



MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER



President's Patch

By Crystal Bailar

Several of our members have been working hard to bring together great Christmas festivities. The Christmas party is shaping up to be quite a celebration. The float for the parade is looking exceptional this year. Sheri Walker says it looks like a prize winner for sure. I am especially thankful for the members who so generously give their time as a service to all of us.

I am struggling to think of something to write about gardening this time of year. It is never too early to look at catalogs and plan for next spring. In fact I received my first 2012 catalog this weekend. I enjoyed all of the wonderful color pictures, and look forward to growing new vegetables next year. I would love to hear from other members about their favorite gardening resources.

We have all been told that one of the keys to successful gardening is creating a plan. I have always been a fan of graph paper and pencil, but there are some free online tools you can use as well. One of these I have tried is from growveg.com which will even send you email reminders when to plant things. I am not sure if it will tell me when to start my seeds indoors, but it seems interesting to me. They have a free 30 day trial, and then charge \$25 a year to remain a subscriber. A free resource can be found at gardeners.com. This website is easy to use, and can help figure out plant spacing if you are interested in intensive gardening. It also gives planting instructions and when to start seeds, even indoors.

I know that most in the Valley had their snow cover blown away in the last windstorm, but we seem to be protected and still have plenty covering our gardens. I had even put a layer of leaves on my perennial garden just in case we

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Chapter Meetings

First Monday of the Month

Next meeting

Monday, Dec 5, 2011, 6:30 pm

**Location: Sophia's Cafe
Palmer, AK**

AGENDA

**To Be Announced
Christmas Party**

GUEST SPEAKER

None

didn't have snow. I was worried about the wind blowing all of my leaves away, so I covered them with bird netting and anchored that with rocks. So even if the snow melts and the winds blow, I hope to keep the garden covered until spring. I will let you know how this works out.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at our annual Christmas party. Last year was exciting and this year is shaping up to be even better.



Nurture by Nature

By: Master Gardener, Curt Mueller

Earth Mother has developed innumerable ways to aid her offspring to propagate and prosper. In the plant world are some we can observe and imitate to further our own skills and enjoyment as gardeners. This essay will pertain to a couple of common ones.

An impervious seed coat is quite common and serves a useful purpose in protecting the seed from being digested by hungry animals or being destroyed by environmental conditions that could cause it to rot. Some examples are the shells on nuts and pits in prunus species. Others are lupines, iris, and clover and our gardening nemesis, chickweed seeds. Waxwings will digest the soft part of the chokecherries and crabapples they ingest, but most of the seeds will pass through their systems whole. The digestive juices will soften the seed coat, and thereby allow the seeds to take up moisture and enhance the germination process.

We can promote germination in seeds such as iris and lupines by using any of several techniques to imitate nature. Scarification is a method of softening or thinning or creating an opening in the seed coat to allow moisture to enter and let the seed begin germination. Nicking the seed coat with a file or sharp knife, tumbling the seeds in an abrasive medium, or soaking the seeds in an acid bath will often do the job.

Clover will germinate readily if seeded near or on the soil surface where it can respond to daylight. Bury it several inches deep in the soil and the seed may lie there for many

years but will germinate when brought to the soil surface. Chickweed will respond in the same way. This is why working soil that is infested with weed seed usually brings on a thick growth of new weeds. Minimum tillage may be of some benefit.

There are a number of plants that produce seeds that germinate only after subjection to cold temperatures. If a plant drops its seeds in late summer or fall, it would be a disadvantage for the seeds to germinate at that time as the seedlings might not survive the winter. Stratification, as the cold treatment is called, prepares the seed to germinate in the spring as temperatures warm. Again, we gardeners can use this technique on those seeds that require stratification. We can plant the seeds in a container and bury it in the snow or store it in a cold place for a sufficient period and then bring it into a warmer environment. The length of the stratification period will vary with different species.

The website onrockgarden.com contains a wealth of information on germination requirements for many varieties of plants. It is quite comprehensive and a good guide.

Definitely worth a look.





AN ALASKA GARDENER'S WINTER CHECKLIST

Contributed by Master Gardener, Deb Blaylock



1. Investigate new plant varieties in seed catalogs. Try only one or two new varieties each year and compare them with others that have been consistently dependable. The Cooperative Extension Service has publications available on recommended varieties of vegetables and fruits.

