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Homer Garden Club

The next Homer Garden Club meeting will be held at 2:00 pm March 17 at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs.

Newsletter

February 2019

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March 17 Meeting will Feature Don (Iceman) McNamara and Donna Rae Faulkner

Don and Donna Rae will share some of their farmer philosophy with us at the March Homer Garden Club meeting. They'll inform us a little bit about what they have been doing on the farm, the Great Lakes Exposition that they attended in December, their Rhubarb Promotion project that YOU can participate in this year, some unique market farm tools and leave time to have you ask questions about what you might be most interested in. So come early! They don't have all the answers, but they do have a lot of enthusiasm! They say that they have more questions than answers, but are happy to share what they know.

Don "Iceman" McNamara and Donna Rae Faulkner are "all in" when it comes to farming and joyfully inspiring communities and new farmers to practice more regenerative agriculture and healthier eating. In 2011, they started farming part time as "Oceanside Farms" on their 1/3 acre home on Ocean Drive Loop (maybe you toured it for HGC's Gardeners' Weekend?). They sold micro-greens and other produce as a CSA

and at Homer Farmers Market. They practiced SPIN farming to rotate crops and expand production. In 2014, they invested in and moved their farm to a larger parcel where they now have 8 high tunnels and outdoor growing areas for vegetables, Alaska certified seed potatoes, fruits, berries, and poultry, root cellars and solar panels. They



strive to learn more and become a more regenerative agricultural practice and profitable market farm. Oceanside Farms currently sells delicious, nutrient-dense produce at their roadside farm

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Treasurer's Report - February 2019

by Louise Ashmun, Treasurer

Homer Garden Club Monthly Treasurer Report for February 2019

Income

Membership	70.00	
Book Sales	1052.91	
Total Income		<u>\$ 1,122.91</u>

Expenses

Feb meeting venue	150.00	
Newsletter	12.23	
Harvest Dinner Venue	200.00	
Total Expenses		<u>\$ 362.23</u>

Checking Beginning Balance 02/01/2019	\$	2,377.89
Income		1,122.91
Expenses		362.23
Interest		<u>0.09</u>
Ending Balance 02/28/2019	\$	3,138.66
Money Market Beginning Balance 02/01/2019	\$	15,005.52
Interest		<u>2.24</u>
Ending Balance 02/28/2019	\$	15,007.76

*Oceanside Farms
(Continued from page 1)*

stand, restaurants, and the Alaska Food Hub. Don's background includes having been a general contractor. Donna Rae's background includes being a public school biology teacher, wilderness guide, and the Director/facilitator for the Association of Alaska School Boards' Alaska ICE ("Initiative for

Community Engagement".) They love farming together and have been working to support others in

small farm development - especially working with residents in four Alaska Native villages on Kodiak Island over the last 3 years!



Donna Rae Faulkner and Don "Iceman" McNamara
Oceanside Farms
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~Earth Laughs in Flowers~
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Meet Fergus Garrett,
Christopher Lloyd and
Great Dixter

When I began thinking about how I could introduce this year's Gardeners' Weekend speaker, Fergus Garrett, it quickly became clear that I couldn't do the article justice without also introducing readers to the Great Dixter Gardens and the gardens' founder, Christopher Lloyd. So, first, an introduction to Great Dixter:

The spectacular gardens at Great Dixter in Sussex, a historic county in Southeast England, trace their origin to Nathaniel Lloyd, a garden writer who specialized in topiary, and who purchased the Great Dixter estate in 1910. What he bought at that time was a beautiful, traditional Tudor-style home. It was there, at Great Dixter, that his son, Christopher (later "Christo" to his friends and admirers) was born in 1921. While Nathaniel designed the garden's original framework, his son Christopher subsequently planted and oversaw its continuing design, development and maintenance and his prominence in the world of horticulture increased year by year. Who could have foreseen, in those early years, that one day, on the back cover of the most recent edition of "Christopher Lloyd's Gardening Year Journal", Christo would be described as one of Britain's "finest gardeners and garden writers" whose gardens were "admired world-wide" for their "bold and colourful planting(s)" and which "...redefined contemporary garden design"?

