

## CONTENTS

Article	Page
Jan. Meeting	1
Treasurer's Report	2
Garden Magic	3
November Minutes	4
Chocolate Lillies	5
Miscellaneous	6

January 2017

# Homer Garden Club

The Homer Garden Club meeting will be held January 22 at 2:00 pm at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs.

# Newsletter

## January 22 Meeting to Feature Brenda Adams on Garden Combinations

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### Truly Compelling Combinations: Creating Sizzle and Subtlety

Have you ever wondered what makes some gardens absolutely outstanding? Would you like yours to be one of those too? In this presentation, Brenda Adams will explain how and why plant combinations work to create more beautiful gardens. Her presentation is a step-by-step guide to success. In it you will discover how to use foliage, color, texture, form, and other plant attributes to create combinations that far exceed the beauty of each individual plant. Then, taking the notion of combination planting to a refreshing new level, Brenda uses examples of gardens from Alaska to the east coast to offer a unique perspective on how to achieve results that set an exceptional mood and ambience. You'll learn techniques to design upbeat, dazzling, and exciting combinations as well as

those with a calm, more subtle, but still memorable presence.

Brenda Adams, author, garden educator and designer, is the author of the acclaimed book, *There's a Moose in My Garden: Designing Gardens in Alaska and the Far North* (University of Alaska Press, 2013). Her second book, *Cool Plants for Cold Climates*, will be released in late spring, 2017. She teaches "Northern Garden Design and Creation" at the University of Alaska as well as the landscape design section of the Alaska Master Gardeners' course. (Register now at KPC campus for



(Continued on page 2)

**Remember — the Homer Garden Club meets on the 4th Sunday of the month, so the January meeting will be January 22.**

# Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Pittman, Treasurer

## November and December 2016

### Income

Membership	315.00	
Books	15.00	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b><u>\$ 330.00</u></b>

### Expenses

Venue - Nov.	150.00	
Speaker Fee- Nov.	50.00	
Newsletter	16.32	
Website	149.00	
Gardeners' weekend	8.50	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b><u>\$ 373.82</u></b>

Beginning Balance 11/1/2016	<b>\$10,731.24</b>
Income	<b>330.00</b>
Expenses	<b><u>373.82</u></b>
Ending Balance 12/31/16	<b>\$10,687.42</b>

*Brenda Adams  
(Continued from page 1)*

the design class on March 25<sup>th</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.)

Brenda is the award-winning designer of Gardens By Design, Alaska's premier garden design firm. She has designed over 200 unique and personalized gardens for both residential and commercial clients. She's a long-time master gardener and member of Alaska's Rock Garden Society, the Perennial Plant Association, Garden Writers' Association, Alaska Master Gardeners, and the Alaska Botanical Garden. She was president of the Homer Garden Club (2004-2010) and still serves on its board.

Brenda's designs have received three prestigious awards in the Perennial Plant Association's annual international competition. The awards recognize projects that are exemplary in the use of herbaceous perennials to help create balance and beauty in landscape design. Her 2012 award was the PPA's highest, the Honor Award. She was also awarded the PPA's Merit Award in 2007 and in 2009. She is the only Alaskan to receive either award. She, her book, and her designs have been featured in Horticulture magazine, Alaska Home magazine and the Anchorage Daily News. She is a frequent guest on radio offering advice to gardeners who toil in zones 2 through zone 5.



As a child I believed most earnestly in magic. On a summer's day you might glimpse me (two skinned knees and sap-stained palms) bending down to examine nodding bluebells and red paintbrush blooming on the edge of the pine forest below our house. I am searching for wee fairies and industrious elves who live in woodlands such as this, if you can believe C.S. Lewis (and I do). If you listen, you'll hear me calling, my child's voice soft and coaxing "Please come out, I won't tell anyone. Look, I brought you something." Uncurling my fisted fingers, I reveal a small blue round of lapis, or a teardrop of obsidian polished to liquid smoothness.

Though the gentle fairy folk and reticent elves never did invite me into their secret lives, I still believe in magic. More to the point, I practice wondrous spells. Today, on this the third of January, after consulting the cycle of the moon as she swells toward fullness, I assemble the wares of my craft and undertake a certain magic spell I practice each year at this time. In a large silvery bowl, in the warmth of my kitchen, I mix three parts Alaska Earth to one-part vermiculite. Using this potion, I fill up eight little square pots. Then (lacking a wand), I carefully poke a shallow hole into the center of each pot with the fat end of a chop stick. Carefully I pinch petite tan seeds, one at a time, drop them into the ready hole, and run a light spray of water over them. These seeds, which were squeezed from one perfect Red Robin tomato back in the year 2012 and dried on waxed paper before being store in a little vial, survive year after year in the dark and cold of a refrigerator drawer. Each January I single out a few of these wee charms, no larger than sesame seeds, to plant at the New Year.

