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The next Homer Garden Club meeting will be the Harvest Dinner on September 23 at 5:00 pm at the Methodist Church.

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Harvest Dinner Scheduled for September 23

I hope you enjoyed those beautiful, long lazy summer days with your fingers in the earth tending to your flowers and veggies. All of your hard work should be recognized, which is why the Homer Garden Club rewards those efforts with the annual Harvest Dinner, so don't forget to save the date of September 23rd for this year's celebration. The Harvest Dinner is such a wonderful time for friends to gather and share the summer's experiences and bountiful harvest.

This free event for Homer Garden Club members and a guest will be held at the Homer Methodist Church starting at 5:00 PM, Sunday September 23rd. The club provides prime rib which is cooked to perfection, complements of Tom Stroozas. All of the other culinary de-

lights are provided by 'you' the master chef of your favorite recipe.

It is remarkable to see all of the beautifully prepared dishes such as farm fresh veggies garnished with edible flowers, creamy cheesy local potatoes, homemade bread and jam alongside hearty offerings of favorite casseroles and a robust slice of prime rib. Don't forget to leave room for dessert! There are always plenty of mouth watering delights that are sure to please the palate. And, while you're enjoying those fabulous desserts, you just might win a door prize!

Dinner begins promptly at 5:00 pm with door prizes, mulled apple cider, the election of Officers and, of course, payment of dues for the 2019 year.

Beginning in October, the Homer Garden Club will meet the THIRD Sunday of each month

instead of the fourth Sunday as has been done in the past. This was approved by the members in an effort to avoid the conflict caused by Thanksgiving and Memorial Day

Treasurer's Report - June—August 2018 by Peggy Pittman, Treasurer

Income

Memberships	50.00	
Aprons	25.00	
Newsletter Ads	240.00	
Gardeners' Weekend	8658.00	
		Total Income <u>\$8,973.00</u>

Expenses

Gardeners' Weekend	4,816.22	
Baycrest Garden	350.00	
Postbox Rent	138.00	
Pre-harvest dinner exp.	29.01	
Insurance	425.00	
Program	67.96	
		Total Expenses <u>\$5,826.19</u>

Beginning Balance 6/1/2018		\$15,548.74
Income		8,973.00
Expenses		<u>5,826.19</u>
Ending Balance 8/31/18		\$18,695.55

Gardeners' Weekend



a success!!!

Build Something Beautiful – A Visit with the Deans

A fairy-tale quality pervades the Dean family farm and art studio. I'd heard the Deans' name bantered around for years among gardening friends. Kyra Wagner described Jeff and Ranja's homestead on East End Road as, "Organic, no plastic, sort of magical." When I asked her what defines them she said, "It's really all about art. Ranja once told me, "Why would you build something if it isn't beautiful?"

I finally had the chance to visit the Deans this summer when their garden was featured on the Homer Garden Club Tour. For a couple hours on a sunny day in late July, I strolled among the farm's whimsical buildings and gardens, charmed by its old world functionality. Curious to learn more about the genesis of this gentle place, I returned a month later for a follow up chat with Ranja.

The Homestead

Their property, comprised of 28 acres, lies out East End Road. Much of the land is steeply sloped and wooded with alder and cottonwood, leaving three or so level acres for development. The Deans acquired land here 17 years ago. Over time they purchased adjacent property, tilled the soil for garden beds, and built the numerous structures which define the setting. Ranja was raised in Tennessee, while Jeff was raised in Dogpatch, near Fairbanks. The quaint, woodsy nature of the Dean farm reflects their rural roots.

Solid timber frame construction, cedar drift logs, locally-sourced



rock, and repurposed materials enhance the appeal and utility of each building. The house, studio, assorted sheds, chicken coops and barns have an abundance of arched windows, curving rooflines and hand-made wooden latches. Throughout, everything has a focus on natural materials and outdoor living.

"The first building we put up was an outhouse," Ranja told me. Next, she built three hen houses while Jeff gathered materials for the workshop. "We used a lot of recycled, reclaimed stuff," Ranja explained. In fact, the donkey barn's graceful roof comes from old DOT culverts. There are few straight lines anywhere. Walkways bend, clover-shaped windows abound, even the doors have gentle curves, lending continuity between buildings, gardens, and the roll of the land. "I love to make things that fit naturally," Ranja explained.

Some buildings were intended for one thing, then became another as needs dictated. The kitchen, for example, was intended as a woodshed, but it was never used for wood. Ranja took me to see a little building on stilts that began construction earlier this year as a chicken hut. Approaching completion, it has morphed into a tiny guest hut for visitors. "We're just seat of our pants" Ranja explained, summing up how construction projects unfold. This ability to be fluid and let the outcome emerge organically seems a good approach to life in general.

Amid all the construction, erecting fences and gardening chores, the Deans raised three children, their daughter M'Fanwy, who lives on the property, and two sons, Tehben and Jebbari. The boys work in the film industry in Los Angeles and Portland respectively. The children were homeschooled, which gave them the freedom to create. Tehben converted a Toyota pickup to electric power while Jebbari built guitars before heading off to film school. "They were always making something," Kyra told me. "When there's no box you can do amazing things."



