



President's Patch

By Sheri Walker

The count down is on. Its only a few weeks until the Statewide MG Conference; **Back to Our Roots**. The registration form is available on the website for downloading now. Hopefully by the time this newsletter is published, payment may be made online with Paypal. Speakers have been confirmed and the agenda set. That too will soon be available for viewing on the website. Space is limited so if you are planning to attend, please register early.

Volunteer Needs for the Conference are as follows:

- ◆ Registration: 4 or 5 people to sit at registration table and distribute registration materials
- ◆ Door Prizes: 2 or 3 people to assist with awarding of door prizes
- ◆ Meal Tickets: 3 or 4 people to collect meal tickets

Please send an email to matsumastergardeners@gmail.com indicating what area you would like to volunteer. Alternately, you can call me at 746-6772 or Wayne at 745-3537.

Door Prizes Needed: There is a lot of talent represented in our association. The planning committee thought it would be nice if we showed off a little and donated some of our talents as door prizes. So if you have any creations that you would like to donate, please contact Marge Mueller at 745-6144. Some examples of items already offered are:

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Patch	1
Next Chapter Meeting/Agenda	1
Beginnings	2
Terrriums	3
Garden Links	4
Announcements	4
Contacts	5

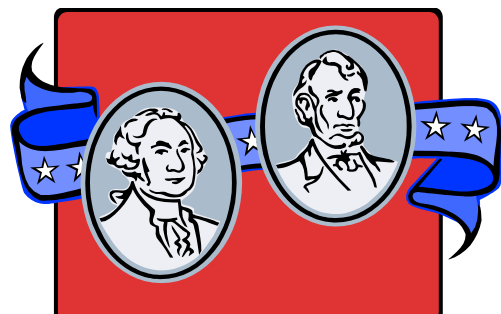
Chapter Meetings First Monday of the Month

Next meeting
Monday, February 1, 2010, 7:00 pm
Location:
MTA Conference Room
Palmer, Alaska

Agenda:
To be determined

Guest Speakers:
Michael & Phyllis Kircher
Photographic Tour of Bolivia's Landscapes and Vegetation

birdhouse, honey, homemade soap, mosaic and more.



Beginnings

By: Curt Mueller

From more youthful days back in Wisconsin comes this truism:

When the days begin to get longer
The winter begins to get stronger.

That seems to apply here in Alaska as well, and after February second we'll undoubtedly see another six weeks of winter, whether the marmot sees his shadow or not. So be it.

If we reckon the year as beginning at the winter solstice, we are well into another orbit around our star. At this writing the morning twilight comes earlier and the sunrise occurs more to the east day by day. Once again the sun is gaining altitude and begins to warm us. This is indeed a miraculous time of the year. It gives one pause to ponder how early humans must have observed the phenomenon of seasonal changes, and when crop growing was begun, how planting time was determined.

As it was for our ancestors, It is still a miracle to see green plants emerge from a lifeless looking brown seed capsule. We have the added enjoyment of perusing catalogs and ordering seed, planning and seeding. Good for the body and mind, most certainly.

As of New Year's Day, our own tomatoes were seeded, and with the help of bottom heat were beginning to emerge by the 4th. By the next day they were all up but for a few stragglers. With good intense supplemental lighting they have grown and were transplanted to three pots on the 16th. They will be moved to the greenhouse when it is heated by the first or second week in February. The greenhouse will be kept at about 55F for the sake of keeping other annual seedlings from stretching out too quickly, therefore the tomato plants will develop more slowly than they would in a balmy temperature.

They will be repotted to six inch pots, and when the roots have filled those they will be moved once again to five gallon plastic bags, which will be their home for the season. The bagged plants will be moved at that time to a heated concrete slab, which mitigates somewhat the cool air

temperatures. With judicious staking and pruning they should ripen some tomatoes by the middle of May.

