

MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

Nov 2017



President's Patch

By Deb Blaylock (subbing for President Rhonda Bowman)

Photos by the author

Some area climatologists are predicting that we're in for another La Nina winter this year. A La Nina winter means cooler and dryer conditions for Alaska. We started the winter with La Nina conditions in 2016, but fortunately it faded away and we received much welcomed snow after Christmas last year. What does this mean for gardeners? Perhaps adding some extra winter protection to vulnerable herbaceous perennials, shrubs and trees. Expect to lose a percentage of some of the more tender perennials. See Curt Mueller's method for protecting his tulip bed in his Peasant's Perspective column.



Here's a photo of my method for protecting my garlic beds this year (8 inches of straw secured with landscaping fence stapled to the raised bed frame):

A benefit of the lack of snow (so far) allows procrastinators time to finish their fall chore list. While the ground may be frozen, there's still time to get tools put away and other things checked off the to-do list (see page 4). Before you know it, those 2018 seed catalogs will be arriving in the mail!

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GENERAL MEETINGS FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, NOV 6TH, 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION: MATANUSKA TELEPHONE COMPANY
(MTA) BUILDING, LARGE MEETING ROOM (IN
THE BASEMENT), 480 COMMERCIAL DR.,
PALMER, AK

DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO ATTEND

MEETING AGENDA

- TREASURER REPORT
- MEETING MINUTES
- OLD BUSINESS
- NEW BUSINESS
- NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

SPEAKER/TOPIC

Dr. Susanna Pearlstein is the Director of the UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm & Extension Center. She comes to UAF from the Environmental Protection Agency where she worked with commercial farmers on a nutrient study. Her Master's and Ph.D. are from the University of Arizona.

PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE: BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

Photos by the author

Of the spring bulbs, tulips are probably the most planted for their hardiness and wide array of color choices. There is still time to plant them if there is a bit of open soil that has not crusted over with frost. Many people plant them next to the house foundation or that of another heated building. It's best to place them where runoff from the eaves doesn't keep the soil saturated; that may cause the bulbs to rot. The soil does need to contain enough moisture to get the bulbs started forming roots. A mulch over the planted bulbs is helpful to retain the moisture and protect the bulbs from extreme low temperatures.

The peasant has been planting tulips in a raised bed for several years and has learned a couple of dos or don'ts in the process. The first year the raised bed was surrounded and covered with pea vines from the summer garden. It stayed in place and protected the bulbs from cold, BUT!

The pea vines still contained some peas and made a wonderful home for voles over winter. When the pea supply had been exhausted, the voles found the tulip bulbs and ate all of them.

The following fall the peasant laid a covering of one-fourth inch hardware cloth over the bed, fastening it securely with screws and strips of wood, leaving no spaces for small rodents to crawl through. This worked well and has become the tried and true method of ensuring the bulbs don't become gutted shells. The pea vines went to the compost pile and the bulbs were protected with leaves, forcing the rodents to seek their winter food elsewhere.

The purpose of protecting the bulbs for cold is that the raised bed tends to allow the soil within to be the same as the ambient air temperature. A prolonged cold spell could allow the soil to reach a low temperature that might kill the bulbs. Tulip bulbs are hardy, but there is a limit to what they can bear. Also, exposure to the sun could cause a freeze/thaw situation or allow

the bulbs on the south side to begin growth earlier, resulting in uneven blooming in the bed. Hey, it works, so the peasant will stick with it. Oh, by the way, the hardware cloth must be removed before the tulip plants grow through it.



The raised tulip bed is done up snugly for winter. Overkill? Maybe, but it works. Please note the abundance of leaves available for such purposes.

The peasant does not try to naturalize the bulbs, but grows tulips as annuals. When they have finished blooming the tulip plants recomposed and the bed becomes available for summer flowers.

There you have it. Thanks, folks.



