begin the day's exercise while you are still in bed. A great exercise to loosen up your back and hips is to just lie on your back; knees bent and gently roll both knees to touch the mattress on your right side and then the left.
3. Your day's initial exercises aren't necessarily strenuous. The purpose is to wake up your body to movement. Move your head, neck, arms, legs, and back. Nothing strenuous, just get moving.
4. Lift with your legs, not your back. We know this already, but sometimes we forget in the moment.
5. Carry heavy items close to your body, both for better support and less strain on your back and arms.
6. Embrace the 30/30 rule! For every 30 minutes you remain at one task (in one position), spend 30 seconds doing an opposite movement. Only 30 seconds are required to counter those focused 30 minutes.

So, if you are bent over a bed/planter/garden for 30 minutes, stand up and do some waist twists, or stretches in the opposite direction. If you have been pulling and grabbing things (weeds?) from below, stand up and stretch your arms high. Or stand straight and walk around. Or stand straight and march around, lifting your knees waist high. I have been doing this movement as I sow seeds. It actually feels good and provides immediate relief to my back. I do feel foolish marching back and forth ... but it really makes a difference (and there's no one to laugh at me but Todd and Pearl!).

7. Wear good shoes. Shoes should have good arch support, a solid sole, and a closed heel. Carla did not favor clogs! Ankle support is also important, especially when walking on uneven ground.

8. Stretching exercises are most helpful after you are done working, when your body is nicely warmed up. Stretch from the waist side to side; stretch with arms raised over your head, one arm, then the other. Stretch your feet and ankles—slowly bending your toes down and then reverse and bend your toes up. Roll each foot/ankle in a slow circle, both directions.

9. Lastly, the 30/30 rule also counts when you are done for the evening. Finished with dinner? Watching TV in that comfy chair you favor? Sit for 30 minutes and enjoy the show but then stand up and stretch or move around for 30 seconds. Working all day and then remaining stationary for the remainder of the evening only adds to sore, stiff, muscles. It only takes 30 seconds to loosen things up. Hang loose!

Incorporating these simple ideas into your day, although not a strenuous routine, can make a big difference. They increase the amount of time you can spend gardening each day AND increase how many years you can garden on! Take care of your body; it's the most important gardening tool in your shed!



MMGA April 2026 Meeting Minutes - submitted by Dorte Mobley

Present were members Jenny, Pearl and Todd Weaver, Gregory and Kathy Kalal, Kristen Buchta, Deb and Ken Blaylock, Marge Mueller, Dawn Wolski, David R. Thompson, Sue Glenn, Gretchen Weiss-Brooks, Dorte Mobley, Isaac Vaughan, Kristina Tornqvist, Stephanie Nowers and guests Nancy Hendrix, Barbara Nagengast, Barbara Worley, Murph O'Brien, Peggy O'Brien, Carla Vizzerra, Sandra McMillian, Carol Symonds.

Meeting was called to order at 7 pm by President Jenny Weaver and the agenda was approved.

Motion by Ken to approve minutes from April meeting. They were in the newsletter and approved after correction that Greg Kalal was asked to do a presentation at the Homestead Expo.

Treasurer's report was presented by Dorte, who answered a few questions.

President Jenny reported that the board had met on March 24. She thanked Kristen for finding a speaker to address greenhouses at the May meeting, Dorte for dealing with all the finance issues, Rebecca for following through on the monthly minutes, and Deb for creating the great newsletters. We now have a display board that can be used with Velcro and magnets when we sponsor or attend events. Jenny will bring it to the May meeting.

Jenny passed around the lists of members who have signed up to help with the various committees including the plant sale, Rebarchek, Arts in the Garden, planting at the Veterans & Pioneers Home and Garden Tours. People were asked to check the lists for accuracy and sign up if they were interested. She asked all members to grow at least one sunflower for the bed at Rebarchek and provided pots and seeds to do so.

Kristen reported that she and the Weavers attended the seed swap at the Cooperative Extension Office (CES). She noted that Craig Lisonbee had done a nice job of talking with people who attended the event. Left-over seeds from the event were dispersed to various seed libraries throughout the Valley. It was noted that Peak Feed & Seed also has a seed library, as does the Sutton Library. Seed libraries are popping up all over the Valley.

A Food Security Conference will be put on by Mat Su Health Foundation, the Alaska Farmland Trust and CES at the Fairgrounds on April 18. We were asked to help with the registration table. It will be in the new event building by the purple gate and Rebarchek.

Memorial Day weekend is the Homestead Expo, which will be an outside event.

Twenty-five people have responded to the survey. The members who answered are mostly the people who come to meetings.

Kristina Tornqvist is in charge of garden and pop-up tours this summer. Please let her know if you are interested or know of someone with a beautiful garden who we can ask to be on the tour.

Ginger Sweeney noted that the Pioneer Home has talked about potentially getting some help with the high planters they have out back, in addition to the ones we do out front. Ginger also volunteered to donate nasturtiums for the bed out by the road where the irises are growing. She also offered that we might want to help with Grow Palmer this summer.

Deb talked briefly about the plant sale labels that she brought to hand out, and members signed up to sell. May meeting is last day to sign up to sell! Jenny noted that our price recommendations haven't changed since the Weavers joined several years ago. She suggested our prices may be much lower than local greenhouses that now charge from \$5.25 to \$7.50 for 3-4" pots. We might want to consider raising them. Dorte added that it depends on if you want to get rid of everything or not.

BrewHaHa across from NAPA in Palmer has coffee grounds set outside that you can pick up for free to use in your garden. Kristina Tornqvist added that most coffee shops offer their grounds, if you just inquire.

Melissa from Mid Valley Greenhouse will be our next speaker and the Palmer Food Bank will present as the business highlight. We were all requested to bring a friend to the next meeting.

Thanks to all who contributed items for the drawing. Special thanks to Sue Glenn for her delicious bread and cookies.

Meeting adjourned around 9 p.m.

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/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 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

MAY 2026 AND BEYOND

May 1-2, Juneau, 2026 Alaska Master Gardener Conference,

May 4, Palmer, Regular Meeting, To Be Announced

May 4, Palmer, Drive Your Tractor to Work Day, <https://www.facebook.com/driveyourtractortoworkday>

May 22-26, Big Lake, Homestead Expo, <https://commongroundalaska.com/alaska-homestead-expo/>

May 30, Palmer, Annual Plant Sale

Jun 6, Palmer, Rebarchek MMGA Plot Work Day

Jun 8, Palmer, Palmer Veterans and Pioneers Home Planting Day

Jun 13, Palmer, Colony Days Parade, "Rooted in Community"

Jul 18, Palmer, Arts in the Garden

Aug 21 – Sep 7, Palmer, Alaska State Fair, "90 years with You"

Sep 14, Palmer, Regular Meeting

Oct 5, Palmer, Regular Meeting

Nov 2, Palmer, Annual 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--



May 2026



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