Always in the past it has been my preference to grow hybrid tomatoes. The qualities that have been selected for are certainly conducive to good production, especially for greenhouse growing. Earliness in some varieties is another factor in favor of hybrids. Last fall some friends presented me with a book featuring heirloom varieties. As a consequence my repertoire of plants includes six varieties of same this year.

Perhaps some of you Masters would enjoy trying some of these heirlooms. I'd be happy to share some seed with you. The varieties available are as follows:

Marvel Stripe
Bull's Blood
Delicious
Goliath
German Giant
Giant Belgian

All of these are supposed to be well flavored as well as of a large size. Most are also quite late in ripening. If you have the facilities that shouldn't be a problem. Anyone who wishes to join me in this experiment is welcome to some of my seedstock. You can email to [mueller@mtaonline.net] or phone 745-6144. I'll bring your seed to our February meeting. I don't have an overabundance of seed, but four or five seeds of any or all kinds should give you plenty of plants.

Another new venture for me is growing geraniums [pelargoniums] from seed. These were seeded on January 7th and are about ready to transplant. The variety Ringo 2000 Red provided more seed than I needed. This is a hybrid, and should produce beautiful flowers. The seed would probably lose some of its viability by 2011, and again I'd be happy to share. It needs to be planted soon in order to get full enjoyment from the plants.

Continued on page 5

Terrariums

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

The true definition of a terrarium is a tightly closed clear glass or plastic container filled with small plants. They have now come to also mean an open, transparent container for growing and displaying plants. Terrariums are most useful for small plants that do not adapt well to normal home atmospheres. When properly planted and located, they provide a way to grow many plants with minimal care.



Open terrariums provide higher humidity for plants than do dish gardens, but closed terrariums retain more humidity than either of the other container types. The open terrarium and dish garden require more frequent watering, but danger of disease buildup is reduced.

Before beginning your terrarium, decide whether you prefer a woodland, tropical or desert theme. Keep in mind the temperature and light conditions in the location where you plan to place the terrarium. Select plants that suit the location.

All closed containers should have transparent covers. Containers with small openings also are quite satisfactory. Containers with large openings without covers can be used but will require more frequent watering to maintain the high humidity needed by some plants. However, open terrariums are drier and less

subject to disease. Containers without high sides are suitable for dish gardens and need not be transparent.

The growing medium for terrariums must be clean, well drained and high in organic matter. Potting soils are ideal because they are sterilized and ready for use. Prepackaged peat-like mixes also are excellent choices.

Adding fertilizer is not necessary, since plants in terrariums should not grow rapidly. If you know the soil used has exceptionally low fertility, light fertilization with a houseplant fertilizer may be done after plants are established.

Many plants are suitable for growing in terrariums. Plants that have a low and dense growth habit usually are best. Larger plants are often used. They are kept small in terrariums by cutting back the tips

The closed terrarium normally will not need water for 4 to 6 months, or when fogging on the sides stops, or when plants wilt. Open terrariums need watering occasionally, but not as frequently as other houseplants. A dish garden, unless it is the desert type, will need frequent watering. It is important that waterings always be light. Since there is no external drainage, heavy waterings result in standing water in the gravel and charcoal, which encourages root diseases. These materials may help overcome occasional light overwaterings, but frequent heavy watering will inactivate the system. When watering the closed terrarium, don't replace the cover until wet foliage has dried.

Continued on page 5

Garden Links

Master Gardeners of the Tanana Valley:

<http://interiormastergardeners.org/>

**Alaska Master Gardeners Association,
Anchorage Chapter:**

<http://alaskamastergardeners.org/>

Alaska Botanical Garden:

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

**Master Gardeners of the Tanana Valley Monthly
Newsletter:**

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/newsletters/mastergardeners/2008/0812tananamgu.pdf>

Alaska Peony Growers Association:

<http://alaskapeonies.org/index.html>

Alaska State Federation of Garden Clubs:

<http://www.gardencentral.org/asfgc/homepage/>

UAF, CES Palmer Website:

<http://mat-suces.weebly.com>

UAF Cooperative Extension Service Publications:

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

Alaska Plant Materials Center:

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_pmc.htm

Master Gardener Research Link:

<http://search.extension.org>

Matsu Master Gardener Site:

www.matsumastergardeners.org

Announcements

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010:

February 1, 7:00 pm: Photographic Tour of Bolivia's Landscapes and Vegetation, Michael and Phyllis Kircher, MTA conference room

March 1, 7:00 pm: MG Conference final preparation, MTA conference room

March 5-6: Statewide Master Gardener Conference, Back to Our Roots, Grandview Inn, Wasilla

April 5, 7:00 pm: Soaps and Ointments from Native Plants, Hazel Koppenberg, MTA conference room

May 3, 7:00 pm: TBA

June 5, 9am-3pm: Plant Sale, Palmer Pavilion

June 7, 7:00 pm: Library Planter, Palmer Library

July 12: TBA

August 2: TBA

September 13, 7:00 pm: Native Trees and Shrubs for the Landscape, Patricia Joyner, MTA conference room

October: TBA

November 1, 7:00 pm: Fungi for Gardeners, AKA Mushrooms, Diane Pleninger

December 6, 7:00 pm: Christmas Party and Elections

GREEN HEARTS

Join us for this Taste of Spring! "Green Hearts" is a gathering of Green-Hearted (and -Minded) folks in the depth of an Alaskan winter who can't wait for spring! This Valley Arts Alliance Second Saturday event will take place at the Mat-Su College Green House on Saturday, February 13, from noon until 4pm, so bring your Valentine! There will be live music and informal talks about gardening, art and photography. If you'd like to be part of organizing this event, please contact Carmen Summerfield at: carmen@valleyartsalliance.com or 746-2370. www.valleyartsalliance.com

2010 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you haven't done so already, please renew your membership with the Matsu Master Gardener's! Those that have not renewed will be removed from the mailing and email list for future newsletters and email updates! Membership renewal forms are available on the website at www.matsumastergardeners.org or contact Michele Walker, our membership coordinator.

**NEXT CONFERENCE PLANNING MEETING
FEBRUARY 11 2009, PALMER EXTENSION OFFICE**

CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Sheri Walker	746-6772
VP	Wayne Bowman	745-3537
Secretary:	Michele Walker	306-1188
Treasurer:	Arlene Bowman	745-3537

If you have gardening news, photos or information you'd like to share in the newsletter, please contact: Deb Blaylock, Email: kdblalock@ak.net

Continued from page 2

Stokes, one seed supplier is quite specific on germination and culture. A soil temperature of 70F to 75F to be kept steady both day and night, with seed container being covered with stretch wrap or something similar, is needed. Bottom heat is definitely in order. Vesey's recommended total darkness for germination, so that was the regimen. It was a surprise to see many of the plants emerging after three days. At that time they were moved under a good light to prevent elongation, with the bottom heat continued until the 18th, when many had begun to show their first true leaves. Most are ready to transplant to pots.

I'd like to pass along a couple of website addresses that contain some comprehensive and invaluable germination data. They are:

backyardgardener.com [Thompson and Morgan]

onrockgarden.com [Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society]

Thank you, friends, for your kind persistence if you've got this far.

Happy Gardening.

Curt Mueller

Continued from page 3

A terrarium, open or closed, should not receive direct sunlight. The dish garden, however, which contains plants needing bright light, may be placed in direct sun. Direct sunlight on a closed or tall, open container will cause heat buildup that will injure most plants. Most plants suitable for terrariums don't require extremely bright light, but do well in good light. If the terrarium is to be located where there is low light, add artificial light. A 100-watt bulb placed close to the terrarium or fluorescent tubes placed over the terrarium will be helpful. Where outside light is poor (like Alaskan winters), add artificial light up to 16 or 18 hours each day.

Plants receiving light from a window gradually will face that direction. To keep the terrarium attractive from the desired view, turn it occasionally to keep the plants growing normally.

Information adapted from University of Missouri Extension publication "Terrariums" by David Trinklein.