

Homer Garden Club

April 2014



CONTENTS

Article	Page
April meeting	1
President's Report	2
Treasurer's Report	2
Straw Bale Gardening	3
Plant Sale	5
Preparing Soil	5

The next meeting will be April 27 at the Birdarka Inn, downstairs, at 2:00 pm.

Board of Directors

Jack Regan, President—
235-3650,
regan009@alaska.com

Jessica Shepherd, Vice President—
299-8811,
alyce.ryan@gmail.com

Brenda Adams — 235-3763
brenda@GardensByBrenda.com

Peggy Craig — 235-0631
michaelandpeggy13@gmail.com

Sharon Froeschle — 277-0241
akfroeschle@gmail.com

Barbara Kennedy — 235-4347
barbara_e_kennedy@msn.com

Kate McNulty — 235-6474
akdmcnulty@gmail.com

Julie Parizek — 226-3276
julie@cranesrest.com

Paula Riley — 435-3983
pauril@yahoo.com

Ellen Vande Visse Will Present “Gardening Outside the Box!” at April 27 Meeting

Ellen Vande Visse is the author of “Ask Mother Nature – A Conscious Gardener’s Guide.” She runs the Good Earth Garden School in Palmer and offers a variety of gardening classes on topics as varied as the Cooperative Extension’s Master Gardener series, “Soils for Peak Production” and “Be a Caretaker of a Pranic (life force) Garden.” Elli’s talks are always high energy and full of earthy advice. She teaches from her 27 years of experience of applying Findhorn/Perelandra– style principles to land management, wild things, earth healing and her organic market garden near Palmer.

Her talk on “Gardening Outside the Box!” will include partnering with joyful divas and nature spirits, which invite you to:

...Ask them to recommend the best fertilizer

...Assist you in pest management

...Create a Nature Spirit sanctuary in your yard

Come learn to converse, co-create and laugh with these nature intelligences, based on Findhorn and Perelandra Gardens.



President's Report

by Jack Regan, President

Planting Time

Homer gardeners have begun planting seeds. This simple act is really an important participation in the recurring cycle of ethnobotany that has going on for millennia. Cultural anthropologists have found evidence that ten thousand years ago an ancient civilization at Chataul Huliuk, on the Anatolian Peninsula, in what now would be referred to as central Turkey,



planted seeds and grew crops, ushering in the dawn of agriculture. Food production not only ensured survival but also has provided pleasurable satisfaction similar to other human activities such as the graphic arts. So take delight as you sow beans, broccoli, carrots and beets and all the wonderful seeds that bring a promise of a bountiful season.

Hanging Baskets and Perennials
Cookie's Country
GREENHOUSE
www.cookiescountrygreenhouse.com
 (907) 235-8915
 Ron & Cookie Broste
 2340 East End Road
 Homer, Alaska 99603

Cookie's Country Greenhouse

2340 East End Road, Homer,
 235-8915 or 399-8915

Opening date — April 16

Featuring Proven Winners® plants .

We also carry vegetable starts, onion sets, honeyberries, seed potatoes and even pean-

nuts, as well as farm fresh eggs and red wiggler worms. Come here for soil amendments like blood meal, lime, fish bone meal, etc. And order your hanging baskets now!

Open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 to 6:00

Homer Garden Club Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig

March 2014

Income		Expenses	
Membership	\$15.00	Meeting	\$200.00
Books	30.00	Venue	150.00
Baycrest Garden	20.00	Program	50.00
		Baycrest Garden	1,162.50
		Newsletter	49.00
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	Total Income		Total Expenses
	\$65.00		\$1,411.50
Beginning Balance 3/1/14	\$1,9998.75		
Income	65.00		
Expenses	-1,411.50		
Ending Balance 3/31/14	<hr/>		
	\$11,652.25		

Straw Bale Gardening

by Jessica Shepherd, Vice President

You've probably heard of straw bale houses, which are popular in the arid Southwest. During construction, straw bales are stacked brick-like and reinforced with wood or rebar and wire mesh to form exterior walls that are then coated in adobe to keep out moisture and insects. The resulting walls are 18 inches to 24 inches thick and effectively keep interiors cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Now let's take the concept of building with straw into the garden.

I got an email from a co-worker a month or so ago with a link to a website about straw bale gardening. Intrigued, I checked out the website (strawbalegardens.com), which is basically a blog post by Joel Karsten. Then I ordered his book of the same name from Amazon.com. and read it cover to cover. Now I can't wait to try out this process for myself!

