

# Homer Garden Club

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November 2014

## Newsletter

**Tony Burgess to Talk on Soil Improvement at November 23 Meeting**

The next Homer Garden Club meeting will be November 23 at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs, at 2:00 pm.

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### Understanding and Improving Your Soil

Tony Burgess will be speaking on November 23 on the topic of Soil Improvement. He will be providing information regarding soil types in our area and how to enhance soil scientifically and organically. As a life-long educator, Tony says understanding your soil is an ongoing process.

Tony has a doctorate in Ecology, having taught at Texas Christian University and Columbia University. Tony was intricately involved with the Biosphere II project in Arizona for 19 years. He

was scientist in charge of several biomes in the Biosphere and oversaw all of the biomes after Columbia University

took over the project. Tony went on to join the faculty of Columbia University's Earth Semester in Arizona. He is a significant expert on southwestern desert biomes.

Tony relocated to Homer two years ago after numerous visits to his son, Beau. He describes himself as a Darwinian gardener.

Tony has an aquaculture farm and is moving toward a year-round high tunnel in the Homer area.



**Due to the holidays, there will not be a meeting or newsletter in December.**

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTEREST TO GARDENERS:**

Kyra Wagner, Sustainable Homer, reports that Midge Short, a master gardener from Kodiak, will be making a garden presentation at the Homer Library on Thursday, November 20, at 6:00 pm. There is no charge and reservations are not required.

This comprehensive garden presentation will tentatively cover the following subjects:

- natural ways to extend the growing season and heat your hoop house without the use of electricity or fuel
- planting dates for a year round garden
- how to coax more from your garden and hoop house than you ever thought possible
- tips and tricks within a hoop house on how to emulate the natural environment
- how best to capitalize on eating locally and seasonally - the most understated berry that's rocking the scientific world today .....
- a comprehensive look and better understanding of the seeds that are offered to us
- the importance of reviving the lost art of seed saving especially here in Alaska and how and where to start
- tips on how to best use hoop houses for seed saving purposes - which vegetables work best, which to avoid
- how best to save the seeds you save
- ways to a better soil through bio char and how to make your own bio char burner

## **Crisp Pickled Pumpkin or Squash** (recipe from Kyra Wagner)

This mildly sweet pickle may especially please people who like the flavor but not the mushy texture of cooked pumpkin or squash. The texture of the pumpkin remains firm and crisp, and the pumpkin flavor is enhanced but undisguised.

- 3 1/2 pounds pumpkin or winter squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 3/4 inch cubes (about 9 cups)
  - 2 Tbsp pickling salt
  - 4 whole cloves
  - 8 whole black peppercorns, crushed
  - 1 Mediterranean Bay leaf, crumbled
  - 2 cups cider vinegar
  - 1 cup sugar
  - 4 thin slices fresh ginger, slivered
  - 3 garlic cloves, chopped
1. In a bowl, toss the pumpkin or squash cubes with the salt. Let the cubes rest for 2 to 3 hours.
  2. Drain the cubes, rinse them, and drain them again. Pack them into 4 sterilized pint mason jars.
  3. Tie the cloves, peppercorns and bay leaf in a spice bag or scrap of cheesecloth. In a saucepan, combine the spice bag with the vinegar, sugar, ginger, and garlic. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Reduce the heat, cover the pan, and simmer the liquid 10 minutes.
  4. Remove the spice bag from the pan and pour the hot liquid over the pumpkin or squash cubes, leaving 1/2 inch head space. Close the jars with two-piece caps. Process the jars in a boiling water bath. Store the cooled jars in a cool, dry, dark place for at least 3 weeks before eating the pickle. After opening the jar, store it in the refrigerator.

# Homer Garden Club Member Meeting Minutes—Oct. 26, 2014

by Recording Secretary Brenda Adams

Vice President Francie Roberts called the meeting to order at 2:12 PM. She announced the new slate of officers.

Recording Secretary Brenda Adams read the minutes from the May meeting and the September Harvest Dinner. Joan Splinter moved and Barbara Kennedy seconded the motion to approve the minutes as read. The motion was approved.

Assistant Treasurer Peggy Pitman indicated the treasury now has \$9,740.45. She reminded members that dues were due by October 1<sup>st</sup>. Please get current.

Francie then called on the different committees chairs for reports.

