

MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

Oct 2015



President's Patch

By Rhonda Bowman, President

Winter is really on its way! The grass is crunchy and stiff in the morning and any plants left are nipped by frost. And the snow is definitely coming down the mountain. It was a great summer and our members scored lots of ribbons at the Alaska State Fair for flowers and crops. Congratulations to everyone getting ribbons this year.

I am sure that you have started your fall chores to get everything put away for winter and make sure that next spring starts off on the right foot.

Looking forward to the spring, don't forget that the 2016 Master Gardeners Conference will be in Anchorage on April 16 at the Anchorage Senior Center. Keep that in mind, because they usually have numerous interesting topics and discussion groups packed into one day. The theme is: Grow Your Own From the Soil Up.

Our next meeting will be October 5 at 7 pm. If you have any ideas for speakers to provide information on gardening related topics please let us know.



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CHAPTER MEETINGS FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING
MONDAY, OCT 5TH, 7:00 PM
LOCATION: MTA CONFERENCE ROOM,
PALMER, AK
DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO ATTEND

MEETING AGENDA

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

TOPIC/SPEAKER:

TBA

PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE; BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

Photos by the author

Our warm, dry summer is gone, but it has been mostly good for gardening. Some things matured earlier or grew larger or provided a more bountiful harvest. The season may have been an anomaly or it may portend similar seasons in the future. The early frosts cause us to remember that we still live in Alaska, and crops that do well in cool, moist weather and can handle some frost are still our standbys.

We have adapted our gardening techniques to the climate of our area. If our climate continues to change we will change our methods with it. The peasant opines that we won't be the new corn-belt any time soon.

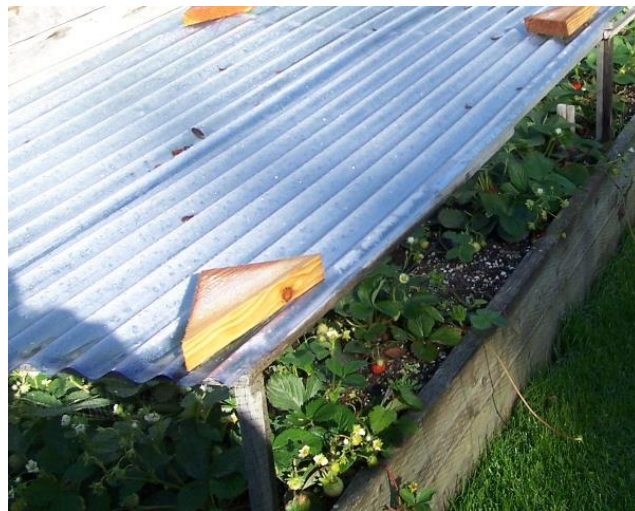
The peasant's strawberry patch consists of four feet by twenty-four feet of raised bed. The raised bed is not conducive to winter survival, so we raise strawberries as annuals. The variety 'Tribute' has been our choice. It is referred to as day-neutral, indicating that blossom set can occur at any time during the season, giving us continuous production during the summer.

An ever-bearing variety sets blossoms during decreasing day length. Decreasing day length happens after the summer solstice, so late summer strawberries will have had their blossom set after June 21. This means there will be a lengthy gap in berry production. Next year's early strawberries will have a blossom set in late summer, although no visible blossoms will be apparent until the next spring. The forming blossoms are within the plants' crowns.

It has been the peasant's observation that in Tribute and other day-neutral varieties, that blossom set is enhanced after the summer solstice so there is a heavier crop in late summer. What usually happens is that the plants are heavily loaded with unripe fruit and blossoms when frosty nights become the norm, putting an end to the season of productivity.

The peasant wonders if there is a practical way to extend the season for strawberries. It is sad to see all these beautiful unripe berries go to waste.

Late summer is usually accompanied by abundant rainfall as the temperature cools. Certainly this season was no exception. With excessive soil moisture some berries will rot where they contact the soil. This summer the peasant laid some transparent greenhouse covering over the plants, allowing the water to run off. It certainly helped with the rot problem, even with the many days of rain and inclement weather.



This photo shows the covering over the strawberry bed. It was laid over a light framework which had been used to support bird netting earlier in the season. It is covered with a heavy frost.

What also happened when we began to get a series of freezing nights was that the berries that were under cover did not freeze, although the sides were open. Other strawberries that were not under cover definitely became discolored from frostbite.

The accompanying photos show berries that were picked on September 21. This causes the peasant to think there may be a way to extend the season still further. It would need to be fairly inexpensive and easy to manipulate. Food for thought. Thanks folks.



These berries were picked on September 21 after several hard frosts.

LABOR OF LOVE; BY EVA COHNEN-BROWN, MASTER GARDENER

Photos by the author

What do you get when you plant a few Northern Giant cabbage seeds on Valentine's Day? A most curious story title, indeed. That's exactly what transpired when my husband Steve and I planted these amazing behemoths-to-be back in the depths of our Alaska winter.

No, this wasn't our first year growing these marvelous plants - that honor goes to last year's season, when Master Gardeners and Cabbage Cultivators Extraordinaire Curt and Marge Mueller shared a vibrantly healthy seedling with us. It grew nicely, except when our chickens decided they needed to expand their diets to include some yummy cabbage leaves. But that's a story for another day....

So, armed with the knowledge that we needed to keep our seedlings safe from not just moose, but our (paltry) poultry too, we kept this year's crop under "guard" and away from our fine feathered friends. Lo and behold, they grew into lovely, mature plants with full and firm heads.