Red Robins are a hybrid, meaning some astute garden wizard has crafted this variety through a careful crossing of parent plants. Hybrids aren't generally thought to be suitable for home-garden seed collection as one never knows what a second generation from this alchemy will produce. But I wasn't thinking about that back when I first saved these seeds, and luck was on my side. For you, dear gardener, you only need to order Red Robin seeds directly from Territorial Seed company. (See the attached page from their catalog).

Now the real magic begins. Overnight, in the moist soil, the seeds will soften and swell, and tomorrow or the next day they will crack open to send down an exploratory root. If they find the soil to be satisfactory, they will swell further and send up a tiny green shoot which will, within a week, break through the soil. Perfect little leaves, two of them, will open like a prayer, and over the days and weeks to come, more leaves will erupt until our Red Robins are robustly standing a foot tall or more. Like elves, the Red Robin is diminutive in stature,

## Cherry Tomatoes

Home / All Products / Vegetable Seed / Tomatoes / Cherry Tomatoes / Red Robin Tomato

### Red Robin Tomato

55 days. Space is not an issue for this little dynamo of a plant. At home in even the tightest containers (as small as 8 inches), the most minimally sized garden can produce a delicious crop of fresh cherry tomatoes. The juicy, tasty, 1-1 1/2 inch round, red fruit are set in clusters by the fistful. Super compact, potato-leaf, determinate plants top out at only 8-12 inches tall and begin producing their first harvests before nearly every other tomato variety. Also available as a plant.

F1 Hybrid Variety

Item	Qty	Size	Price	
TM853/S	<input type="text" value="1"/>	20 Seeds	\$3.65	<a href="#" style="background-color: #f4a460; padding: 2px 5px;">Add</a>
TM853/P	<input type="text" value="1"/>	100 seeds	\$9.95	<a href="#" style="background-color: #f4a460; padding: 2px 5px;">Add</a>
TM853/B	<input type="text" value="1"/>	250 seeds	\$16.95	<a href="#" style="background-color: #f4a460; padding: 2px 5px;">Add</a>

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Soil Temp for Germ.	Days to Emergence	Seed Depth	Soil Temp. for Trans.	Plant Spacing	Row Spacing	Min. Germ.	Seed Life	Seeds per 1/8 gram	Fertilizer Needs
70-90°F	6-14	1/4"	55°F	See below	3-4'	80%	3 years	≈ 35-40	High

*Lycopersicon lycopersicum* The first ripe, juicy tomato of summer is a delicious milestone of the season for gardeners. Each year we test and evaluate more than 250 tomato varieties to bring you the most flavorful, best performing selections, for every desired use. An array of nutrients and antioxidants including the especially potent lycopene, found in its highest concentration in tomatoes, supports healthy eyesight, cardiovascular health, cancer-fighting capacity, and more.

Days to maturity are calculated from date of transplant.

(Continued on page 4)

*Garden Magic*  
(Continued from page 3)

never growing more than 18" tall. But don't let their size fool you. By early March they will offer up clusters of little yellow blossoms that will, with a gentle rub of my finger, enter into a new phase of magic. Dozens of pea-sized green orbs will form and gradually swell. And if I know my spells, and I know this one well, by May Day the first red tomato, no bigger around than a quarter, will be ready for the picking.

On this day of celebration, I will gently twist the enchanted fruit from the vine and pass it through my lips, savoring its smooth skin before releasing its bright flavor with my teeth. Henceforth, winter dreams of juicy tomato salad with fresh basil will become my daily pleasure. And there will be more enchantment in

the making. Much more. By early May there will be all manner of delights overtaking my wide window ledges, where, under grow lights, you will find sturdy broccoli plants and kale grown from seeds only a little larger than this period (.) ready to plant out into the garden on a mild morning. Egg-sized seed potatoes, saved from last year's goodly crop, will be sprouting on the cool shelf between the windows. Lettuce and basil and thyme starts will accept a little pruning for a spring salad. While out in the lower greenhouse spears of garlic will be thrusting

up from the sun-warmed soil, reminding me of the fine fall day when I planted them.

But now, as this short day softens into early evening, the promise of a magic garden is just beginning with a pinch of tiny seeds and a gentle whisper asking them to trust me.



## November Meeting Minutes

by Brenda Adams, Recording Secretary

November 27, 2016

President Francie Roberts opened the meeting at 2:06PM. She asked new members to introduce themselves and introduced Treasurer Peggy Pittman to them so they'd know who to see about joining and paying dues.

Peggy Pittman reported \$10,564.92 in the treasury.

Committee reports:

Francie talked about the different committees that make everything work for our club. She cited the need for more volunteers and described some of the ways you can help. Gardeners' Weekend, the last week of July, is a major event during which we host a nationally known speaker and open five gardens for self-guided tours. GW needs lots of people in many different roles. Baycrest garden commit-

tee maintains the HGC garden at the Baycrest overlook. Volunteers agree to weed and deadhead the garden with another person during two different weeks over the summer. Sign-up sheets for volunteers are at each meeting. This month they were in the back of the room. Social Secretary Jeannette Lawson asked folks to sign up to bring refreshments for the social time at the end of the meeting.