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After wandering around the charming buildings, which felt like time-traveling to a well-tended Norse village, we came to the back yard with its chicken coops, trimmed hedges of ripe currants, and tidy lawn. An expansive solar system, which provides hot water and heat for the house, is snuggled into the south-facing slope. The Deans also use a wood boiler for heat in the house and adjacent buildings. I asked if they had plans to generate all their energy needs. "If it works out that way we will," Ranja concluded, summing up her general outlook.

Ranja would like to have a small greenhouse for tomatoes and the like, but somehow I don't think it will be one of the high tunnels cropping up around Homer. These plastic-wrapped Quonsets would be an eyesore among the sculpted buildings on the farm.

Speaking of sculptures, the Deans' sculpture and fine art studio, along with the workshop, comprise the heart of the homestead. All the Deans are notable artists, and the studio displays lovely, museum-quality bronze figures, commissioned wood carvings, wall art, carved panels, and jewelry. In addition to selling art and commissioned works, they offer educational homestead tours. You can learn more by visiting their website at <https://jefferydean.com>.

Gardens and livestock:

Of course, I was mainly there to learn about their gardening practices. As we walked Ranja explained, "I've always gardened. I've had a pretty good-sized garden since I was seventeen and I'm fifty-five now." Later she said, "If you added

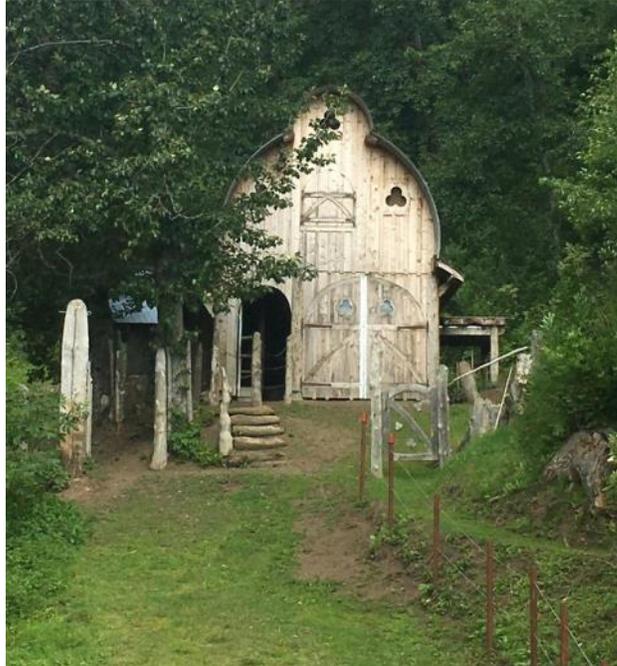
up all the food I've grown in my life, I've grown more than I've eaten." We agreed this is a worthy accomplishment. "I like to do my share," Ranja concluded.

In addition to the usual kale, carrots and potatoes, Ranja maintains

hazelberts, but with climate change it might be worth another shot at the nuts."

Clearly she is still growing more than she and her family can eat. Some she sells, including herbs, berries and nasturtiums, to Two Sisters Restaurant, while neighbors buy surplus eggs. She makes medicinal tinctures with dandelion, valerian and meadowsweet, and dries chamomile, bee balm and mint for tea. The animals "feast on wormwood" as a dewormer, as well as rosehips "by the bucketful."

Soil fertility in the gardens is no problem. "I heap the compost on," she explained, holding her thumb and forefinger about five inches apart to show how much she spreads onto the beds. There's no shortage of compost with all the animals on the place. Everything is pretty much organic except for the hay they bring in for the animals. They buy that from fields within walking distance.



rows of beets, numerous herbs, copious currants, various fruit trees, and a large raspberries patch. She explained, without apology, that she's not great at remembering the names of the varieties she plants. Regardless, they were thriving. Young apple trees bore ample fruit which would ripen within a few weeks, while cherry trees in the overgrown bluff glinted with red fruit ready for picking.

When asked about crops that have not done well for them, Jeff, who joined us for part of the time, named, "Blackberries, grapes, and



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The Animals:

It's hard to miss the Yow (a cross between a Yak and a Cow). He is a handsome white beast with intimidating horns and a long, full tail. In her matter-of-fact manner Ranja said, "I tried to ride him and broke a



few bones. So I don't do that anymore." She has taken him to the beach for a swim, hanging on to his horse-like tail as he towed her through the waves.

Three donkeys wander a fence line along the west side of the property making a noise like a horn section warming up before a performance.

Ranja explained that they make noise breathing in and out, something horses can't do. She uses them when she tills the garden and rides them sometimes.

Near the goat shed, three does greeted us while two young males happily ate overgrown rose bushes on the back 40. The goat milking shed is an architectural wonder of cordwood masonry and timber beam joists married to an original homestead building of logs they hoisted on top with a crane. Gaps between the old logs let daylight

shine through, nicely ventilating the hay stored there for feed.

