

# Homer Garden Club

# Newsletter

October 2011

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The October meeting will be held October 23 at 2:00 p.m. at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs.

### Board of Directors

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## Club Officers Elected — Recording Secretary Still Needed

At the September Harvest Dinner/meeting, the majority of the 2010-11 officers were re-elected. Barbara Landi, publicity, resigned due to plans to leave the Homer area. The current recording secretary, Roni Overway, has agreed to retain that position temporarily until it is filled. Anyone who would like to fill that position and be on the Board, please contact Jack Regan.

The new officers are:

President	Jack Regan
Vice President	Neil Wagner
Treasurer	Peggy Craig
Recording Secretary	VACANT
Social Secretary	Julie Parizek
Newsletter Editor	Paula Riley
Database Mgr.	Barbara Kennedy
Historian	Michael Linden
Publicity	Kyra Wagner

## October 23 Meeting Will Feature Dr. Jeffrey Smeenk Speaking on Potato Growing

Dr. Jeffrey Smeenk, Cooperative Extension Specialist for Commercial Horticulture and Assistant Professor of Horticulture, University of Alaska Fairbanks, will be the featured speaker at the October 23 meeting. He received his PhD in Production Agronomy and Sustainable Agriculture in 2003. Since then his research interests have included season extension through soil-warming and plasticulture techniques, development of potato varieties for the Alaska market and management of high-value crops. His current research programs include soil quality enhancement, non-herbicide methods of weed control, season extension of high value crops and high tunnels.



Dr. Smeenk plans on talking about potatoes in Alaska. He will bring a number of novel commercial varieties to show and will also bring some of the material that the University of Alaska Fairbanks potato breeding project is working on. He will talk about potato production successes in rural communities and about the different potatoes grown on the road system. He'll also talk about the recent Late Blight issues and answer questions on potato gardening.

During the Q&A after Jeff's talk, he is open to any other questions about gardening as he has lots of horticulture knowledge. Write down those puzzling garden mysteries and see if he can answer them!

## TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL.....

### Crosby, Stills and Nash

A strong nationwide movement is underway to develop educational programs for children to learn patterns of healthy eating, sound nutrition, and fundamentals of horticulture. The Homer Garden Club had an opportunity to participate in this wave of sustainable food production. Shere Baechler, a teacher from the Paul Banks

School, presented a request to the garden club for matching funds to a Department of Agriculture grant for the Paul Banks School to build a greenhouse on school property for the educational purposes of the students. After careful consideration, the garden club approved the grant and \$1,150.00 was awarded for the project.

Several people participated in establishing the greenhouse. Vista Volunteer Ben Zimmerman coordinated the effort. The greenhouse components were assembled at the Mariner High School woodworking shop with support from Mariner High School Principal Dr. Gee. Paul Banks School Principal Mr. Benny

Abraham provided on site support. Many other people, including community and commercial organizations, helped with the process. The greenhouse was erected and plants were installed. Students were excited to participate in the program, starting some seeds in pots in their classrooms and then bringing them to the greenhouse.

Horticulture in Homer has its own special problems. Falling temperatures and declining periods of light as the winter develops are significant environmental factors for the greenhouse and will influence its performance. The students at Paul Banks School are still excited about their greenhouse and the Garden Club wishes them ongoing success.



On October 7 Board members of the Homer Garden Club visited the Paul Banks Elementary greenhouse.



In between all our fall rain I hope you all are getting your gardens harvested and put to bed for winter. On a sunny fall day being in the garden is a joy. Your senses come alive with the heady earthy fall gar-

another pound of Red Chesnok Purplestripe and Siberian Marbled garlic. When they showed up last week, I was ready to try again.

cloves about 1½ inches deep, about 8 inches apart in 3 rows 12 inches apart. I added mulch on top and will layer old garden plants at least a foot thick. Next spring in early May I'll clear the beds and cover them with remay, and hope for large garlic.