2. Go over the summer's experiences in your mind; record thoughts. A garden diary can be a valuable record of successes and failures and the causes for each. Use **this information to improve your garden next year.**

3. Build or plan projects for next season. Spring is usually a very busy time. Accomplish as much as possible in the winter to make spring less hectic. Boxes, hangers, cold frames, and indoor lighting may all be projects that can be accomplished indoors during the winter.

4. Improve and organize your food storage facilities. Determine storage requirements for each crop that you grow. Temperature and humidity control are important. Don't forget space requirements differ too!

5. Collect containers and protective covers for seedlings. Empty milk jugs or cartons, metal food cans, and coffee cans are potentially usable as hot caps for protecting newly transplanted crops and as collars to prevent pest problems.

6. Try new recipes for stored produce. Tasty, fresh and nutritious produce is the reward of your gardening efforts. Obtain recipes from your local Cooperative Extension office. Trade recipes with friends and neighbors.

7. Save wood ashes. This is not only a way to recycle waste but using wood ashes will reduce the requirements for lime on a two-to-one ratio.

8. Cut brush and branches for peas, beans, and tall flowers. Using naturally available materials for trellising can reduce the overall cost of gardening.

9. Avoid applying salt to paths and roadways

near plants. Use urea or other fertilizer which can benefit plants next spring. apply sparingly since fertilizers contain salts also. Sand or other inert material can be a good alternative.

10. Collect and use kitchen scraps. Egg shells, coffee grounds, and fruit and vegetable scraps (no meats, fats or salad dressings) can be added to the compost pile and will be recycled into the garden for later use.

11. Swap gardening stories and information. Study insects, birds, plant diseases and gardening techniques. Successful gardening requires constant learning. Use the benefit of another gardener's experience and utilize books, magazines and Cooperative Extension Service newsletters and publications.

12. Keep track of what you're buying in the store and see how you could replace it with homegrown produce. Gardening not only provides you with nutritious alternatives to store bought vegetables but you know what conditions they were grown in from seeding to harvest. Cost, freshness and quality are areas of concern for all consumers.

13. Look into resources at your local Cooperative Extension and your public library. This may include not only written sources of information but gardening classes and workshops that cover all aspects of gardening from a local perspective.

14. Garden indoors in pots and tubs. Be aware of the plant requirements for light and temperature. Winter produce is a real treat.

15. Observe. Take notes. Rest. Dream. Looking forward to spring can make the winters seem short. Plan ahead so that next spring's garden will be the best one yet. Next year's garden and seed catalogs will soon be here.

Source: University of Alaska Fairbanks - Cooperative Extension Service, Publication, HGA-00431, 1990, Wayne Vandre and Marion Stirrup.

MSMG General Meeting

November 7, 2011

Board members present: Crystal Bailar, Sheri Walker, Marge Mueller, Michele Walker, Deb Blaylock



Meeting brought to order by President Crystal Bailar at 7:05 pm

Treasurer's Report: Michele reported \$3968.00 in the bank account. She reminded everyone that it's time to renew membership.

Christmas Party: Potluck. Club is providing turkey and ham. There will be a Chinese auction for anyone wishing to participate with a \$20 limit for the gift. Members bringing children should bring a wrapped gift for each of their children.

Parade: please send your ideas for the float to Curt. The theme is "How Palmer Stole Christmas"

Nomination for Vice President: Wayne made a motion that Verna Euwer and Kristina Tornqvist fill the VP position jointly. Sheri seconded it. Motion passed.

Butte Elementary Holiday Bazaar: Sheri asked if the club was interested in participating in the bazaar again this year. Arlene Bowman said she would look at her calendar to see if she is available. Michele Walker and Christine Ashurst said they may be able to help out if someone else coordinated the event.

Adjourned: 7:25 to make way for Landscape Design presentation.

Submitted by: Sheri Walker

Renew Now for 2012!

I know how quickly schedules fill up with the start of the holiday season just a few weeks away. So get your renewal in now and you can check one more thing off your rapidly growing list of things to do. Renewals can be taken care of quickly using our online PayPal link on the club website www.matsumastergardeners.org , or you can see me at November's meeting and if you are simply too busy for either of those then just drop your payment in the mail.

If you have friends or family that love gardening and you think they would enjoy receiving our emails, coming to our meetings and on our tours then you can purchase them a gift membership and we'll send them out a Seasonal card welcoming them to the club with your name attached as the gift giver.