Then there are the chickens. Ranja tends numerous Icelandic-cross hens, bred for Homer's maritime climate and "cuteness also, with their beards and hats." The hens enjoy organic feed, plus scraps and lots of grass.

Back home, after my visit with Ranja and Jeff, I looked around at my gardens and high tunnel with new eyes. The treated lumber fences, square cedar decks and uninspired stairs look so generic, so Home Depot. They are missing the "seat of the pants" craftsmanship that defines the Deans' farm. Rather than be discouraged, I am inspired. I realize it's all about taking the time to do it well, allowing inspiration to play a role. Maybe, over the years, I too can conjure some of the magic which makes the Deans' farm so enchanting.

10 Ways to Prepare Your Garden for Winter

from "Eartheasy" article of October, 2016, by Shannon Cowan

If you would like to reduce the amount of work facing you during next year's spring frenzy, consider some of these suggestions for putting your garden to bed.

1. Clean up rotting and finished plants:

Besides looking untidy, old plants can harbor disease, pests, and funguses. According to Colorado State University's cooperative extension, unwanted insects feeding on your crops throughout the summer may lay eggs on the plant's stalks and leaves. Removing spent plants from the soil surface or burying them in garden trenches (if they are disease-free) prevents pests from getting a head start come springtime. Burying old plants in your garden also adds organic matter to your soil, improving soil tilth and overall health.

2. Remove invasive weeds that may have taken hold over the growing season:

Dig them up and place them in the

trash or burn them on autumn's burn piles. Most invasive weeds remain viable in a compost heap or weed pile, so resist the urge to simply shift them to another part of your garden.

3. Prepare your soil for spring:

Fall is a great time to dig in soil amendments like manure, compost, bone meal, kelp, and rock phosphate. In most climates, adding nutrients at this time of year means the additions have time to start breaking down, enriching your soil, and becoming biologically active. Once you've added any amendments in fall, you can cover the bed with sheet plastic or other covering to prevent winter rains from washing the amendments below the active root zone

4. Plant cover crops:

Cover crops add nutrients. While a general guideline is to plant cover crops approximately one month before your first killing frost, some cover crops are hardier than others.

5. Prune perennials:

Fall is a good time to trim some perennial garden plants, though take care to ensure you choose the right ones. Although plants like fennel benefit from a fall pruning, research shows that spent raspberry canes continue to nourish the plant's crown into the winter

6. Divide and plant bulbs:

Although spring bulbs have long since flowered and died back, other flowering bulbs like lilies bloomed more recently. Three to four weeks after that glorious array, it's time to dig up and divide any plants that appeared crowded or straggly during the growing season.

7. Harvest and regenerate your compost:

Now that the heat of summer is over and nature's microbes are settling in for their winter's nap, you may be tempted to ignore your compost heap.

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This would be a missed opportunity in two ways. First, material composted over the summer is probably finished and ready to go. Using this rich material to top up garden beds, amend deficient soils, or fertilize lawns and landscaping will nourish your soil and jumpstart growth come springtime. Second, cleaning out finished compost means making way for another batch, which—in most areas—can be insulated against winter's chill. To keep those microbes working a little bit longer, build your fall compost heap with plenty of autumn leaves, straw, or sawdust layered with kitchen scraps and other active, green matter.

8. Replenish mulch:

Mulching in winter has many of the same benefits as summer mulching. These include reducing water loss, protecting the soil from erosion, and inhibiting weeds. But winter mulching has other benefits as well: as the soil transitions to colder weather, the freez-

ing and thawing of the earth can adversely affect garden plants, whose roots suffer from all that churning and heaving. Adding a thick layer of mulch to the soil surface helps regulate soil temperatures and moisture and ease the transition into winter. A thick layer of mulch around root vegetables left in the garden for your fall and winter harvest can also buffer against hard frosts and prolong your crop. And as the mulch breaks down it incorporates fresh organic material into your soil.

9. Review the cultivars in your garden and assess your growing season:

Did the varieties of fruits and vegetables planted this season perform adequately in your garden? Now is the time to reconsider under-performing plants and find out if a better variety exists for your location

10. Clean and sharpen tools:

Although most gardeners know they should keep tools clean and well oiled throughout the year, it's difficult to

keep up with this task when gardening is in full swing. Fall is a great time to rejuvenate your tools' lifespan by giving them some attention. Begin by washing tools to remove dirt and debris. If rust is present, remove with sandpaper or a wire brush. Sharpen hoes and shovels with a basic mill file. A whetstone works well for pruners. Finally, rub the surfaces of your tools with an oiled rag coated in light machine oil. This will help seal the metal from oxygen and extend your tools' lives for another year.

Thinking Ahead

Wherever you live, there are always steps you can take to prepare for next year's gardening season. Taken now, these steps will not only help your spring and summer run more smoothly, they can also improve your yields over the long term.

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