Speaker committee: Co-Vice President Joan Splinter announced that Brenda Adams will speak in January. Her topic, "Compelling Combinations: Creating Sizzle and Subtlety," describes the techniques for creating garden combinations that will convey the effect you desire, be it sizzling hot or quietly subtle.

Joan introduced our November speaker, Dr. John Morton, a biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife

Service, who is currently the supervisory biologist at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

His topic covered a broad range of issues related to changes he and his team are observing or forecasting on the Kenai Peninsula. He began with a question: What is an exotic plant in a climate changing world? He defined an exotic as something that doesn't grow here naturally. Two examples are elodea and lodge pole pine. His group has been eradicating the elodea from our area at a cost of five hundred million dollars! On the other hand, people are actively planting lodge pole pines and are being encouraged to do so. Therefore, exotic does not necessarily mean undesirable.

John described the nineteen fifties and sixties as a very stable time

(Continued on page 5)

climatically, but said there has been more change since then. He said Kenai winters have warmed more than summers, nights more than days. He cited the spruce bark beetle kill and the spruce aphid invasion as examples of results of this warmer weather. When an audience member pointed out that the beetle infestation is a periodic event that has been occurring for hundreds of years, he agreed but stated that he thinks it was much worse this last time because of

warmer conditions.

He also said that on the Kenai Peninsula available water has declined sixty per cent since 1968 and that glaciers have reduced by eleven per cent while the tree line is moving up.

John talked a lot about biomes of different types and how they relate at the point of intersection. The Caribou Hills-Homer bench area is in an interesting example in that boreal, temperate, and grasslands biomes join there. Normally, vegetation and animal species move

northward and higher in a warming trend. That concept is challenged in the Caribou Hills-Homer bench area.

Throughout his talk, Dr. Morton told us to take many of these things, especially forecasts, with a grain of salt. By inserting a photo of a spilled salt shaker throughout he added a welcome note of humor to his presentation.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30.

## Chocolate Lilies

by Daisy Lee Bitter

Of the many wildflowers that grow around Kachemak Bay one of my favorites for many reasons, are the Chocolate Lilies. Some people who find their odor offensive have given them derogatory nicknames such as “Baby Diapers and “Outhouse Flowers.” On the contrary, there are many of us who grew up on farms or near livestock who aren’t offended by the odor.

Bouquets of Chocolate Lilies and Coastal Paintbrushes combine the beauty of the pendant maroon-brown lily bells with their greenish pistils to complement the colors of the paintbrush. The light green leaves are arranged in stair-step whorls along the single 15—24 inch long stems. The unique papery appearance of their seedpods makes them popular choices in dry arrangements. Chocolate Lilies are easy to transplant and are often naturalized in Alaskan gardens.

The Chocolate Lily is also known as Wild Rice, Indian Rice, Black Lily, Rice Lily, Kamchatka Lily and Kamchatka Fritillary. George Steller, the naturalist on Bering’s voyage of discovery, referred to them as Sarana Lilies in his reports. This member of the Liliaceae family is Alaska’s only member of genus *Fritillaria*.

Although the taste is somewhat bitter, these bulbs contain sugar and starch and were a staple food for prehistoric native people. Traditionally, native Alaskans have dried the bulbs or pounded them into flour and stored them for later use. The Dena’ina Indians would usually dig Chocolate Lily bulbs with their hands, being careful not to lose the lightly attached rice-like bulbs. Before eating them, the Dena’ina broke the bulbs apart and soaked them to remove the bitter taste.



Older Haida people recall that the best tasting lily bulbs grow near beaches which are periodically covered with salt water.

Krasheninnikov said that Sarana Lilies baked in an oven and crushed with cloudberry, blueberries or other berries were the princi-

pal and best-flavored food of the Kamchadal native people in Russia. He claimed that it was so nourishing that if a person ate it every day, one would scarcely realize the lack of bread.

Due to the starch content of the bulbs, Chocolate Lilies are valuable as a survival food. Their bitter taste can also be removed by boiling and then discarding the water. Chocolate Lilies taste good in soups, stews, casseroles, or simply boiled and covered with garlic butter or Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper. I find that for best flavor, it’s best to harvest the bulbs late in the season.

Humans are not alone in enjoying the bulbs. Red-backed voles or field mice, which are numerous in this area, also find them appetizing. When the snow melts in the late spring, I’ve found many Chocolate Lily bulbs cached around the edges of the dry grass nests of the voles. Our local red-backed voles store bulbs in these winter nests under the snow. During break-up several years ago I discovered one nest with over 50 of these rice-like lily bulbs. Owls and weasels, which eat approximately four voles per day, help us control the population of vole.

"I have found, through years of practice, that people garden in order to make something grow; to interact with nature; to share, to find sanctuary, to heal, to honor the earth, to leave a mark. Through gardening, we feel who we are as we make our personal work of art upon our land."

*Julie Moir Messervy*



*Homer Garden Club  
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