



President's Patch

By Sheri Walker

Good soil has life. Those were the words of Christine Greig of Alaska Sea-Ag as she talked with us at our July tour about the need for nourishing the soil so that it can nourish the plants that nourish us. I was intrigued by the simplicity of the process they use for making the fish bone fertilizer. They use an old feed grinder like the one my Dad used to use for making chop for the hogs. I bought a jug to try out. It smells a whole lot better than my compost pile did after my husband buried the halibut and ling cod carcasses in it. I had suggested that we try composting them with straw in a black plastic garbage can like Jodie Anderson from UAF described at our conference. He thought that would just be too smelly a mess to deal with so convinced me his idea was better. I am totally amazed that all the bears within 20 miles didn't show up for dinner as the whole yard stunk for several days. He's going dip netting this week so it will be interesting to see what he thinks we should do with the salmon carcasses. In any case, fish fertilizer has long been recognized as a valuable boost to the soil and the plants growing within it. To learn more about how Alaska Sea-Ag is turning a normally disposed of product into a beneficial fertilizer and other products they market for enriching and amending the soil, visit their website: <http://www.alaskasea-ag.com>.

There is nothing quite like a cucumber that doesn't need salt to taste delicious. We have been enjoying a fresh one every other day or so since end of May. However, we have now reached the point where production has exceeded the ability of consumption. My husband suggested today that we pickle them. My success in making pickles with my Mom was not that great, I preferred good old Bick's dill pickles to home made any day. I will however start adding them to smoothies. Don't laugh until you try it. Cucumbers added in moderation to a fruit smoothie really go unnoticed while packing it full of nutrition. The

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Chapter Meetings First Monday of the Month Next meeting

Monday, August 2, 2010, 7:00 pm

Location:
Kenley Family Farms
Palmer, Alaska

Directions:

Address: 5200 Palmer Fishhook Rd
Palmer, AK. Take the Glenn Highway to Palmer. Continue on the Glenn north. Take a left onto Fishhook Road (about 2 miles out of Palmer). After you pass Trunk Road (about 2.5 miles), we will be the third drive on the left (one half mile from Trunk Road). You can't see our place from the road. Go up the driveway and keep right.

excess of broccoli will not find its way into my smoothies though. I have not tried it but I am afraid that its rich pungent flavor would contrast too greatly with the fruit. I am just grateful for the discovery that broccoli flowers are edible as I am having trouble keeping ahead of it too. I must admit that I have been thoroughly converted to the practice of growing vegetables. It has been incredibly rewarding to produce food for my family that is not only highly nutritious because it is fresher than fresh but also tastes so wonderfully good.

Dealing with Thatch in Alaskan Lawns

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

Thatch is a layer of living and dead roots, crowns and lower shoots that often develops in lawns. It can weaken and even destroy a lawn if not prevented or removed. Because of our cool summer temps, thatch can be very severe in Alaskan lawns.



Factors favorable to thatch development include excessive growth and conditions unfavorable to the microorganisms that decompose decaying plant parts (like cool wet weather). Rapid and excessive growth is likely to produce a heavy thatch because plant material is being produced more rapidly than it can be decomposed.

Grass clippings from mowing do not contribute to thatch. However, once a thatch layer has developed, clippings may speed its formation. Thatch buildup varies among lawns. Kentucky bluegrass and red fescue lawns have greater potential for thatch buildup.

Once thatch starts to form, conditions develop that often result in even more thatch. Accumulated thatch does the following:

- Harbors disease-causing fungi and insects
- Prolongs high humidity, which promotes disease
- Causes shallow root development
- Retards movement of air, water and nutrients into the soil
- Binds or ties up fertilizers and pesticides

These factors contribute to early death of grass plants. Thus, thatch is both a result of unfavorable conditions and a cause of further damaging influences.

Thatch development may go unnoticed in early stages, especially in bluegrass lawns. Lawns with a thick thatch layer may appear healthy in spring, and then suddenly die in large patches during summer heat and drought. As thatch builds up, the roots of new grass plants grow within the thatch layer rather than in the soil. When the lawn is exposed to hot, dry summer weather, the plants are unable to survive.

Desirable cultural practices

- Fertilize moderately and regularly to maintain vigor without excessive growth.
- Cut grass regularly with a mulching mower at the recommended height to maintain vigor and to avoid shock. No more than one-third of the leaf tissue should be removed with each mowing. Clippings may be left to decompose if mowing occurs at regular intervals. As clippings filter into the turf canopy and decompose, nutrients are recycled to the turf. However, do not allow clippings to accumulate on the surface, and remove excessive clippings, especially during periods of rapid growth.
- Collect and remove clippings once a thatch layer has begun to develop to avoid further buildup.
- Irrigate every seven days, or as needed in dry periods, to encourage deep rooting.
- Power rake as needed to keep thatch below ½ inch thick.
- Core aerify to improve penetration of water and fertilizer. Leave soil cores on the surface to dry and crumble before mowing. Mowing the dried soil cores redistributes the soil microbes that decompose soil and thatch, and aids in reducing thatch.
- Top-dress every one or two years with ¼ inch of weed-free manure or soil, similar in texture to the existing soil, to encourage decay of thatch.

Examine the lawn closely regardless of how healthy it appears. Cut several plugs 2 or 3 inches deep. Lift and examine the profile. If thatch is present, it will appear as a distinct horizontal layer of brown spongy or felt-like material.

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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:

August 2, Kenley Family Farms, ??, Alaska
August 26 – September 6, Alaska State Fair, Palmer

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, MTA Conference Room

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

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The Crops Department at the State Fair is in need of volunteers for: entry clerks on the 5-9 PM shift on Wednesdays 8/25 and 9/1 and judges clerks on Thursdays, 8/26 and 9/2, 8 a.m. - Noon.

Please contact Kathy Liska, Crops Superintendent at: 337-2196 or email at akliska@aol.com .

The Flowers Department is also seeking volunteers. It's such fun to volunteer and find out what the judges are looking for in flowers to win blue ribbons and grand champions. Even if you don't enter, you will have fun and find out who wins before everyone else at the fair. If you are a Master Gardener looking for volunteer opportunities, this is a great opportunity. Entry volunteers are needed on 8/25 and 9/1, noon to 9 p.m. and 8/26 and 9/2, 8 a.m. to noon. Volunteering for entries is also fun. Check out the exhibitor's guide at www.alaskastatefair.org. You can print out the guide for flowers and crops to figure out what to enter in your garden.

Please contact Kris Young @ 864-0089 home or (907) 315-6282 cell bulblet@hotmail.com

If you plan on volunteering for either event, please contact Kathy or Kris as soon as possible! Thank you.

CLUB CONTACT INFO

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

A few of Alaska Sea-Ags Products
As seen on the club's recent tour

Dealing with Thatch in Alaskan Lawn, Con't from page 2

When about 1/2 inch of thatch develops in bluegrass, remove it before the grass is damaged. Thatch is best removed by power raking, verticutting or coring with a machine that may be hired or rented. Coring causes less lawn stress than dethatching with a power rake or vertical mower and provides the additional benefit of reducing soil compaction.

In severe situations, removal of thatch by mechanical means also removes most of the living grass. In such cases, moderate treatments over two or three years may be more desirable than attempting complete removal in a single operation.

Necessary lawn improvement practices should be done after dethatching or aerifying. Such operations may be done on the same day and may include top-dressing, reseeding, fertilizing, liming and irrigating.





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



Matsu Master Gardener's Club
PO Box 598
Palmer, AK 99645