Happy Holidays

Michele Walker

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/>

Alaska Peony Growers Association

<http://alaskapeonies.org>

Cooperative Extension Service, Palmer Website

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/districts/matsu/>

UAF Cooperative Extension Service Publications

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

Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners

www.sealaskamastergardeners.org

Alaska Plant Materials Center

<http://plants.alaska.gov/>

Master Gardener Research Link

<http://search.extension.org>

Mat-Su Master Gardener Site

www.matsumastergardeners.org

Landscape Plants for Alaska

www.alaskaplants.org

Garden Snaps

<http://www.gardensnapsmap.com/index.html>

Alaska Garden Clubs

<http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org>

Alaska Master Gardener Blog

<http://alaskamastergardener.blogspot.com/>

Integrated Pest Management Program

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

USDA/NRCS Plant Data Base

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/>

Local Alaskan Plants Clearinghouse

<http://www.localplants.org/Home>

Announcements

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

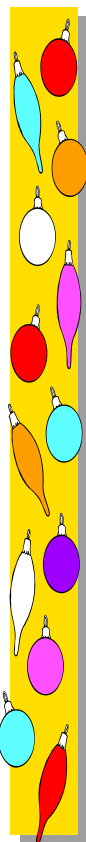
This is a call to all members who would like to be involved in the Butte Elementary Holiday Craft Fair. This sounds like a good opportunity to get more exposure for our club, and volunteer hours for those who need it. We will be handing out publications from the Cooperative Extension, and answering gardening questions as well.

If you would like to help at the table, or would like to sell something please contact Arlene Bowman at wbowman@mtaonline.net.

Dec 3rd from 10 am - 5 pm at Butte Elementary. Set-up will begin at 9AM. If you want to sell items, the club will get 25%.

COLONY CHRISTMAS FLOAT INFO

Float Assembly starts at 1:00 pm, Dec 10th, at the green hangar near the forestry complex. The marshaling area is not set yet. Those who will be participating in the parade, passing out candy, and riding on the float, should be in the marshaling area 20 minutes before starting time which is set at 5:00 pm. Info on the marshaling area will be provided later or contact Curt.



MAT-SU MASTER GARDENER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

**Sofia's Café
December 5, 2011**

**Directions:
Palmer/Wasilla Hwy.
Turn right Midtown Drive
Right on Frontage Rd**

**What to Bring:
Pot Luck Dish
&
\$20 Wrapped Gift
(If you want join in on the Chinese
Auction)**

TURKEY & HAM WILL BE PROVIDED

RSVP to Marge Mueller @ 745-6144

CLUB CONTACT INFO

President:	Crystal Bailar	745-7805
VP	Vacant	
Secretary:	Sheri Walker	746-6772
Treasurer:	Michele Walker	306-1188
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: djblaylock@alaska.edu

Website: www.matsumastergardeners.org

Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2011/2012

DECEMBER 2011

Dec 5, Palmer, MMG Mtg, Christmas Party
 Dec 9-11, Palmer, Colony Christmas Celebration
 Dec 10, Palmer, Colony Christmas Parade

2012

Jan 9, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
 Jan 25-26, - Girdwood, Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference
 Jan 26-27, Girdwood, Peony Grower's Winter Conference
 Feb 6, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
 Feb 21-22, Palmer, Produce Growers Conference
 Mar 5, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
 Mar 13-15, Fairbanks, Sustainable Agriculture Conference
 Mar 15, Anchorage, ABG Spring Garden Conference
 Apr 2, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
 Apr 14, TBD, Alaska Master Gardener Conference
 May 7, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
 Jun 2, Palmer, Plant Sale (Tentative)
 Jun 4, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD
 Jul 2, Palmer, MMG Mtg, TBD

"YULE, IS WHEN THE DARK HALF OF THE YEAR RELINQUISHES TO THE LIGHT HALF. STARTING THE NEXT MORNING AT SUNRISE, THE SUN CLIMBS JUST A LITTLE HIGHER AND STAYS A LITTLE LONGER IN THE SKY EACH DAY. KNOWN AS SOLSTICE NIGHT, OR THE LONGEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR, MUCH CELEBRATION WAS TO BE HAD AS THE ANCESTORS AWAITED THE REBIRTH OF THE OAK KING, THE SUN KING, THE GIVER OF LIFE THAT WARMED THE FROZEN EARTH AND MADE HER TO BEAR FORTH FROM SEEDS PROTECTED THROUGH THE FALL AND WINTER IN HER WOMB. BONFIRES WERE LIT IN THE FIELDS, AND CROPS AND TREES WERE "WASSAILED" WITH TOASTS OF SPICED CIDER."

- [YULE LORE](#)



December 2011

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Matsu Master Gardeners Club
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