Co-chair Brenda Adams announced the three candidates for speaker for Gardeners' Weekend. They are Bill Cullina, Executive Director of the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden, situated in an area of the country with growing conditions very similar to the Kachemak Bay area, Ciscoe, a radio personality and "answer man" with extensive horticultural background including over 20 years of leading the landscaping of a major Washington university, or several Alaska luminaries. The committee will make a final decision soon.

Carol Demers reported on the Baycrest Garden project. She said they didn't get bulbs in time to add those to the garden, but will do so next season. She also mentioned that lots of new plants have been

added since the initial day of planting and invited members to stop and see the beautiful new garden.

Co-Vice President Joan Splinter announced that she and Francie have lined up an exciting group of speakers for the regular monthly meetings. Details coming soon!

Kate McNulty, Social Secretary and Harvest Dinner Chair, thanked everyone who helped and attended the Harvest Dinner, especially her daughter who did dishes the entire time we all were eating, so final clean-up was a breeze. She also asked folks to sign up to bring refreshments for future meetings.

Francie then introduced our speaker, HGC member Carla Stanley, a retired teacher currently employed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, to speak about "Birds, Bees, Butterflies and Beneficial Insects".

Carla gave a far-ranging talk which introduced us to many wonderful native pollinators and in particular universally beneficial "flower flies" which look like bees, but are not and don't sting. She had great photos of these and many other insects. Another interesting pollinator she discussed is the brown bat. Alaska has five different species of brown bats who are all voracious consumers of mosquitos. Another surprising tidbit is that Daddy Longlegs are one of the most beneficial insects we can have in our gardens and greenhouses!

## Why Use a Food Thermometer?

Using a food thermometer is the only sure way to determine if your food has reached a high enough temperature to destroy foodborne bacteria. Many people rely on "eyeballing" food. This can be misleading, especially if cooking by color. According to USDA research 1 out of 4 hamburgers turn brown in the middle before it has reached a safe internal temperature.

With Thanksgiving approaching, a food thermometer is a must for the turkey, dressing and reheating leftovers.





# A Long Winter's Rest: Preparing the Garden for the Off-season

By Carl Wilson and Mary Hartman, Extension Agents, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

The annuals have faded and the turf has turned green again after a blistering-hot summer. It's Mother Nature's way of telling us to put the garden to bed for winter.

Take **turf**, for example. It will survive winter best and come back more vigorously in spring if you fertilize it this fall, when it's still green. Use a lawn fertilizer with a higher first number and lower second and third numbers--25-5-5, for example. This is particularly applicable to bluegrass, fescue and ryegrass. And as long as the lawn remains green, continue to mow it to a 2½ to 3-inch height. Don't scalp it by mowing short while it's still green. It's also a good idea to aerate the lawn and to continue watering until it turns brown. Even then, water once a month throughout winter, especially if the snow cover is scant.

## The Vegetable Garden

Pull up old vines and vegetable plants. Insect pests that feed on these plants during summer and fall often lay eggs on the old plants. If the vines are left on the soil surface, insect eggs will survive the winter and hatch in the spring. If they are not diseased, you can work the old plants back into the



garden soil. This adds valuable organic matter to the soil and, at the same time, destroys insects and their eggs.

In addition to garden debris, other organic material may be added to the soil in fall. You can use well-rotted manure, compost, peat or leaves. Soil micro-organisms and beneficial soil insects will help incorporate these materials into the soil before the ground freezes and in the spring after it thaws.

You also can apply a light covering of ammonium sulfate (20-0-0) at the rate of a pound per 1,000 square feet of garden area. Spade or rototill all these materials into the soil, mixing well to a depth of 8 to 12 inches.

You'll want to leave one part of the garden intact. The area where you've planted root crops can be mulched instead of dug up and worked. To extend the digging season by weeks or even months, place a straw mulch over root crops such as carrots, beets, parsnips and Jerusalem artichokes. Parsnips turn sweeter after the ground cools. Jerusalem artichokes don't store well after they've been dug, so leaving them in the ground until you are ready to use them is the best storage method.

After a light frost nips their vines, harvest winter squash and pumpkins. Do this before a heavy frost damages the fruits. Cut from the vines leaving 3 to 4 inches of stem on the fruit.

## Annual Flowers

Pull up spent vines and foliage of annual flowers and compost them or dig them into the garden. If the plants are diseased, however, discard them in the trash.

