

April 2010



## President's Patch

By Sheri Walker

It is always very gratifying when hard work pays off. Such is the case with the conference "Back to Your Roots". A huge thank you to all the committee members and volunteers who made it happen. Just like a garden, it didn't unfold exactly as we had planned it but was lovely anyway, turning out better than we had imagined. There were a few last minute speaker revisions and a couple of impromptu presentations. There were also not as many in attendance as we had hoped but it actually made for a very friendly, interactive conference with a lot of networking. Much valuable and interesting information was shared not only by the presenters but also by the attendees.

Now the gardening season is upon us in spite of the snow that still lingers around. I have tulips poking through the ground by the house that were spared from the voles and now I must protect them from the moose. There's roses to prune and seedlings to take care of and figure out where on earth I am going to put them when they get bigger until its time to plant them out.

Next on the agenda for club activities is the Home, Garden and Outdoor Living Show at the Menard Sports Complex in Wasilla, April 23-25. The organizers are kindly donating a space to us as a non-profit organization. This is an incredible opportunity for us to get the word out about us and spread some gardening information around. We will have for sale the remainder of the T-shirts and hats.

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### Chapter Meetings

#### First Monday of the Month

Next meeting

Monday, April 5, 2010, 7:00 pm

Location:

MTA Conference Room  
Palmer, Alaska

#### Agenda:

Seed Swap  
Home, Garden and Outdoor Living  
Show  
Plant Sale

#### Guest Speaker:

Hazel Koppenberg, Making Soaps  
and Ointments from Native Plants

As well, we will promote the plant sale. This also presents a great opportunity for folks to get their volunteer hours in as we will need volunteers to staff the booth.



## Allium cepa

By: Curt Mueller

Whatever other benefits *Allium cepa* may have health-wise and otherwise, this plant certainly adds zest and flavor to many of our meals. It is our onion, a favorite of many of us. This literary effort will not dwell on its virtues, but will attempt to provide some tips on its successful production in the home garden.

We're all familiar with the onion sets available in garden centers at this season. They are easy to grow by this method, and certainly the technique is common and useful. Perhaps less common is to grow onions from seed. This is the topic presented here, and methods are those of the writer and certainly not the only way to grow from seed.

For starters, Johnny's is my favorite seed source. They give an excellent description and list the latitude favorable for each variety. Maturity time is 100 days or more, and a latitude designation of 55 degrees works out very well, even at our own latitude of almost 62 degrees.

This is my growing method. Variations will work as well.

Seed in mid-March in the greenhouse in 32 cells per flat. Seed directly into the cells with 3 or 4 four seeds per cell, then thin to one plant when germination has taken place. Seed is viable for at least a year or two.

Grow at 55 to 60 degrees nighttime temperature. Plants can be clipped back to a length of four inches if they get too long and floppy. Fertilize about every ten days.

Plant to garden in May when soil temperature has begun to warm. I use a raised bed to enhance soil temperature. Spacing is 4 inches apart in rows spaced six inches. This is a bit tight but makes good use of available space. I mix 8-32-16 into the soil and water with a soluble fertilizer mix of even ratio at time of transplant.

Keep soil moist. Onions have a shallow root system. I use a drip hose system to water the whole bed at once.

Weed thoroughly.

Control root maggots. I use a Diazinon spray when white eggs appear on leaves. One or two applications are sufficient. Diazinon is no longer available. Present choice for chemical is Lorsban.

When leaves collapse it is time to harvest. This takes place in late July or early August.

Sun-dry the onions after harvest. I place a piece of mesh shelving on a garden cart and wheel it into the garage at night or during inclement weather.



When tops have dried, twist them off and store the onions in onion sacks obtained from your favorite green-grocer. It seems to work best to store with the onions upside down to discourage sprouting. A cool dry place above freezing is in order.

We hang the sacks on coat hooks in the garage. Onions store well into the following summer if not used up before.

There you have the basics. I'm open to other ideas on this subject.

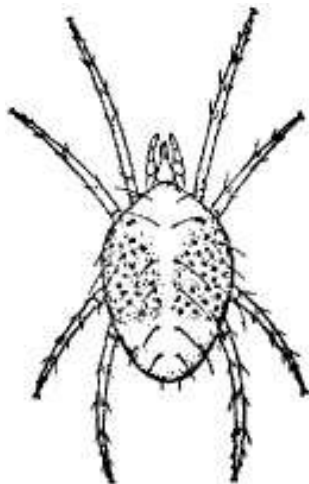
Thank you.