Cooling potatoes in garage before storing in root cellar

den smells and the warm sun on your face. A glance up at the snow-capped peaks across the bay reminds you to get going.

A trip up to Carol Demers' place last month inspired me to give garlic another try. I'd bought some nice large bulbs from Filagree Garlic in Washington last year and casually put them in the ground. They came up this year but never flourished or grew well. I almost gave up on garlic. Then we visited Carol's at 1200 feet and saw her nice looking garlic. Her organized garden beds and systematic approach inspired me, so I ordered

I picked out a nice 12-foot long by 41 inch raised bed and added about a quart of fish bone meal, a pint of green sand, a cup of lime and a heaping wheelbarrow of compost we'd made this summer. It's sort of like mixing up a large chocolate cake, but the smells were a bit more robust. After mixing and smoothing the bed, I pushed two-foot long pieces of ½ inch re-

bar inside the raised bed sides and slipped five-foot long sticks of ¾ inch pvc pipe over them to make hoops. They will match my five-foot wide remay cover next spring. Carol has a good trick of fastening a wood strip on either side of the remay to hold it down yet make it easy to raise to weed or

I don't dig potatoes. I scoop them out with gloved hands. The ground in the raised beds is pretty soft and there doesn't seem to be room for a fork in tight places like raised beds unless you're OK with lots of spiked potatoes. So I take my time and get to know each plant. While I'm chasing around for potatoes I also pull out any horsetail roots. Yes, it's rather tedious but it's not going away otherwise.



8 varieties for seed stock



Joseph Belcastro went artistic with his potatoes!

work on the beds. She stores the remay with wood attached in a shed every winter. I stretched string to make my rows straight and put in the garlic

I built a raised half-round log bed on new ground /old chicken yard this spring as an experiment. I just dug down and mixed the local loamy soil with fish bone meal, green sand, and a couple buckets of compost and then planted potatoes. Comparing potato beds, the new bed had larger and slightly more potatoes than my old garden beds! I washed, then dried the potatoes in the basement, pulled my seed stock from the eight varieties and put them in the root cellar for storage. Later this month I'll go back for the rest of the root cellar companions: carrots, beets, parsnips, turnips, cabbage, kale and brussel sprouts.

I still have a long way to go to become a gardening sourdough, but this year I finally felt like maybe I was making a little headway and possibly have come to understand a few of the idiosyncrasies of gardening in Alaska. I actually have been harvesting enough vegetables that I have had to freeze and can them – a far cry from my disaster last year.

Last year the slugs had eaten all my cabbages, cauliflower, etc., so this spring I was prepared. I gathered egg shells all winter and had a couple of gallons of them to scatter around my plants; I had bottles of beer in the frig waiting to be used as slug bait – I had declared war! I never even got to try them out. I had absolutely no slugs! Consequently, my cabbages were huge! I only planted five, but the biggest one weighed several pounds and the rest weren't much smaller. Being from Colorado, I'd never even seen one that big, much less actually grown one.

My dog ate my peas last year so I made two-foot-high raised beds to keep him out of the garden. It worked great for my little short-legged Corgi, but unfortunately he had a Lab come visit him who thought it was great fun running up and down the rows of peas and thoroughly trampled them. Back to the drawing board on that one. None of my carrots came up last year, so I planted them extra thick this time. Naturally, every single one came up and I was thinning and thinning and thinning and ..... They were still too thick when I harvested and subsequently quite stunted. Nothing like the gorgeous ones at the Farmers' Market, but at least I did pick more than enough for me.

I planted potatoes for the first time this year and discovered why everyone says they grow great in Alaska. The vines were so huge that I was afraid there wouldn't be any potatoes under them, but I dug



almost 100 pounds of potatoes of every color under the sun. And the bonus is they taste SO good!

