

Homer Garden Club

May 2014



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**May 25 Meeting to Feature Brenda Adams on:
"Compelling Combinations: Creating Sizzle and Subtlety"**

**The next meeting will
be May 25 at the
Bidarka Inn, down-
stairs, at 2:00 pm.**

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Have you ever wondered what makes some gardens absolutely outstanding? Would you like yours to be one of those too? Or are you just ready after a long winter to see colorful Alaska gardens in bloom? No matter your motivation, join award-winning Alaska garden designer and author Brenda Adams May 25th as she reveals one of the most important secrets to stunning garden beauty. Her presentation "Compelling Combinations – Creating Sizzle and Subtlety" will guide you in the use of foliage, color, texture, form, and other plant attributes to create combinations that far exceed the beauty of each individual plant. You'll learn how to create dazzling and exciting combinations as well as those with a more understated but still compelling presence. This is a photo-packed talk that will stimulate your aesthetic nature and make you anxious for the season to begin.

Brenda Adams is the author of a new and acclaimed book, *There's a Moose in My Garden: Designing Gardens in Alaska and the Far North*, recently published by the University of Alaska Press.

**Don't forget the Garden Club Plant Sale
May 31, 11:00 am, at the Homer Chamber
of Commerce!**

Gardeners' Weekend Needs You

by Sharon Froeschle

Please consider volunteering to be a host or hostess for this year's Garden Tour. We are still in need of more volunteers to greet guests at the gardens, and have them sign the guest books.

After our last meeting a member suggested that going to 2 hour shifts, instead of the current 3 hours, might increase the number

of members willing to do it. We surveyed former

hostesses and the results were fairly evenly split between 2 and 3 hours. Therefore, we will base the length of the shifts on how many



volunteers sign up. If we have enough we will go to 2 hours; and if not, we will keep it at 3 hours. Either way, please check your calendars and commit if you can. We could really use your help.

If you have questions about what the commitment entails, or want to sign up, please call or email Sharon at 227-0241;

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

Homer Garden Club Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig

March 2014

Income		Expenses	
Membership	\$155.00	Meeting	\$207.63
Books	30.00	Venue	150.00
Baycrest Garden	120.00	Program	37.63
Plant sale	76.00	Refreshments	20.00
		Newsletter	49.00
		Baycrest Garden	1,084.00
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	Total Income	Total Expenses	\$1,340.63
	\$381.00		
Beginning Balance 3/1/14	\$11,652.25		
Income	381.00		
Expenses	-1,340.63		
Ending Balance 3/31/14	<hr/>		
	\$10,692.62		

It is approaching 8:00 am on a Sunday morning on what will surely be a sun-soaked and glorious day. Spring has come early this year, after the mildest Alaskan winter I can remember. Already the weather is warm enough for shorts and a t-shirt and the garden beds are thawed and just asking for young seedlings to embrace. Yesterday I planted out broccoli, cauliflower and artichokes, and seeded in turnips, radishes, and lettuce. Today I'll transplant strawberries from the high tunnel into outdoor beds and replace them with corn

Gardening is surely a spiritual practice. Like any spiritual path, it requires faith and steady devotion that will, in time, be transformative. Gardening can be a solitary activity, allowing for time to empty the mind of worry and distractions or it can be the means of coming together with others to work the soil side by side. It allows for individual expression in form (a focus on roses say, or tomatoes), yet there are common principles (soil health and propagation) that cross all forms of the practice.

local columbine or the lacy leaves of an emerging fern, are encouraged as well. I fall somewhere in between. I like tidy, but I can't resist a volunteer lupine. I draw the line on pushy plants that tend to dominate the gathering and don't contribute when it comes time to draw a chair up to the table. I don't take up chemical arms against them, I just gently uproot them and add them to the compost pile where they'll end up doing the most good for all.