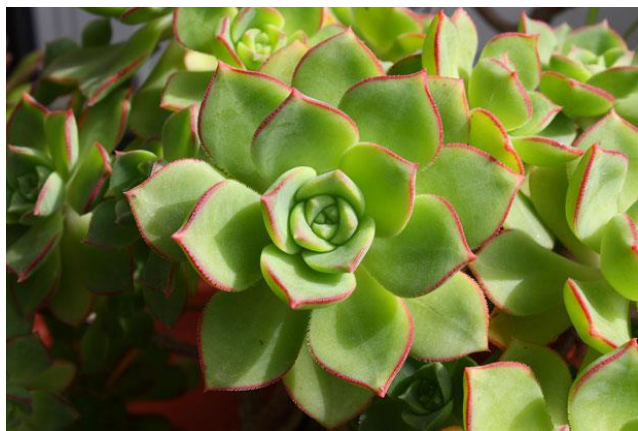
The guardian of the tulips

GROWING INDOOR SUCCULENTS, DR. STEPHEN BROWN, UAF

Images are from public domain sites

Gardening with succulents allows you to free up your creativity and channel your inner artist in some easy, pretty much fail-safe projects using low maintenance succulents as the centerpiece. Indoors or out, on the wall, in or on the ground, or just hanging around, they make for eye-catching displays. They can be potted in a design, highlighted on their own, tucked into mixed plantings and empty corners, or used in other ways that are more like art pieces than plantings. Envision wreaths, screens, miniature gardens, terrariums and more.

Succulents are usually defined as plants with fleshy leaves or stems that allow them to store water in arid areas or those with poor soils. They are adaptable and will grow in most soil types if gardeners keep in mind how they operate. Since they are designed for storing scarce water, the issue of watering is crucial. They can easily be over-watered in regular potting soil. There are commercial soils made for succulents and cacti. These have more grit which lets more water flow through rather than be stored in the soil. Succulent roots get water from what's carried in the air around them rather than from direct contact with water in the soil.



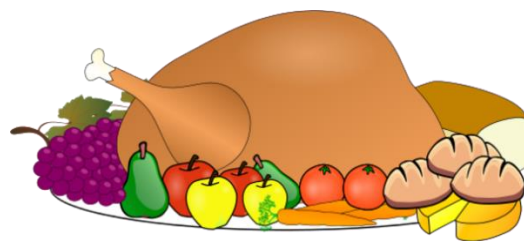
Alternatively, one can add perlite to regular potting soil in a ratio of three parts soil to one part perlite. The most important factor is that it should be well draining. They should be watered deeply at regular intervals rather than lightly

watered often for strong plants and root systems to form. Some sources recommend using a low dose water-soluble fertilizer (20-20-20 or 20-10-20) in each watering. They do have dormant periods (some summer, some winter) during which watering should be lessened or stopped.

Once you've got the handle on growing and caring for succulents, their flexibility allows for much variety and creativity in ways they can be displayed. Free up your inner artist to make them whimsical (think teacups, old children's toys, niches and crannies, etc.), sculptural (a pyramid of stacked dishes), in single or mixed displays, matched or multi-colored. Succulents come in an amazing array of forms and in a huge range of colors, adding to the possibilities.



This article was adapted from original material by Betty Liske, University of California Master Gardener.



Fall To-Do List

Adapted from UAF-CES Publication HGA-00429, An Alaska Gardener's Fall & Winter To-Do List