Curt Mueller

## Least Toxic Control of Spider Mites

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

Spider mites, or red-spiders, appear as tiny dots moving over the plant surface. They have fine piercing/sucking mouthparts and feed by sucking out plant fluids. Their feeding activity on plant tissue results in a browning of the foliage ("bronzing") due to the loss of chlorophyll. You can see silken webbing over parts of the plant when populations are high. Hot, dry weather favors rapid spider mite development, whereas low temperature, high humidity and excess moisture are unfavorable.



### Hosts

A commonly encountered spider mite is the twospotted spider mite. It attacks a wide variety of field, garden, greenhouse, nursery and ornamental plants as well as several weed species. It can be found on all areas of the plant.

### Chemical Control

- A. Apply an insecticidal soap.
- B. Apply a 2 percent solution of horticultural oil.
- C. Sulfur sprays and dusts can be helpful (greenhouse only).

### Biological Control

Various predatory mite species (e.g., *Phytoseiulus persimilis*, *Amblyseius californicus*) are available commercially for release on mite-infested plants in the home and greenhouse. They cannot bite people, and they do not leave the plants.

### Mechanical Control

- A. Wash plants with soapy water (2 teaspoons mild detergent per gallon of water) and a soft brush, making sure to wash the undersides of leaves.
- B. Hosing tough plants with a forceful spray of water knocks off mites and destroys their webs.

### Cultural Control

- A. Mist plant foliage periodically to increase humidity around the plant, and avoid high temperatures and soil-moisture stress.
- B. Quarantine new plants and treat before placing them among established plants.
- C. Consider carefully if plant species particularly susceptible to spider mite infestations are worth their keep.

*Adapted from University of Missouri Extension publication "Least Toxic Control Methods to Manage Indoor Plant Pests" by Bruce A. Barrett*

## 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](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_pmc.htm)

**Master Gardener Research Link:**

<http://search.extension.org>

**Matsu Master Gardener Site:**

[www.matsumastergardeners.org](http://www.matsumastergardeners.org)

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## Announcements

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010:

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

**April 23-25,** Home, Garden, and Outdoor Living Show, Wasilla, Menard Sports Complex

**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

### WOLF LAKE WELLNESS

Wolf Lake Wellness is a Bi-monthly buying club of organic and natural foods and non-food items. They are looking for farmers in the local area who can supply the following:

- Organic or Natural Non synthetic chemical fertilizers
- Plant starts for sale
- Chemical free produce, flowers for sale through the summer/fall months
- Source for Natural raised chicken eggs.
- Source for local honey and comb
- Sources of cold process natural soaps
- Makers of natural products that may be interested in working with us as an outlet of their products.

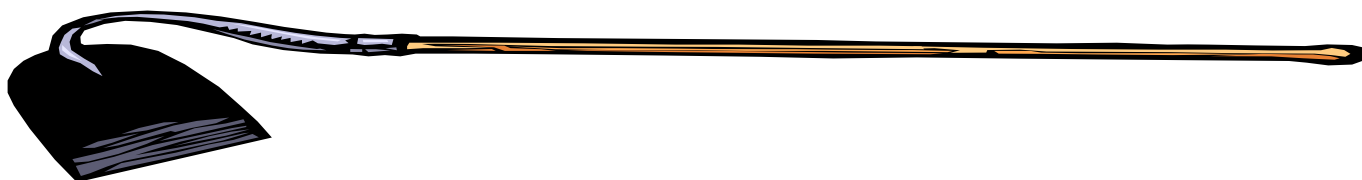
Contact Ludie Barank at: **Phone:** (907) 746-2800 or (907) 715-8254 or **Email:** [wlw@wolflakewellness.com](mailto:wlw@wolflakewellness.com)

## Mat-Su Master Gardeners Meeting Minutes

March 1<sup>st</sup> 2010

President Sheri Walker called the meeting to order with 14 people in attendance. Sheri Walker read the minutes, Wayne Bowman moved to accept the minutes as read, seconded by Marie Domer, and passed. Sheri began by asking if the club would like to make a purchase for the plant sale. After some discussion it was decided that the club would forgo a purchase this year. Sheri then proposed that the club consider allowing the board to investigate the purchase of a projector, as it is used at 10 out of 12 meetings a year and has potential for other club uses as well. Currently the club borrows a projector from the Co-operative extension which can at times be inconvenient when unavailable. Marge Mueller proposed a motion to allow the board to begin investigating the purchase of a projector, with Hazel Koppenburg seconding. Marie Domer stated her opposition to the motion stating the Co-operative extension should be helping more in that regard. The objection has been so noted and the motion was passed. Sheri then brought to the attention of the club that the Alaska Home, Garden and Outdoor Living Show had offered to donate a booth at their event (April 23-25) for the club to display a presence. With the opportunity for hourly presentations and demonstrations the club agreed it was a good idea, allowing Sheri to move forward with the paperwork. Marie Domer suggested that she and Steve Brown could present their intro to Alaska Gardening Classes at the show. Lastly Arlene Bowman presented the hats and shirts which will be sold at the conference. Prices were discussed and \$15.00 an item was decided upon. A motion to adjourn was made by Warren Templin, and seconded by Marie Domer and passed.