Of course, this didn't happen overnight. The soil was prepared by adding composted chicken manure mixed with pine shavings. A specially designed watering system was installed, composed of PVC pipes that had holes drilled at the base, and a pipe for watering extending up and away from the plant. This system is the brainchild of the aforementioned kind-hearted Muellers.

Ah yes, watering - not a day went by without these giants demanding that their thirst be slaked by us mere humans. The unusually warm and dry summer we just had was irrelevant to these green taskmasters, of course. We had a daily date to keep, and keep it we did.

Weekly fertilizing with Miracle-Gro and some weeding rounded out our aerobic, cardio workouts...er, gardening duties. I realized that I rather enjoyed doting on these miracles of plant life, especially when a high-powered water tank was added to keep our plants happy and water hose schlepping (hauling) to a minimum.

By September 4th - a mere 202 days since planting - the first of the cabbages was ready for harvest and entry into the giant cabbage weigh-off at the State Fair. It weighed in at modest 39.15 pounds, but garnered much praise for its beauty. An admirer called it "Labor of Love," considering the date of planting.



Labor of Love, Part 2 and admirers

Cont. on page 4

Cont. from page 3

The second cabbage - "Labor of Love, Part 2," if you will - was feeling a bit left behind, but we kept on nurturing it for another 16 days until it fulfilled a more practical - and tasty - purpose: food, glorious food. The head was donated to friends of ours, and the remaining gargantuan leaves are being used for stuffed cabbage rolls. A "small" leaf measures 15"x20", so each one has been divided into quarters. The recipe that follows is primarily from "The Settlement Cookbook" (3rd edition), and from personal preference:

Stuffed Cabbage Rolls - (from The Settlement Cookbook, mostly)

- 8 cabbage leaves (or 2 from a giant cabbage, quartered)
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- salt and pepper, ~1 t. each
- 1 small onion, grated
- ½ cup cooked rice
- 1 ½ cups tomato sauce
- 2 T. vinegar
- 1 T. sugar

Cut out and discard (compost) hard center spine of cabbage leaves. Put cabbage in large pot, and pour boiling water over it. Let stand until leaves are flexible; drain. Season the meat with salt and pepper; add grated onion and rice. Roll a portion of the meat mixture in each leaf. Fasten with toothpicks. Place cabbage rolls folded sides down, with the rest of the ingredients, in a Dutch oven. Add a little water and simmer for about 1 hour. Enjoy!



Stack of 5 cabbage leaves, halved - note can & toaster for scale comparison

At the harvest tasting and sharing at the club's last meeting, Terrie Irwin shared a delicious zucchini relish. Many asked for the recipe. Thanks for sharing, Terrie!

ZUCCHINI PICKLE RELISH

- 12 cups unpeeled zucchini (chopped small)
- 3 cups sweet onion (chopped small)
- 1 cup celery (chopped small)
- 2 large red bell peppers (chopped small)
- 2 cups peeled carrots (chopped small)
- 1 cup pickling salt (see important note)
- 3 cups white vinegar
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons turmeric
- 2 teaspoons DRY mustard powder
- 1 tablespoon celery seed
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon corn starch

Wash and dry the vegetables before cutting them. Peel the carrot. Coarsely chop the vegetables, then put them in the food processor (2 or 3 cups at a time) and pulse them a few times to get them small enough for a good relish (but not too small). Measure the vegetables AFTER you chop them in the food processor.

Mix the small chopped vegetables and 1 cup of pickling salt. Place this mixture (covered) in fridge overnight.

IMPORTANT NOTE: After the vegetables have chilled overnight, it is VERY IMPORTANT that you rinse the salt off of them. Whatever method you choose to rinse the salt off, just make sure you rinse, rinse, rinse then squeeze as much water out of the chopped veggies (with your hands) as you can. Set aside.

In a large, non-aluminum, pot, mix the vinegar, sugar, celery seed, spices and corn starch. Bring to a boil (to dissolve the sugar). Add all of the rinsed vegetables to the pot and bring BACK to a boil. Once it is boiling well, turn heat to medium low and gently boil everything for 20 minutes, stirring every five minutes or so.

Sterilize 7 pint jars and 7 (two piece) screw-on lids.

Now that your relish has boiled for 20 minutes, remove it from the heat and place it in the hot jars, leaving a half inch space at the top of the jars (make sure there are no air pockets in the relish). Wipe the rims of the jars and screw on the two-piece lids fairly tight. Process half pints for ten minutes and pints for fifteen minutes. Turn the heat off, remove the lid and wait five minutes before removing the jars.



A photo collage of 2015
Alaska State Fair
winners entered by
club members. Photos
courtesy:
Deb Blaylock
Michael & Phyllis
Kircher
Pat Tremaine



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 **UPDATED**

<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 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 **UPDATED**

<https://fairbanksmastergardeners.wordpress.com/>

Palmer Soil & Water Conservation

<http://palmersoilandwater.org/>

South-Central Alaska Beekeepers Assoc.

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

Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners

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

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/>

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 in desperate need of someone to coordinate speakers for our meetings. Please let Rhonda know if you're interested. Thanks!

BOARD MEMBER OPENING

The position of Club Secretary is still open. The job involves taking minutes at meetings and attending board meetings. If you are interested, please contact Rhonda Bowman for further details and information.

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

CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Rhonda Bowman	746-2948
Co-VP	Curt Mueller	745-6144
Co-VP	Hally Truelove	376-0909
Secretary:	Vacant	
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

OCTOBER 2015

Oct 5, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

NOVEMBER 2015 AND BEYOND

Nov 1, Daylight Savings Time Ends

Nov 2, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

Dec 7, Palmer, Annual Christmas Dinner

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!

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~~



October 2015



Like us on
Facebook

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