MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

Sep 2015

President's Patch

By Rhonda Bowman, President

Can you believe it is time to start thinking about all the fall chores to get your beds ready for winter? Sometimes it is much better to winterize your hanging baskets by taking them to the local establishment that can care for them during the winter, but lots of folks do it themselves in their garages or cellars. It prevents you from buying more flowers each year, and the more mature plants are generally fuller and more established the next year.

I know it is easy to forget, but plant your spring bulbs before the ground hardens up. This includes flowers and some vegetables. The usual rule of thumb for depth is to plant them three times the width of the bulb, so if your bulb is one inch across they go three inches deep.

Dry leaves can be a great way to protect your roses or beds since it acts as an insulator, but mulch them up so they go into the soil and build up the nutrients. A great way to feed your lawn is to mow over dry leaves with a mulching mower.
Lots of us overlook protecting our tools for the winter, but cleaning the rakes, shovels, trawls and applying a little oil to prevent rust will keep them in great shape for many years of use.

If you have dahlias, begonias and fuchsias it is essential to get them out of the ground or pots before frost to prepare to sit in a cool environment around 40 degrees for the winter.

Finally, dividing perennials in the fall makes the plants healthy and larger since they don't have to fight for root nutrition from the soil. Each plant has different times for this, and usually it's pretty easy to spot when they could benefit from dividing.
Our conditions here in the Valley with the lack of snow or what we have blowing away makes it necessary to protect your beds over the winter. Some folks use mulched leaves but I use straw. I had heard some folks place evergreen boughs over the mulched leaves to keep them from blowing away.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

CHAPTER MEETINGS
FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

NEXT MEETING
MONDAY, SEPT 14, 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:

HARVEST TASTING AND SHARING.

BRING SOMETHING INTERESTING FROM YOUR GARDEN TO SHARE WITH THE GROUP

Alaska State Fair
August 27 – September 7

PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE, BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER

Photos by Curt Mueller

Marge and the peasant have been growing a variety of tasty and healthful vegetables for a good many years. During that time we have made changes to our methods in an effort to improve yields and quality and to extend the season of productivity.

One of our favorites is bush beans. Our Alaska climate is not always favorable for this endeavor, although this summer has been an exception. Beans like warmth, plenty of sunshine, and timely but not excessive moisture. As often as not we have had cool, wet summers with much overcast, and growing beans is marginal. We can expect more of those years, even though our earth is warming. The peasant would like to tell you about the various methods we have developed over the years that have resulted in a consistent harvest.

Our vegetable gardening began with growing on a flat surface and over time it evolved into growing everything in raised beds. There are advantages to this system for most vegetables and for the gardeners as well. For beans it provides better soil drainage and allows better air circulation around the plants. If planted near the outer edges of the bed this is especially so. There is also less contact with the soil.

Provider has been consistently good as a seed variety. Pre-sprouting the seed has become the norm, giving us an even stand and earlier start to allow the plants to develop. Along with this came covering the raised bed with clear plastic to raise the soil temperature. The seeds are sown and the plastic is slit directly above the seed-row at that time. The slits are interrupted about every foot and a half and an uncut part of about two inches left to help hold the plastic in place. Then cuts about three inches deep are made at right angles to the first slits and on both sides. These cuts are about an inch apart. This creates little flaps that lie on the soil until the seedlings emerge.

The seedlings push the flaps up on their own with no help required by the gardener. We use six-mil plastic that is good for two or three seasons. It is removed in the fall.

There is very little weeding required during the growing season. The bed is thoroughly weeded before planting and the plastic cover helps hold down weeds. Any large weeds that grow close to the beans can be removed by carefully reaching through the slits in the plastic. Once the beans are well grown they will shade the whole area of the bed and weeds are no longer a factor. The quarter inch drip hose which waters the beans is placed next to the rows before covering. A turn of a valve does the watering. Moisture level can be monitored by feeling the soil through the slits.

Initially we grew three rows in a 54 inch wide bed. The beans were too crowded and picking difficult so we went to two rows close to the outsides of the bed. This system gave us a good crop yield most years, but summers with a lot of inclement weather were still causing problems, thus another change was made.

A light framework of 2x2s and 1x2s was constructed and covered with 6 mil plastic. The sides could be raised at varying heights and openings were left at each end for air circulation. Now the rain could be kept off the plants and the sides lowered to contain the heat. On a sunny day the interior temperature could reach 100 degrees and the sides raised enough to keep the temperature within a satisfactory range. It worked quite well but the plastic on top sagged and trapped rain, requiring pushing the plastic up to dump the water and keep the plastic from bursting and dumping the water on the beans.

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SLUGS…THEY'RE HERE!

STEPHEN BROWN, MAT SU/COPPER RIVER DISTRICT AGRICULTURE AGENT

With the mostly warm dry summer we've had it looked like we were going to dodge large numbers of slugs this year...not so! The rains of the last few weeks have caused my phone to ring off the hook with desperate gardeners trying deal with this slimy and voraciously hungry mollusk. First, some background on slugs.

Slugs and snails are terrestrial gastropods, the largest group of mollusks, which include squid, octopus and clams. They need a cool, moist environment. Slugs are active with a temperature between 38°F and 88°F, when the relative humidity approaches 100 percent and there is no wind. Slugs have a reduced shell and are unprotected, soft-bodied and susceptible to drying out. For these reasons, they are most active above ground during the night when temperatures are cooler and the humidity is higher. Slugs overwinter as adults by hibernating in the topsoil or as eggs. They move by a single muscular foot that secretes a fluid to help in movement. When the fluid dries out it leaves a silvery, slimy trail. If the surroundings are cool and moist, a slug may regularly travel the same route between its shelter and food source.