## Weeds

It doesn't matter where the weeds

are--the vegetable garden, flower beds or the lawn--this is a good time to get rid of them. Consider this: Weeds that are spread by seed produce thousands of seeds. Lambsquarter can bear up to 72,500 seeds per plant, curly dock can bear up to 30,000, purslane 52,000, and redroot pigweed 117,000. If even 50% of the pigweed seedlings germinated next spring, you'd have 58,000 pigweed plants to pull or otherwise get rid of. Better to pull them this fall or, if weeds are in the lawn, to spot-spray a selective herbicide on the still-green perennial weeds. Perennial weeds, such as dandelion, thistle and bindweed, are more easily killed by fall sprays than by summer applications.

## Trees and Shrubs

Shorter days and falling temperatures are prompting deciduous trees and shrubs to drop leaves and prepare for winter dormancy. Limit fertilization in fall, as nitrogen stimulates useless late-season growth and delays dormancy.

Do continue to water trees and shrubs through fall, sending them into winter with ample moisture. It also will be necessary to apply water every three to four weeks throughout the winter. Dry soil kills roots and puts stress on trees and shrubs. Water when temperatures are above freezing and when the soil is not frozen. Apply water early in the day so plants will have time to absorb moisture before soil might freeze at night.

By the first of November, wrap trunks of your deciduous trees with crepe-paper tree wrap. Begin at the base of the tree and wrap upward, overlapping about a third of the paper with each turn. Stop when you reach the first set of

(Continued on page 5)

# Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig, Treasurer

## October 2014

<b>Income</b>	
Membership	245.00
Total Income	<u>\$245.00</u>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Meeting—venue	150.00
Total Expenses	<u>\$150.00</u>
Beginning balance 10/1/14	\$9,745.45
Income	245.00
Expenses	<u>(150.00)</u>
Ending balance 9/30/14	<u>\$9,840.45</u>

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A Long Winter's Rest)

branches. Secure the top turn of the wrap with a piece of stretch tape. Wrapping trees and shrubs prevents sunscald injury, a condition that develops when the warm



winter sun is absorbed by the plant's bark. Remove wrap next April.

### Raspberries

Cut back canes of fall-bearing raspberries to about ground level. Water the area during extended winter dry spells. Canes will regrow the

following season and will bear fruit in August and September. Remove only older, thick canes of summer-bearing types so you can reap a harvest next year.

### Perennials

After temperatures hit freezing and the plants die back, cut the stems on most perennials to within an inch or two of the ground. Dispose of the cuttings; they can harbor diseases that could survive the winter and return to the plants in the spring. Some plants, such as Oriental poppies and iris, produce a cluster of green leaves in the fall. Leave these intact. Remove only the older, brown stems that remain from the spent flowers.

As the season progresses and the weather becomes colder, mulch the soil around the plants. This is generally done in mid-to late November. Mulch keeps roots cold. It doesn't protect them from the cold. A plant can be hardy in more northerly latitudes where winter temperatures are severe but can be injured here, where winter

temperatures fluctuate considerably. The alternate freezing and thawing of exposed soil can damage roots and even heave them out of the ground.

Recommended mulching materials for perennials include hay or straw, evergreen boughs, pine needles, peat moss and cornstalks. These mulches are light and won't pack or suffocate roots. Apply to a depth of 4 to 6 inches. A few plants, however, such as peonies and bearded iris, don't require winter mulching and, in fact, do better without it. Mulching can cause their thick, fleshy roots to rot. As with other perennials, though, they require watering during dry winter conditions.

**REMEMBER:** Dues are now due October 1<sup>st</sup>. Members are encouraged to have the newsletter sent to them via e-mail as it is much less expensive for the club and you will then receive it in fabulous color.

## THE HOMER GARDEN CLUB MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Type: Basic (\$10) \_\_ Supporting (\$15) \_\_ Business (\$25) \_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

May we send your Newsletter via E-Mail? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Are you interested in vegetable gardening \_\_\_ ? flower gardening \_\_\_ ?

### How would you like to participate in the Garden Club?

(please check any activities you may be interested in)

\_\_\_ Meeting Refreshments \_\_\_ Board of Directors \_\_\_ Nominating Committee \_\_\_ Newsletter  
\_\_\_ Programs/Speakers \_\_\_ Spring Plant Sale \_\_\_ Harvest Dinner \_\_\_ Baycrest Garden  
\_\_\_ Gardeners' Weekend

Please make check payable to "Homer Garden Club" and mail, along with form, to:  
Homer Garden Club, P.O. Box 2833 Homer, AK 99603

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