In short, you take one or more bales of straw (not hay, which

contains seeds) and after determining where to place it, sprinkle the top surface with one-half cup of nitrogen-rich fertilizer and soak it down. Over the next twelve days

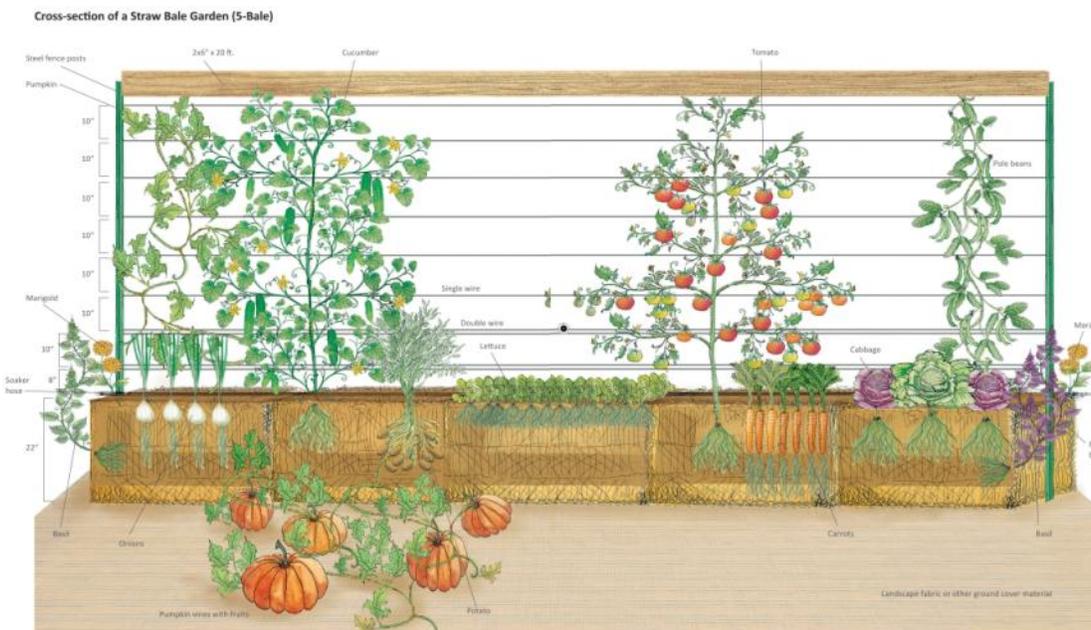
If you've ever heard of gardeners who successfully grew vegetables far into the winter by growing on a warm compost pile, you know what's coming.



you'll water daily and fertilize about every other day to encourage the growth of microorganisms that will, over the course of the summer, break down the bale.

The straw bale will heat up inside and generate a gentle warmth for several weeks, creating an inviting growing medium for heat-loving plants like cucumbers, tomatoes, and green beans. Add a soaker

hose along the top and plastic or row fabric tented over it all and you've got a mini-greenhouse that generates its own heat and leaves you with a pile of clean compost at the end of the season. (continued on page 4)



Straw Bale Gardens (continued from page 3)

Karsten recommends covering the top of the bale with an inch or two of potting soil (not garden soil which will introduce weed seeds) and planting directly into the bale, pulling the straw open to accommodate potatoes or transplants like peppers and sprinkling seeds into the top layer of soil for carrots and lettuce. And if the straw bales look a little rough in your tidy yard, you can always plant flowers and herbs into the sides of the bales to dress them up.

Because the bales generate heat

they can be planted a couple of weeks earlier than the garden, so between May 1st and 15th depending on the year. And maintenance is simple – there are no weeds and harvesting doesn't require much bending. This form of gardening may be perfect for people with limited space or poor soils, as the bales can be placed on the edge of a driveway or on a stone or cement patio. And the price of a bale (about \$22 at Wagon Wheel or Save U More) is less than an equal amount of potting soil.

My plan is to try a row of four bales in a new garden spot that I'm expanding into. I need to improve the

soil there anyway, and once the bales have done their part this summer they'll leave me with a nice mound of compost for next year's garden. I'll try growing green beans, onions, peppers and a couple of squash vines. All of these plants have been a challenge for me here in Homer, where the weather is a little too cool and wet for sun-loving plants. Maybe, like the straw bale houses, I'll enjoy the flavor of the Southwest here on a sunny hillside in Homer.