And like any good spiritual practice, gardening provides a window into something deeply calming and grounding. In truth, there are days when I feel like gardening is the only thing I get right. The sanctity of warm soil smoothed over seeds under my hands, and the affirmation of the first orbbed radish, head of lettuce or ripe tomato bring a satisfaction with life that few other endeavors can. I stumbled upon this quote, author unknown, that sums it up well.



Gardening, like spirituality, can take the orthodox path, with the gardener planting straight rows of segregated onions and carrots or laying out precise beds of flowers in a pinwheel of color. As with some religions, perceived outsiders, like dandelions, are

plants which are already a foot tall.

There is really nothing I like more than gardening, and no time of year that I like better than right now. Getting up on the weekend is so easy when I have a garden to tend and green lawn to walk barefoot through as I water in the new plants.



"In the Garden,
my soul is
sunshine."

Gardeners are, by nature, optimists. It doesn't matter if the bean crop failed last year, or the squash varieties planted year after year never yield more than a runt or two. Every spring the gardener is outside in house slippers and bathrobe at the first robin's song to see if the peas are up, or if the light frost has nipped the tender green of the nasturtiums in the hanging basket by the door.

firmly discouraged when they attempt to join in. For others the garden is a place to practice a more free-spirited approach that welcomes the comingling of spicy radishes, practical kale, finicky basil, and gay pansies. The appearance of a sage native, such as a



Beauty from our own Backyards: Gardeners' Weekend 2014 by Roni Overway

May 7, 2014. I'm sitting in front of my computer keyboard thinking about an article I'm charged to write for the May newsletter....shouldn't be too hard..I've done it several times before... and it **IS** time to start ginning up the excitement for Gardeners' Weekend 2014. What I'm seeking right now, though, is inspiration! Hmmm.....What did I write this time last year? Well, let's look and see! Aha! Found it! **This is what I wrote:**

" So, it's May 4th and I'm sitting here sipping morning tea and gazing out at a vast expanse of WHITE! May 4th!! Is there any possibility that Mother Nature is taking a year off? Forget spring! Forget summer!! Just go straight from winter to winter??? It's one thing this time of year to take in the Kenai mountains across the bay, still dressed in arctic garb; that's normal....even natural. But please, not my front yard! My yard should be sporting her spring attire: the soft lime greens of budding plants and grasses, the promising burgundy of sprouting peonies. Am I whining?"

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES! I'm certainly not whining and you're surely not whining either because we've been blessed with a gorgeous, warm, sunny, early, rabbit-free, ice-free spring!! Those peonies I was pining for this time last year are 18" tall so I'd say instead that it's time to **CELEBRATE!!** And celebrate we will on August 2nd and 3rd as we put on our eighth (8th!!) Summer Gardeners' Weekend. It's time to get out your calendars and circle those dates.

You will be introduced in our next issue to this year's featured speaker, **Debra Prinzing**. For the time being though, let it suffice to say that she is an extremely talented and popular floral designer who brings years of design experience to her audiences around the country. Considering her expertise in this field we hope to begin festivities with a floral design **workshop**

with Debra on Saturday afternoon. Participants will be able to create lovely bouquets in their own vases using flowers and greenery from their own gardens and/or some purchased stems. This event will be limited to 24 participants. The price is yet to be determined **so stay tuned** for more Information. That evening we will welcome Debra to the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center Auditorium for her



presentation titled "Dazzling Bouquets: Inspiration and Beauty Straight from Your Garden". Debra has taken the concept of

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the "slow food" movement and has created a sister-movement in which she applies the same principles of local, seasonal and sustainably grown to the cut flower industry. From there it is not a huge leap to our applying those same criteria to the growing, cutting, arranging and enjoyment of flowers from our own gardens.

On Sunday you, along with 400 or so of your friends and neighbors will, again be treated to our extremely



popular garden tour. Included this year will be two commercial growers whose businesses are cut-flower based, but whose customers are really "worlds" apart. A beautifully rendered second year garden will also be open for your enjoyment. Veggie growers are not to be forgotten as we've included a beautiful, mature, well planned and extremely productive outdoor vegetable garden. Rounding out the cast of gardens is one of our favorite destinations

enlarged and enhanced due to a recent home renovation.