- ☐ **Remove crop residues from garden plots.** Most crop residue can be composted. Removing it also helps to prevent disease and insect pests, such as root maggots, from overwintering and returning.
- ☐ **Remove and store poles, trellises and portable frames.** Avoid the effects of winter damage and weathering. Needed repairs or refinishing can also be accomplished now. Mark perennials for spring. A marked stake can indicate location and provide information on what should be emerging next spring.
- ☐ **Apply mulch.** Mulch provides a protective, insulating layer around sensitive perennials. Avoid conditions and timing that would allow rodents to overwinter in the mulch. Use grass clippings or leaves or, even better, straw and weed-free hay. Mulch conserves moisture, reduces erosion and leaching, prevents rapid temperature fluctuations and improves soil structure after it is incorporated. Don't forget spring removal.
- ☐ **Surround perennials in containers with insulating mulch.** The amount of soil in containers is not sufficient to buffer the fluctuating extremes of winter weather. Other options would be to place the container in the ground or store the plant in a sheltered location such as a crawl space or cool garage.
- ☐ **Dig in a top dressing of compost for raised or deep beds.** This increases drainage, improves physical structure and adds nutrients. Material should be well composted to avoid introduction of weed seeds and other pests.
- ☐ **Put up windbreaks, fences and protective shelters.** Sheltering is an effective way to reduce the drying and damaging effects of winter winds on woody perennials. Fences may also be useful in preventing damage to plants by animals, winter traffic and other harmful activity. Windbreak material may include boards, burlap or other material that will disrupt the force of the wind.
- ☐ **Build a compost pile.** Select an open site with good drainage. Use finely divided material and turn the pile periodically to maintain aerobic conditions. Composting can recycle plant debris. Selected household scraps such as raw vegetables and egg shells provide nutrients when added to the soil and maintain the physical structure of garden soil.
- ☐ **Empty buckets, watering cans, rain barrels.** Emptying reduces freezing damage, prevents the accumulation of debris and allows for any needed repairs or refurbishing.
- ☐ **Put away hoses and sprinklers.** Drain completely. Check for cracks and other damage. Store in a location where they will not be subject to physical damage.
- ☐ **Store clay and terra-cotta pots out of the weather.** Clean thoroughly if they have been used. Store in a dry location away from activities that may cause breakage.
- ☐ **Keep evergreen and deciduous shrubs well-watered before the ground freezes.** Watering prevents winter desiccation. Plants can lose water even during dormancy. Watering is ineffective after the ground freezes. Insufficient moisture, frozen ground and winter wind combined can result in drying or winter kill.
- ☐ **Carry out any garden expansion plans at this time.** Fall is usually a time of decreased activity, which allows opportunity for these projects. Conduct a soil test on the new garden area to determine fertility and liming requirements. This may be a good time to construct raised beds and improve the soil for their use.
- ☐ **"Winterize" perennials.** This includes watering, pruning to remove dead, damaged or diseased parts, mulching to provide insulation over the root area, and wrapping thin bark trees to prevent damage by winter sun and rodents. Shrubs and small trees also need to be protected from moose. Dividing and replanting some perennials may also be required.
- ☐ **Prune raspberries, currants, roses, gooseberries and other berry bushes.** Remove old nonbearing canes, thin overgrown areas, prune, and remove any damaged, dead or diseased parts. Remove branches that are too close to the ground. Cut back canes or branches that have grown too long. Canes may be saved for markers or supports.
- ☐ **Sharpen and repair hand tools.** Re-sharpen hoes to a blunt angle, about 30 degrees, with a flat file. Other cutting tools can be sharpened to a finer angle, 20-26 degrees. Clean off all rust and dirt and apply a protective coat of oil (such as linseed oil) on both the metal and wood parts of the tool before storing for the winter.
- ☐ **Bring in soil, sand, compost and flats to use for starting seedlings the following year.** Pasteurize starting media and screened compost by heating to 180°F for one-half hour. Avoid contaminating pasteurized media. Store all materials in a dry location. Clean flats with a mixture of one-part bleach to nine parts water, if they have previously been in contact with soil.

STORING DAHLIAS, BY DORTE MOBLEY, MASTER GARDENER

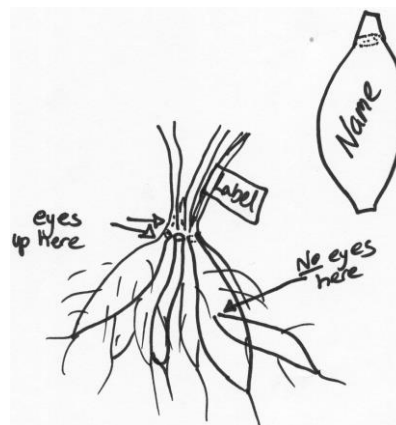
To begin with the beginning: To start my dahlias, I take some flats with soil and lay them on top of the soil. I keep it as moist as I would do if they were planted. When I see signs of roots growing, I plant them in a pot. This way I can keep an eye on them and put them out in the compost if they should start to rot.

When I plant my tubers in the spring, I both put a stake by them with the name on it, but I also make a "map" of them. That way it is easier to label them in the fall. Sometimes when frost is just around the corner, I take some labels and with a fat permanent Sharpie write either the name of the dahlia or, if I do not know this, the description (can be tall yellow decorative or pink from the neighbor's or something). I wrap the labels around the sturdy stems all the way down by the ground, so when I cut the plant down they are still there. When the leaves and blooms are all brown and have died from frost, I dig up the tubers, cut the stems to 4-6 in (watch out for the labels) and hose all the dirt off. I let them lie and dry out for a day or two (or if I don't get time to do them, a month or two – but then they do dry out too much).