(The images are from the straw-balegardens.com website)

Ground Control Hydroponic & Garden Supply

**1392 Ocean Drive #1, Homer, Alaska 99603
(907) 235-1521**



Your source for:

Hydroponic supplies, Dripworks irrigation supplies, Agribon row cover, fluorescent HID & LED lights, Seed starting supplies, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, Soil amendments: Bone meal, Blood Meal, Green Sand, Lime, Perlite, Vermiculite, Peony and lawn fertilizers And much more

**We are open Tuesday through Saturday
from 11:00 to 6:00**

Quotes

"The first supermarket supposedly appeared on the American landscape in 1946. That is not very long ago. Until then, where was all the food? Dear folks, the food was in homes, gardens, local fields, and forests. It was near kitchens, near tables, near bedsides. It was in the pantry, the cellar, the backyard."

Joel Salatin, *Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World*

Man—despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication and his many accomplishments—owes his existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains.

Author Unknown

PLANT SALE May 31 at 11:00 am

at the Homer Chamber of Commerce Visitors' Center

Volunteers are always needed. A sign-up sheet will be available at the April and May meetings. There will also be containers available for starting seeds or transplanting plants.

Posters will be ready at the April meeting for volunteers to post around town.

The plants at the Baycrest garden are available for members to dig up when the soil thaws. If anyone wants to reclaim these and donate them to the Plant Sale, there are containers available at the garden. These plants must be cleaned to bare roots before donating them to the sale in order to remove all weeds and pests.



Preparing the Soil in Spring

by Pam Ruch, [Organic Gardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com)

How soon is too soon to get started in the Spring?

Gradually the late-winter sun rises higher in the sky each day, and its rays are warmer, more intense, even through the brisk March wind. Soon we're able to eat our evening dinner by daylight. As the late winter snow melts into the earth, I begin to shuffle seed packets and round up the garden tools. I know it's still too early to dig, but there's no harm in being ready, is there?

When to work the soil

Working the soil too early is a mistake. When the earth is still saturated with melting snow or spring rain, it is easily compacted by treading across it, or even worse, driving heavy equipment on it. In addition, large clumps of wet soil turned over at this time will only bake into impervious clods that will be very difficult to break up later. Plant roots grow best when there are some air spaces between soil particles. Heavy, wet soil doesn't break up into the loose, air-

retaining texture that is best for plants. Its clumpy texture is also likely to trap pockets of air around plant roots, and that is just as bad as no air.

How can you tell whether your garden has dried out enough to be



worked? The truest test of soil conditions is that age-old gesture of the gardener—fingering a handful of soil. Pick up about half a cup of earth in your hand. Now squeeze the soil together so that it forms a ball. If the ball of earth can readily be shattered by pressing with your fingers or dropping it from a height of 3 feet or so, it is dry enough to dig. If the ball keeps its shape or

breaks only with difficulty into solid sections rather than loose soil, it still contains too much water. Clay soil that is too wet will feel slick when rubbed between thumb and forefinger. If it is very wet (75 to 100 percent moisture), the mass will be pliable, and a ribbon of earth can be drawn out and pressed with your finger. Working soil that wet can spoil its texture for the whole season.

Heavy clay soil will form a ball even when moisture content is less than 50 percent. Soil that is somewhat coarser, a sandy loam or silt loam, tends to crumble when moisture content is low but will probably form a ball at about 50 percent. At 75 to 100 percent moisture, it will be dark, pliable, and may feel slick between the fingers. Coarse-textured sandy soil will not form a ball if moisture content is below 50 percent. At 75 to 100 percent moisture, it can be pressed into a weak ball, but even then it shatters easily. Coarser soil, of course, may be worked at a higher moisture content than fine-particle clay.

Maintain your garden with help from **JUST ASK RENTAL**, featuring mowers, weed eaters, tillers, thatchers, landscape tools and much more.



Ulmer's
Drug & Hardware

Located in the
Lakeside Mall,
3858 Lake Street,
Homer
235-8594

Let **ULMER'S** help make your garden a showplace with our great assortment of yard ornaments and planters, as well as all your gardening tool needs.



Strawberries growing in rain gutter



Homer Garden Club
P.O. Box 2833
Homer, Alaska 99603