As has become our custom, Bill and Dorothy Fry's **Bear Creek Winery** will be the venue of our after-tour party with hors d'oeuvres, wine tasting, door prizes and

FUN!!

WE HAVE JUST ONE MORE MEETING DURING WHICH YOU CAN SIGN UP TO HELP OUT WITH THIS EVENT. Needless to say, it doesn't happen on its own. **We need lots of helpers.** Please take a look at this list and see what you would like to do to help us out: We need one more person to **sell tickets at the Homer Bookstore on Saturday, August 2nd from 2:00 until 3:30;** around

the first of **July we will need a couple of people to put up posters and distribute brochures** locally; we still need **garden hosts and hostesses but are thinking of trying something new.** (See *Companion Article by Sharon Froeschle*) Those folks are **absolutely essential** to making the garden tours on Sunday flow smoothly. Signup sheets will be available at the May club meeting but you can also sign up by calling one of the committee members. I'd like to thank those club members who have already signed on to help out. We are extremely grateful for your willingness to devote volunteer hours to our biggest yearly event. It's popularity is due, in no small measure, to those of you who have been steadfast volunteers. **THANK YOU!!**

If you have any questions at all you are **MORE** than welcome to call a committee member. That's what we are here for. Roni Overway 226 3404 or 242 1966, Brenda Adams 235 3763 or 299 4701, Jessica Shephard (until recently Jessica Ryan!!) 299 8811, Sharon Froeschle 227 0241, Joan Splinter 805 479 3736.

Vermont is poised to become the first state to require labeling of so-called "franken-foods." Its landmark bill states that foods with genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, "potentially pose risks to health, safety, agriculture, and the environment," and it requires food manufacturers to label raw packaged foods that have been produced or partially produced with genetic engineering.

Gov. Peter Shumlin says he'll sign the bill, which would not take effect until July 1, 2016. "I am proud of Vermont for being the first state in the nation to ensure that Vermonters will know what is in their food. The Legislature has spoken loud and clear through its passage of this bill," Governor Shumlin said in a statement Wednesday. "I wholeheartedly agree with them and look forward to signing this bill into law."

While the US Food and Drug Administration and the biotechnology industry maintain that there is no

significant difference between food containing genetically modified ingredients and those that do not, the American public overwhelmingly supports labeling of food made with genetically modified ingredients. More than 90 percent of those polled by The New York Times in January 2013 said food should be labeled.

However, industry officials caution that the rules could result in higher costs for food producers that could translate to price hikes at the grocery store. Vermont Grocers Association President Jim Harrison expressed concern over state-specific labeling requirements, in an interview with the Associated

Press. Adhering to varying state rules "gets very costly, very confusing, and very difficult for the entire food industry to comply with," Mr. Harrison told AP.

While neighboring states of Maine and Connecticut have passed similar bills, those bills will not go into effect unless a sufficient number of surrounding states pass comparable legislation.

The national Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA), the food industry's main trade group, is weighing whether to challenge the law in court, to make accommodations for food sold in Vermont, or to adopt labeling nationwide to avoid the costs of having different labeling requirements. The bill "sets the nation on a costly and misguided path toward a 50-state patchwork of GMO labeling policies that will do nothing to advance the safety of consumers," the association said in a statement

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Our orchard, nestled behind spruce and birch trees will always be shade constrained. Meanwhile my high tunnel gets quite a bit of sun and I wanted a replacement for growing higher-time-maintenance corn. I'd thought about planting fruit trees in it. So last week Michael Linden and I took a road trip up to Mike O'Brien's place in Nikiski. It was inspiring. Mike has a couple of 24X40 high tunnels chock full of fruit trees just starting to bloom. We found him in another high tunnel filled with small grafted fruit trees in plastic bags. He was blending a compost dirt mix in a large noisy mixer. Another lady was buzzing around like a bee on sweet clover.