An individual slug has both male and female reproductive capability. Any slug is capable of laying eggs and producing young slugs after fertilization. Slugs give birth to clusters of small, translucent or pearly white eggs that are laid under boards, along edges of garden beds, in soil crevices or other cool, moist shelters. The presence of many small juvenile slugs may indicate a birthing location warranting control. Slugs most often lay eggs at the start of late-summer rains, although some slugs lay eggs in early spring.

Habitat modification is an important first step in controlling slugs. Slugs need cool, moist conditions free from wind and disturbance. Remove debris, weeds, tall grass and plant branches that contact the ground to reduce slug habitat. Manipulate garden plants to encourage air movement, especially at ground level. Regularly till the soil between rows and in garden beds to disrupt slug habitat. If mulch is used, apply rough textured mulch (even compost) several inches deep. Tillage is one of the best slug controls.

Hand picking slugs is effective when combined with slug barriers. Look for one-inch clusters of slug eggs on the edges of garden bed frames. Dispose of eggs along with juvenile and adult slugs. Wear disposable, waterproof gloves when hunting slugs after sunset or early in the morning. Look for slugs on succulent foliage. Place slugs in a container with 5–10 percent ammonia and water or just soapy water. Do not apply salt to slugs in the garden. Slugs can also be picked and crushed. Dead slugs placed in compost may give off an objectionable odor.

Slug barriers include copper foil strips (one inch wide) which, when placed on the edges of garden bed frames, will exclude slugs, or corral existing slugs in the bed. Wood ash, dry sawdust and diatomaceous earth placed around beds in strips an inch or more deep all provide effective slug barriers as long as they remain dry. There are unconfirmed reports that crushed eggshells provide an effective slug barrier. Only the copper strip is an effective barrier when wet.

Beer and yeast traps (involving beer or water and yeast in a container sheltered from rain) placed at or slightly above ground level are more novelties than actual control. The beer and yeast traps need to be replaced every four days and have to be placed several feet apart.

Iron phosphate provides organic slug control. One product, Sluggo™, contains iron phosphate and is listed as an organic pest control product by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI). Mortality is slower compared to the nonorganic pesticide described below.
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After using that setup for a couple of years we purchased some corrugated greenhouse covering to eliminate the sagging. That rigid material is removed and stored over winter so as to keep snow from collapsing the structure. The twelve by four-and-half-foot bed provides us with beans for the summer table and some for the freezer and dilly beans. It's not perfect, but it does work quite well.

Thanks folks.

This structure is our present method of growing beans. Please note the sloping top and opening on the end. There is a similar opening on the far end. A thermometer is visible hanging inside. The sides may be opened as desired or dropped all the way down. Partly visible is a slat to hold the bean plants from spilling over the side. It is near the end of the season, but the beans are still producing well.

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I use tarps with bricks to ensure it stays in place. I usually don't lose any plants and I have purposely kept beds near my house uncovered so I know it helps. I usually uncover the tarps around middle to late March so the ground can get some water, and it also depends on the weather and snow levels.

Hope this helps give you in preparing your yard for fall, and get those veggies and fruits canned to enjoy them all winter.

2015 Mat-Su Master Gardener Class

Location: Matanuska Experiment Farm, 1509 S. Georgeson Dr., Palmer (Old Trunk Road)

Dates: Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, September 2 - December 2

Cost: $300 with $150 refunded if required 40 hours of community service are completed by September 2, 2016.

The Alaska Master Gardener course will cover subjects such as botany, Integrated Pest Management, soil science, organic and conventional gardening practices, fast composting, lawn establishment and maintenance, fertilizer fundamentals, how to give gardening advice and much more. The course will be taught by Dr. Steve Brown and a variety of guest lecturers who are horticulture experts. Course fee includes *The Alaska Master Gardener Manual: Sustainable Gardening* and many other supporting University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service bulletins and publications.

For more information, contact instructor Steve Brown at 907-745-3639 or scbrown4@alaska.edu

To register and pay online,
visit: http://bit.ly/ces-workshops

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The active ingredients of iron phosphate are naturally occurring elements and are fairly safe to the environment, humans, pets and wildlife.

Pesticide with the active ingredient metaldehyde applied as 4 percent bait provides effective slug control. Metaldehyde destroys slugs' mucus-producing system, which reduces slug mobility and digestion. Pesticides containing metaldehyde are sold as baits (Metarex, Deadline, and Orcal). Ideal baits are small, fine and resistant to breakdown in rain. Metaldehyde is attractive to dogs and other mammals.

A bittering agent, Bitrex, is added to metaldehyde-based molluscicides to discourage feeding by non-target animals. When used alone, metaldehyde is not harmful to beneficial organisms (insects, millipedes, spiders, etc.). It does not accumulate in the soil and rapidly breaks down in sunlight and water.

Information adapted from the UAF Cooperative Extension Service publication Slugs by Robert Gorman.

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 Assoc..
http://www.apfga.org/

Alaska Plant Materials Center
http://plants.alaska.gov/

Alaska Rock Garden Society
http://www.akrockgardensociety.org/

Cooperative Extension Service, Palmer
http://www.uaf.edu/ces/districts/matsu/

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 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

For anyone is needing some volunteer hours – there are a few slots vacant to weed the Palmer Library Planter in downtown Palmer. See the club's webpage for vacancies. Send an email to matsumastergardeners@gmail.com in interested.

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: kdblaylock@ak.net

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST 2015

Aug 27 – Sep 7, Palmer, Alaska State Fair

SEPTEMBER 2015 AND BEYOND

Sep 2, Palmer, Fall 2015 Master Gardener Class Starts (Sep 2 – Dec 2, 2015)
Sep 14, Palmer, MMG Mtg., Harvest Tasting and Sharing
Oct 5, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
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~~

September 2015

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

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MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S CLUB
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