Michele Walker, Secretary

**RIVER BEAN'S ORGANIC FERTILIZER RECIPE**

- 3 parts fish meal
- 3 parts bone meal
- 1 part rock phosphate
- 1 part greensand
- 1 part wood ash OR kelp meal

**RIVER BEAN'S SOIL MIX**

- 2 ½ parts top soil
- ½ part perlite
- ½ part vermiculite
- ½ part compost
- 3 parts complete organic fertilizer
- 1 part lime

**FROM PAT TREMAINE:**

Fish meal is available from Alaska Sea-Ag in Palmer. I buy most of my ingredients at AK Garden and Pet, which is the wholesale part of AK Mill and Feed.

Far North Garden Supply in Wasilla has large bags of ingredients and that's where I buy the worm cast

When I had my soil tested in May, 2009, my beds were deficient in Nitrogen, so I added blood meal to the mix. For gardening, I use the fertilizer mix and add it to the garden and work it in. I just sprinkle it on around the plants for all plants.

For Pots, I use Promix with the inoculant and use a lot more than the top soil listed in the recipe. That sounds like a lot of fertilizer for that much soil. I also use worm compost, manure, Epsom's salts for tomatoes, microbes, and mineral rock to the mix and to the garden. Roses like alfalfa meal and I mix it in the pots in the spring. I mix the ingredients in the wheelbarrow and add water and mix well before planting. Linda Lockhart from the North Root Garden Club says to use "Thrive" on all plants as soon as they come up. It is available at Lowe's and Home Depot, etc. It adds hormones, enzymes, and trace minerals, and makes the nutrients available to the plants

## 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](mailto:kdblalock@ak.net)

Website: [www.matsumastergardeners.com](http://www.matsumastergardeners.com)  
 Email: [matsumastergardeners@gmail.com](mailto:matsumastergardeners@gmail.com)

## PLANTING TIPS

Pat Tremaine, 746-4623, [tremaine@mtaonline.net](mailto:tremaine@mtaonline.net)

### GREEN BEANS IN ALASKA FOR EARLY CROPS

For green beans in June, this is what I do to start the seeds. I usually use Contender or Provider seeds and start them on May 1. I soak the seeds overnight in my sprouter jar with a screen on top. I rinse them in the morning and drain upside down for a few minutes. I rinse them 4 times a day and drain them. As soon as I see sprouts, I keep them in a bowl where they can spread out. I put water in the bowl and drain them well carefully, being careful not to break the roots and sprouts. I put a loose piece of paper towel over the top between rinsings. I let the seeds sprout until they have green leaves and roots on them and plant them gently into 4 packs, one to each cell. I put them under bright lights and then outside if the weather is nice and harden them off. I use IRT (infrared transmitting plastic) over the rows for a few days to heat them up after putting in fertilizer and compost. The first of June I plant them in rows about 8-12 inches apart. It's best to use irrigation under the plastic or fabric, but I don't use it, so I water in the holes. I also use floating row covers over hoops to keep in the heat. When I use this method, I pick green beans on June 15, which continues for many weeks.

### PLANTING PEAS, PEA PODS, SUGAR SNAP PEAS

I sprout the pea seeds the same as beans, but start earlier around the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week in April so I can plant them outside around May 7, along with my salad garden. I don't sprout them as long and put them in the ground when the roots get long and the leaves just start to show. I put the ones I don't plant in the ground into 6 packs to sell at the VGC plant sale. By sale time, they have grown tall and get a head start and people are more likely to buy them. I prefer short pea plants, but last year they were very tall. Water well after planting.

### PLANTING CANDY ONIONS FROM VGC

I prepare the soil with fertilizer and compost. I plant the onions around May 7 with just a little of the green top showing (to get more white part) about 3 inches apart in all directions in my 3 foot beds. Water well. I put floating row covers over the plants to keep out the onion/root maggots, which used to eat the onions and they just disappeared. The onions get huge by the end of summer and I harvest the smaller ones for salads throughout the summer. By the end of July, the row covers can come off, but the plants need to be hardened off a little each day if it is sunny to prevent burning. The green part of the plant can get 2 feet tall and is very crunchy, juicy, and delicious. The onions are harvested after a frost.