When we consider British gardens what often comes to mind are "English Country Gardens", which loosely follow a pattern: proper planning that includes some givens

like zone consideration and soil conditions and with specifically chosen plants that can actually be found in published lists. English cottage or country gardens usually surround a cottage or home and are gardens that evoke warm summer days, bees and butterflies. But Christo disparaged that term as "prissy and self-satisfied". To him, a garden was a garden; a richly designed Eden for sure, "intensely planted, continually changing," and where beauty might be the ultimate goal, but where the process involved was equally important. Great Dixter developed via never-ending experimentation and change, if change seemed warranted. So, a garden is a garden, but Great Dixter? Oh! What a garden! How fortuitous it was that Christopher Lloyd, in 1993, chose to hire, as his head gardener, a young man with a degree in horticulture from Wye College. And now, 25 years later, Fergus Garrett remains the head gardener at Great Dixter having worked side by side with and learned from the garden's legendary and innovative founder. Today, 13 years after Lloyd's passing, Fergus Garrett continues his long affiliation with the gardens and is still the head gardener but is also the CEO of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust, founded by Lloyd to secure the legacy of Great Dixter House and Garden.

Over time, Fergus Garrett has become world renowned in his own right. In 2008 he was awarded the Royal Horticultural Society Associate of Honour; in 2012 the International Contributor Award from the Perennial Plant Association; and in 2013 the Longhouse Landscape Award and the Garden Me-

dia Guild Golden Nisse Award. In 2015 Fergus was awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal for his "outstanding contribution to the practice of horticulture". While passing on his knowledge and expertise through national and International student and volunteer programs at Great Dixter and through the many worldwide lectures he has given over the years, Fergus, as the Gardeners' Weekend committee has come to know him, has expanded his catalog of interests to include ecology and how biodiversity and the ornamental garden interact. With his five gardeners and four students he continues experimentation with a new naturalism as he invites some native plants into the gardens. Necessarily booked a year and a half in advance, Fergus Garrett promises to be a very special guest and speaker, one you won't want to miss!

Now is the time to mark your calendars for this year's (13th!) Gardeners' Weekend, July 27th and 28th. Fergus Garrett will be speaking at 7:00 PM at the Islands and Ocean auditorium on the 27th. Remember, too, that our speakers have sold out in recent years, so be sure to buy your tickets as soon as they go on sale. The committee's plan is to have tickets available to HGC meeting attendees at the May meeting and to the public on July 1.





February 17, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 pm by President Kathy Dube' who commended the club members for gathering on this day of inclement weather. Kathy welcomed visitors and pointed out that refreshments would be available in the back of the room following the meeting. Included among the refreshments was a cake celebrating 35th year since the founding of the Homer Garden Club. One member in attendance at the meeting today, Shirley Forquer, was a member of the club in 1984, which drew a round of applause. Kathy also pointed out that the club still is in need of a social secretary and asked for a volunteer to fill this spot. One of the duties of the social secretary is to organize refreshments for meetings. Until this position is filled, Kathy suggested it would be very helpful if any member who arrived early could help in the set up; making coffee and laying out the refreshments. Peggy Craig suggested that perhaps we should not have refreshments at meetings but by informal vote most present felt they wanted to continue with the tradition.

Louise Ashmun, treasurer, provided her report; the treasury currently has a balance of \$17,131.18. She encouraged all members to pay their dues so they could benefit from receiving the HGC newsletter.

Peggy Craig announced that she currently does not know if she will be able to obtain fish bone meal for club members this spring. The supplier hasn't decided if they will be bagging it and Peggy will not be able to retrieve and provide it in bulk form. Once the decision is made an email message will be sent to all members informing them of availability.

Don McNamara, from Ocean Side Farms, asked if anyone had experience growing Black Elderberry. One person said they had tried but were unsuccessful.