The aphids ate my greenhouse last year, so this time I really kept a watch out and had very few. When I found any, I tried spraying with dish soap, but that seemed as hard on the plants as the aphids were, so I just removed any plant that had them on it. Basil seemed to be the main attractant. Anyway, I harvested enough green beans, tomatoes, beets and cucumbers from the greenhouse to make me more than happy. I only had three cucumber plants, yet I picked so many that I was giving them away like most people give away zucchini. One got lost in the bean vines and got so big that it made five pints of bread and butter pickles all by itself! I had felt adven-

turesome, so planted several herbs. They did quite well (except the aphid-encrusted basil), but now I'm having to try to figure out how to use them!

The only things in the greenhouse that didn't do well were the corn and squash. I just haven't mastered the art of fertilizing my squash blossoms. Fortunately the ones in the outside garden did fine. The corn was a total bust, so I'm going to get my son-in-law to give me lessons next year. His did great in his high tunnel.

All in all, I had a great time with my garden. There was enough of a harvest to keep me enthused and enough failures to keep me challenged!

### Secretary Needed!

Please consider volunteering to be the club's recording secretary. This position also involves being on the Garden Club Board, which gives you a chance to have a voice in any decisions. The recording secretary position's duties are to take minutes of the Board and general meetings and submit copies to the Board. Please give us a hand. Roni Overway has consented to fill in temporarily, but needs to spend more time setting up Gardeners' Weekend.

# Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig, Treasurer

## September 2011

### Income

Membership	\$420.00
Donation	<u>75.00</u>
Total Income	<u>\$495.00</u>

### Expenses

Gardener's Weekend	\$3,795.10
Meeting	485.41
Venue	200.00
Program	285.41
Chamber Dues	79.00
Administration	23.58
Liability Insurance	325.00
Pioneer Garden	<u>200.00</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$4,908.09</u>

### REMINDER!!!!

Garden Club dues are due October 1. You can mail them in with the enrollment sheet on page 8. If you don't pay your dues, you will not receive the newsletter.

Beginning balance 9/1/11	\$17,214.84
Income	495.00
Expenses	<u>-4,908.09</u>
Ending balance 9/30/11	<u>\$12,801.75</u>



Thanks go to the fourteen hardworking gardeners who showed up to clean up the Baycrest Garden for the fall. It looks great. Many hands make quick work and lots of fun.

Peggy Craig , Baycrest Garden Chairperson

At the Harvest Dinner Rachel Lord requested the members of the Homer Garden Club to participate in a survey she has lined up. This survey is an attempt to determine the types of vegetable garden seeds that do well in our area. From the information she hopes to receive from this survey she will compile a list of what seeds gardeners can use to improve their yields. The more surveys she gets back, the more reliable this list will be, so let's give her a hand! The survey list follows on the next two pages. You can print it out and mail it to her, or copy and paste it into an e-mail.



Type of Edible:\_\_\_\_\_

Variety Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Grown in (circle)      Greenhouse              High Tunnel              Outside

Yield this year (circle)      Low              Moderate              High

Pests/Diseases?

Notes:

Type of Edible:\_\_\_\_\_

Variety Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Grown in (circle)      Greenhouse              High Tunnel              Outside

Yield this year (circle)      Low              Moderate              High

Pests/Diseases?

Notes:

Type of Edible:\_\_\_\_\_

Variety Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Grown in (circle)      Greenhouse              High Tunnel              Outside

Yield this year (circle)      Low              Moderate              High

Pests/Diseases?

Notes:

Type of Edible:\_\_\_\_\_

Variety Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Grown in (circle)      Greenhouse              High Tunnel              Outside

Yield this year (circle)      Low              Moderate              High

Pests/Diseases?

Notes:

**Please copy and paste as many sections as you need/want to fill out for different types of crops and varieties!**

**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 \_\_\_\_ Pioneer Garden

\_\_\_\_ 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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P.O. Box 2833  
Homer, Alaska 99603*