In my garage I set up a table with a cutting board, a bucket with bleach-water (about ½ - 1 cup to a 5-gal bucket) some newspapers and the cutting tools. This can be kitchen knives, sharp scissors, pruning shears (for tough stems) or hobby knives. The knives should be very sharp for clean cuts, and I have found a scalpel works great – just don't twist the blade because they break easy. Scalpels can be ordered in medical supply stores. Just watch your fingers – and get them packed far away if you have kids! I also have a permanent marker (fat Sharpie), white Styrofoam containers and some vermiculite ready.

If you look at the tubers you will see that they kind of spread outwards from the center. Some have kind of multiple centers, and basically, I just pull on the stems to get those apart. Up there where the stems come up, the "eyes" are located. It can be on the "bottom" of the area, so if you turn the clump upside down you might see them. You MUST have an eye on the tuber for it to start sprouting. I turn the clump around, cut off all roots thinner than a finger (including all the small tread thin roots) and remove any damaged or rotten parts of the

tuber. Yes, you can cut the bottom off the tuber so you have a neat end on it!



I then start to cut the tubers apart. If you look closely at them up by the top you might see an area that looks a little swollen and has bumps on it. Or you can see small new growth thinking about starting to sprout (it might be a little bit up the stem). On some of the tubers the "eyes" are a little reddish. You now cut so you have eyes on all the tubers you want to save. I use kind of a triangular cut so I can get many eyes on lots of tubers. Some tubers have an extra tuber hanging from the side of it – they do not have eyes on them!

After cutting them apart, I write the name on each tuber – this is possible if the tuber is relatively dry and you don't press too hard with the marker. Then they take a bath in the Clorox water until I am ready with the next clump. I let them dry out on the newspaper for a couple of days before I lay them in the Styrofoam coolers layered in vermiculite. Do not let them touch each other, that way if one goes bad it will not "take the others with it." I check the tubers around December and then I begin to look for signs of them starting to grow around the beginning to middle of February. I do not have a cold storage, but must keep them in the heated garage, so they always start too early for me. If you can keep them around 35 - 40 degrees F, it is best.

During this whole process I try to remember that if I only get one plant from each clump, I have not lost anything. And if I lose the whole thing, oh well, next year I can get another one from the store.

October 2, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Thirteen members were present for the October 2 meeting.

Cathy was absent, but left a budget summary. Several questions were asked for clarification. Among these was one regarding Heart Reach and one about donated sod to the club.

The Experiment Farm has perennials and rhubarb that needs to be dug up by October 10.

Deb presented the new Grant Application form. It was passed around and approved. Deb will finalize the form for use.

The Nominating Committee would like anyone eager to be President of MMGA to call Joan at (206) 604-4676. The position would begin at the January 2018 meeting.

Our speaker for the evening was Steve Brown. He talked about soil and soil amendments and provided several useful take-home tables for application.

Our next meeting is November 6, 2017 at 7:00 PM at the MTA Building.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Redlin

*"How silently they tumble down
And come to rest upon the ground
To lay a carpet, rich and rare,
Beneath the trees without a care,
Content to sleep, their work well done,
Colors gleaming in the sun.*

*At other times, they wildly fly
Until they nearly reach the sky,
Twisting, turning through the air
Till all the trees stand stark and bare.
Exhausted, drop to earth below
To wait, like children, for the snow."
- Elsie N. Brady, Leaves*



Sunday, November 5th, at 2 a.m.

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 Farm to School **New**

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

Alaska Garden Clubs

<http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org>

Alaska Grown Source Book (online)

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/sourcebook/sourcebookindex2016.html>

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/>

Grow Palmer

<http://growpalmer.org/>

Integrated Pest Management Program

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

Junior Master Gardeners

<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.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

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

University of Saskatchewan Fruit Program

www.fruit.usask.ca

USDA/NRCS Plant Data Base

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/>

Announcements

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Serve as an officer/board member

Submit an article to the newsletter

The Nominations Committee is actively looking for names for club officer/board member positions. If you would like to be considered for a position, please send an email to matsumastergardeners@gmail.com.

CLUB CONTACT INFO

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| President: | Rhonda Bowman | 746-2948 |
| Vice President | Curt Mueller | 745-6144 |
| 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 at her email: kdblalock@ak.net

Website: www.matsumastergardeners.com/

Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2017

Nov 5, Alaska, Daylight Savings Ends
Nov 6, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Susanna L. Pearlstein, Ph.D., Director, Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center

DECEMBER 2017 AND BEYOND

Dec 4, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Annual 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. Family memberships are only for family members living in the same household.

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~~



November 2017



Like us on
Facebook

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

**MAT-SU MASTER GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION
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