Committee Reports followed:

Gardeners Weekend - Kathy Dube' announced that planning is on-going, but there was nothing new to report.

Renee Patten, CoVP, announced that speakers are set through May, with some discussion starting for next year's meetings. Next month, March 2019, Ocean Side Farms will present, followed by a Bonsai Expert in April and a local beekeeper in May.

It was also announced that the new Homer Garden Club book is available for sale at this meeting for \$25. Although it will be available to buy at other locations, if you buy it from the club, we see a bit more profit from each book, and you don't pay tax.

Renee Patton, CoVice President, then introduced the speaker for our meeting.

Casey Matney, PhD, is from the UAF extension service, serving the Kenai Peninsula. He will be discussing the fundamentals of soil management and soil health, plant management, and best approaches for making and using compost in the garden.

He announced that his office now has a new person, Jennifer Hester, to assist him with agriculture and pest management. Their office is located in Soldotna, off K-Beach road near the Fish and Game Office. They can be reached for questions at 907-262-5824.

Casey's office helps with interpretation of soil testing results and recommendations for amendments to your garden or other agricultural setting. Recommendations can be made for conventional (N-P-K) fertilizer or organic amendments, but Casey says records show 80% of the people across Alaska are requesting recommendations for organic amendments.

Among the many topics covered by Casey in his presentation:

Adequate water is very important for the plant to come in contact with and absorb nutrients. The three ways that plants absorb nutrients are root interception, mass flow and diffusion.

Soil ph should be in the correct range so plants can extract maximum needed nutrients from the soil. For mineral soil, which is prevalent in our area, that ideal ph would be 6-7. For heavily organic soil, greater than 20% organic matter, the ideal ph is closer to 5.5-6.5

Nitrogen - needs to be added annually. If plants don't use it, bacteria will use it up over the course of a year, but only add as much as can be used during growing season. Don't over fertilize. Recommended application is usually about 1-1.5#/100 square feet of garden soil

Phosphorus – limited in AK soil, add annually (bone meal, manure, conventional fertilizer)

Potassium – limited in AK soil, might need

to add annually until soil testing indicates adequate amount, then every few years after that

Sulfur – “everything grows better in Alaskan soils with added sulfur” say Casey – add annually until soil testing indicates adequate amount, then maybe every few years

Calcium – almost never need to add to Alaskan soils

Magnesium – usually low, add annually until soil testing indicates adequate amount, then maybe every few years.

Sodium – shouldn't have too much in the soil, don't over fertilize, irrigate well. With evaporation of water salts build up. Any manure will add salts.

Boron – almost always low in Alaskan soil. Boron is a micronutrient, to increase, use Borax – 1-2 TBSP dissolved in 1 gallon water sprayed over 100 square feet of garden soil as amendment until adequate by soil test then perhaps every 3 year application

Manganese – usually okay in Alaskan soil
Copper – usually okay in regularly used Alaska garden soil

Zinc - usually okay in regularly used Alaska garden soil

Aluminum – usually never a problem in Alaska soils

Soluble salts – keep as low as possible, below 1.6. Changes electrical current which effects ability of plant to absorb nutrients. Compost and manure can increase soluble salts. If too high, this can be the reason some crops don't grow well in the soil.

Some common amendments added to Alaskan soils are:

Lime – added as powdered for more rapid reaction or prilled, for less dust and slower breakdown and absorption. If ph of soil is below 6 add at rate of 4-15#/100 sq feet of garden, depending on reactivity of soil. If adding to soil in fall, prilled might be better.

Blood meal – usually about 12% N, add 1-1.5 #/100 sq feet. In high tunnel with longer growing season might need to use again in late June or July as it might be all used up by growing plants.