Mike grows over fifty varieties of fruit trees, mainly apple and sour cherry, but with some plum and pear. He gets some new varieties from a university in the states to test out in Alaska. Six hives of bees were buzzing around the south side of the high tunnels ready for pollinating. We walked through the high tunnels and he pointed out the different tree varieties and their attributes. I should have had a tape recorder, especially later when he asked what type I wanted.

His espalier system is a series of taunt rope set in parallel every six inches up. He doesn't cut off any tree branches, just bends them over to one side or the other. He attaches the branches to the rope with a "Large ZenTapener Tapetool



Tapener." It is the perfect tool for the job! It makes a plastic loop over the branch, snugs it, staples it closed and cuts the tape in one easy click. The beauty of it is the plastic tape will stretch as the trees grow so you don't have to go back and loosen the tie, or later find your branch cut into by it.

Mike is a real wealth of knowledge. He digs a 6' wide X 16" deep hole for each tree and lines it with tyvar, then refills it with dirt with the tree in the middle. This bonsais the trees a bit for indoor limits. But I found out these details after he called a couple days later, and asked if I had planted my trees. Luckily mine were planted in 12" raised beds with dividers between them. So we decided it

would be OK. It's good to separate the tree's roots when they are planted close together so one tree doesn't dominate over the other trees. He covers everything with tyvar with drip hose on either side of the trees. There was a fair bit of NPK fertilizer scattered around.

Mike had originally planted his greenhouse with trees spaced eight feet apart, but he had so many trees waiting to be planted in pots that he ended up putting double the amount in there. He said six feet should be the minimum distance, mine are about seven feet apart. He grows his own root stock to graft from and also grows and sells

different berry bushes along with market produce. Like Tim Meyer from Bethel, he has a plan and moves about like a man on a mission. This year Mike is setting two new 30'X96' HT'high tunnels. One will be filled with Zestar apples which do very well up here. It's hard to imagine how many apples that could produce, but I'm sure Mike has a plan for them!. The other big high tunnel will be filled with a variety of fruit trees. I plan on going back and seeing his orchards again in a couple years.



When I got home I bought my own Large ZenTapener Tapetool Tapener with staples and extra ribbon for just over \$80 online. I'll start using it when it arrives to attach my pruned tomatoes and currants. Happy Gardening!

Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.

Warren Buffett

Wednesday. "We encourage policymakers in Vermont and across the nation to support alternative legislation that would ensure that food labels are accurate and consistent for consumers."

In anticipation of legal challenges from GMA and the biotech industry, the Vermont bill allots \$1.5 million for defense of potential lawsuits. Individuals will be able to contribute to that fund, and the state will be able to add any winnings from future lawsuits to the fund, the Burlington Free Press reports.

It is not clear how the new requirements might affect consumers. The long-term effect on prices could depend on how consumers react to the new labels. If shoppers change their buying habits on the basis of what they learn about the ingredients of foods they are already buying, manufacturers may respond by swapping genetically engineered ingredients for costlier non-genetically modified ingredients.

That's the scenario that has played out in the European Union, which has required some form of labeling for genetically engineered products since 1997, biotech and biosafety

expert Gregory Jaffe told AP. Mr. Jaffe is director of Biotechnology for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, which does not support mandatory government labeling of genetically modified foods.

More than 64 countries do require such labeling. Several countries, including Germany, Austria, Greece, and Spain, have banned specific genetically modified crops entirely, according to the Organic Consumers Association.

The Garden Club Plant Sale will be held on **May 31st** this year at the Homer **Chamber of Commerce**. The Plant Sale will open at **11:00 am** and volunteers need to be there by **8:00-9:00 am** depending on your task.

We need your help!!! Please divide your perennials, repot your houseplants and over seed your annuals (flowers and veggies) and donate the extras to the sale. I will be accepting plants 2 weeks early this year. Please call **Karen at 235-5253** for details and help potting. Please label everything

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