Fish bone meal – Phosphorus 7-9% and about 3-3.5% Nitrogen - add at 3 #bone meal/100 sq feet garden

Bone meal – up to 14% phospho-

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rus, add at 1.5 #bone meal/100 sq feet garden

Conventional fertilizer – usually has N-P-K only but can get some custom mixes

Wood ashes – raises ph and may be potassium depending on source. But also adds sodium which can be detrimental. Not recommended for usual use in garden.

Langbeinite – 22% potassium, best amendment for increasing potassium, but also adds magnesium. “Might over supply what your garden needs but probably won’t hurt anything.” says Casey

Epsom salts – 10% magnesium and 13% sulfur. Usual recommendation about

1# /100 sq feet garden or guided by soil test.

Borax – 11 % Boron – 1-2 TBSP in 1gallon water per 100 sq feet garden

Manures – horse manure makes perfect compost but cow, chicken, hog also useful

Liquid fish fertilizer – 4-6 % nitrogen

Kelp – Has everything in it, but in small amounts. Usually 1% N, 1% P, 1% K

Composting

Essential needs are: air, water, adequate food and correct temperature. Can be accomplished many ways, a pile, bin, a large row, but the most simple is a 3x3x3 foot pile. If the pile is too big it can be hard to manage and turn, if too small - might not heat up enough.

Compost supplies organic matter to soil, attracts earth worms, stimulates beneficial soil microorganisms, increases soil water and holding capacity, and increases soil nutrient retention

Greens for composting include vegetable or kitchen scraps, coffee grounds, egg shells, grass clippings (although not if Weed and Feed, or other herbicides have been used on lawn), manure from any herbivore (plant eating) animals, pine, spruce or fir needles but no more than 10% as they contain turpines and phenols that can kill the bacteria needed for composting. Grass clippings tend to clump together which decreases air flow and encourages anaerobic bacteria so use them well mixed and turned often.

Browns for composting include leaves, straw, dried brown plants, hay, shredded paper, sawdust, and animal bed-

ding.

Keep in mind these all have different nitrogen and carbon values which will affect the mix.

Layer brown /carbon based materials with green materials, supply adequate water (moist not wet), turn every 5-7 days and try to achieve ideal compost pile temperature of 130-150 degrees. The most rapid composting is achieved by layering 2-3 brown to 1 part green (by volume) although keep in mind that sources will vary in their density of carbon or nitrogen. In general you are aiming for 25:1 Carbon to Nitrogen ratio. This gives you the hottest pile, that kills pathogens and weed seeds. After about 4-6 weeks, the pile will stop heating up when turned. It is probably then done composting, but it is best to let it mature for 2-3 months before use. Do not add more ingredients as the pile is composting as it will stop or slow down the process.

Avoid – any type of oil, grease, meat, fish or dairy, hard to kill weeds, charcoal briquettes, thorny branches, logs, treated lumber or diseased plants.

Do not add lime during the composting process as it will change the ph and possibly stop the composting process. It can be added with other amendments after the compost is done. Do not add wood ashes to compost – they will change the ph and possibly increase soluble salts

Use caution not to add too much compost to the garden, make sure it is very mature and add only 1/8 to 3/16 inch as a top dressing. Maximum amount would be 1/2 inch. Compost is not a fertilizer. It breaks down slowly and only about 1/2 of its nutrients will be released the first year, but by adding small amounts each year there is a slow release to plants. It adds micro-nutrients to soil.

Until compost is ready to be used it is best preserved by keeping it cool, dark and dry. The moment you put it on your garden, weather conditions start the breakdown. Best to put it on in the spring. If you have excess, fall application is okay but there will be some lose of nutrients through weathering.

Other uses for compost include:

Potting mix – good ratio would be 1/3 part compost to 2/3 perlite, sand or soil. Don’t exceed the recommended 1/3 part compost due to accumulation of soluble salts.

Compost tea – soak a porous bag full of compost in water. Use the liquid to water

yard, garden or house plants. Use no more than once per week.

Rain water or well water is best for compost but chlorinated water can be used if you let it set for a day or two before use.

Trouble shooting compost problems:

Rotten or egg odor usually indicates anaerobic process – pile might be too wet

Strong ammonia smell – might indicate too much green in the pile

Low pile temp – pile too small, not enough green

High pile temp – pile too large, insufficient ventilation or turning

Vermiculture – another way to process kitchen scraps. Worms can eat up to half their body weight each day, so if you have 1# of worms you will need 1/2# of food for them each day. Need more when soil temp is warm – less when it is cool. Worm castings are low in nitrogen - similar to kelp.

For more detailed information on composting Casey recommends:

<https://campus.extension.org/pluginfile.php/48384/course/section/7167/NRAES%20FarmCompost%20manual%201992.pdf>

Casey then took several questions from the very interested club members. He was asked about composting rhubarb leaves and potato plants. Rhubarb leaves are fine in compost but above ground stems and leaves of potato plants should only be composted if they are disease free, as they tend to be susceptible to fungal disease that could be passed on through the compost.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gloria Mumm, Interim Secretary



Growing seeds indoors isn't hard; it's keeping them alive that can be challenging. You can save a lot of money by growing seeds, but only if they live and turn into robust plants. Avoiding these common mistakes will greatly increase your odds of success.

NOT ENOUGH LIGHT—Seedlings need a lot of light. No matter what anyone tells you, the chances are that you don't have enough natural light in your house to grow robust seedlings. Even a South facing window usually won't do. You can, however, use artificial light; either get some grow lights developed specifically for plants or for a more economical solution, get some large fluorescent shop lights and put in one warm bulb and one cool. Hang the lights from chains so that you can raise them as your seedlings grow. Keep the lights as close to the seedlings as possible without touching (2 to 3 inches). After your seedlings appear, you'll want to keep the lights on for 12 to 16 hours a day. To make this easier, you can easily hook up a timer to turn your lights on and off automatically.

TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE WATER—Give your seedlings too much or too little water—either way, they are toast. This is perhaps the most challenging part of growing plants from seeds. Because seedlings are so delicate, there is very little room for error when it comes to watering. You want to keep your sterile, seed-starting medium damp, but not wet.

STARTING TOO SOON—Chas Gill, who runs the Kennebec Flower Farm, says that the biggest mistakes people make when starting seeds are, "they start their seeds too early."

Lots of plants don't like the cold, and exposing them to chilly air and soil will stress them out, and stressed out plants are more susceptible to pests and disease. Most plants are ready to go outside four to six weeks after you start the seeds.

PLANTING TOO DEEP—Seeds are finicky when it comes to how deep they like to be planted. Some seeds need complete darkness to germinate, and some like some light. This information is usually on the seed packet. If there isn't any information, the rule of thumb is to plant seeds twice or three times as deep as they are wide. This can be a challenge to figure out, but if you're not sure, err on the shallow side—don't plant your seeds in too deep.

BRINGING OUTDOORS TOO EARLY—There is no benefit in a tough love approach to seedlings when they are young. If you try it, they just up and die or become weak and then fail to thrive. When plants are young, even the most stalwart need a huge amount of coddling and attention. When your seedlings are ready to go outside, after all of this babying, the last thing you want to do is shove them out the door and into the harsh world without significant preparation. The process is simple, though it can be time-consuming and a bit of a logistical nightmare. It is called hardening off. The idea is to expose your plants to the elements gradually. Practically, this means that you put your seedlings outside for more time every day throughout 6 to 10 days, depending on your patience, the temperatures, and the fragility of your seedlings. This prepares them slowly for the wind and sun.

KEEPING IT TOO COOL—For seeds to germinate, most must be kept warm 65 to 75 F. A favorite place to do this is on top of the refrigerator. There are special "seedling mats" that you can buy to put under your seeds. You can also use a small heater set on a timer placed next to your seedlings. You will only need to worry about this until the seeds sprout. After that, most can tolerate fluctuating temperatures (within reason). Whatever type of light you use, natural or artificial should produce enough heat to keep them happy.

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