

September
2014

Homer Garden Club

Newsletter

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Harvest Dinner and Meeting to be Held September 28, 5:00 pm, at Methodist Church

It's **Harvest Dinner** time already!! We will be meeting again at the Methodist Church, in the Fellowship Hall, from 5:00 to 7:30 pm Sunday, September 28th.

Here is the schedule:

- 4:00-4:30 Set up the Hall
- 4:30 - 5:00 Members arrive and deliver food to the kitchen
- 5:00-6:30 Dinner
- 6:30-7:30 Meeting (**Election of Officers**) with the balance devoted to sharing our summer's experiences
- 7:30-8:30 Cleanup

As in years past, beverages and prime rib will be provided but the rest is up to us! This is a fun chance to visit, compare garden notes and share a little from your harvest of garden, woods or sea. Please join us

with whatever dish you feel inspired to make.

Please contact Kate McNulty at 235-6474 to volunteer to set up or clean up. Or just show up in time to help. Also contact her if you would like to donate a door prize.

REMINDER!!!!

Garden Club dues are due **October 1**. You can mail them in with the enrollment sheet on page 6 or enroll at the Harvest Dinner. If you don't pay your dues, you will not receive the newsletter.

For the gardener, fall is a time of reckoning. What crops did well? Which ones were disappointing? If we take notes (which I highly recommend) we can use this time of reflection to offer advice to our future selves drawing on what we've observed this year. To that end I'll share my own garden musings.

Crops that did especially well this year were the roots and fruits; potatoes, carrots, onions, strawberries, raspberries, apples, currants, and tomatoes. I grew potatoes in newly tilled soil that hadn't seen vegetable crops before and the results were impressive – robust plants and some really large potatoes. I've only harvested about a third of the 150 square feet I planted, but I imagine I'll end up with close to 200 pounds. This may not be one for the record books but it will certainly meet our needs. My onions, grown from sets bought at

several gallon-sized bags in the freezer for smoothies and jam. We're still harvesting a bumper crop of plump raspberries, and I have dozens of lovely, good-sized apples on my two 8-year-old apple trees ready for picking.

Crops that were a disappointment this year included artichokes, which I may have started too early (first of January), green beans and corn in the high tunnel, which I suspect didn't get enough water.

I like to experiment, and this summer I tried hay bale gardening and a couple of souped-up low tunnels. If you saw my earlier article on hay bale gardening, I expressed great optimism at the idea of planting seeds into well-soaked and fertilized hay bales. I envisioned early lettuce, robust green beans, and long, dirt-free carrots. The sad truth is, this method didn't work well for me. It may have been the dry June weather we had, but while everything sprouted in a promising flush of green, the beans withered and eventually died, the carrots were stunted, and the lettuce was leggy. Worst of all, the bales produced a prolific crop of dark, spooky-looking mushrooms over several weeks. My mushroom guide suggests that they may have been a psychedelic variety, but I wasn't keen on verifying that.

The souped-up low tunnels, on the other hand, were completely successful. I put six PVC hoops over my 4x8 raised beds, covered the soil in a brown plastic that discourages weed growth while allowing the warming rays of the sun to penetrate, and after planting in zucchini and squash starts, I covered the hoops with a perforated plastic that

captures heat while releasing moisture build up. Over this I put a layer of Remay – a light cloth that further holds heat. The results were impressive. The temperature each morning was a good ten degrees warmer than the ambient temperature, and the plants grew beautifully. I opened up the ends of the tunnels on sunny days to keep them from getting too hot and to allow in the flies and bees that pollinated the squash. Had I hand pollinated (note to self for next year) the results would have been even better. I plan to try this method with green beans next year.

Slugs were a problem for everyone this summer thanks to the wet weather in July and August. And this summer for the first time I saw banana slugs in the neighborhood. They may have come in when my neighbor purchased several potted flowering plants to spruce up his long neglected flowerbeds. At any rate I now see three or four every time I walk the upper road above his property. I haven't actually seen any in my garden, but at one point I had a potato plant go from vigor to skeletal overnight, so I presume the nasty pests were the culprit. Banana slugs are much larger than our common slugs – as long as my index finger, and I saw one that was at least as big around as my thumb. I initially shuddered when I stepped on them, but now I find the 'pop' they make rather satisfying. Call me heartless, but as far as I'm concerned they're a biological disaster.

Being an organic farmer I needed an organic solution to this summer's slug problem. I tried Sluggo with moderate success, and "bug-wiser" beer until someone suggested that the beer might actually attract more slugs. I offered them to my young chickens, but they wouldn't have anything to do with them after the first quick peck.

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Wagon Wheel, are fist-sized, and my carrots are perfectly sleek and uniformly large. I dried the onions with their tops still intact for a week and then braided them prettily to hang in a cool kitchen window for easy use. I'll store the carrots and potatoes in totes covered with moist burlap in the crawl space to use throughout the winter.

Our strawberries came on early in the high tunnel and for the first year ever I had enough to both eat as many as we wanted and put up

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Sprinkling ground up eggshells on the soil is supposed to be uncomfortable for them to crawl across, but despite faithfully saving shells all winter and applying them around my tender plants I couldn't see much difference. I was still finding slugs nestled deep inside the lettuce and cabbages that I cut open on the cutting board. Shudder.

And then a co-worker mentioned that she had several male ducks that needed a home and did I want one? She came by with four handsome drakes in a cardboard box in the back of her Subaru and let me pick one out. I reached in and gently lifted out our newest recruit. We christened him "Wally", which suits him.

Wally has proven to be a great connoisseur of slugs. He runs his bill along the edges of garden box-

es, and waddles carefully among the potato plants lapping up anything that wiggles. For the first couple of weeks he didn't even bother to eat the chickens' layer pellets and grain that I put out for him, as the slug population met his needs. I still spot a slug from time to time, but there's been almost no new damage to crops since his introduction. Plus, he's very person-



able, quacking a greeting each time he sees one of us, and walking with us along the edge of the fence in pursuit of company. We've decided that he needs a

female for company, so if anyone reading this has a gentle female in need of a home, Wally would be most grateful.

As summer moves smoothly into fall we are busy forking over the soil and grappling for potatoes, cooking up big pots of apples for applesauce, drying tomatoes in the dehydrator, and canning raspberry jam that will be given out at Christmas. There is great satisfaction to be had in looking at well stocked shelves, a freezer nearly too full to accommodate yet another bag of berries, and a table set for company that contains so many good things that we have harvested. This is wealth enough for me.

"I never had any other desire so strong, and so like to covetousness, as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and a large Garden. ~Abraham Cowley, The Garden, 1666"



The Baycrest Garden is now complete!!!!

If you haven't already done so, be sure to stop by the Baycrest Overlook and check out the new look for the Garden Club's garden. Gone are the weeds and instead there are flowers, flowers and more flowers, plus shrubs and ornamental grasses.

Special thanks go out to the wonderful volunteers who spent so many hours planning and implementing this new garden that is a credit to the Garden Club. Numerous volunteers came out for the final planting and they deserve a big round of applause for their dedication.



Gardeners' Weekend

by Roni Overway

Thank you, Thank you Gardeners' Weekend Volunteers!

In most of the past years I've written a newsletter article right after the "weekend" to sum up the total experience. This year's event was no less worthy of the superlatives with which Roget has assisted me in the past! But those of you who attended our 8th Gardeners' Weekend and are reading this now know all about that! The variety of events, the uniqueness of the gardens open to tour, the hard work owners put into their gardens to make them welcome additions to our two-day celebration, all of those things, it almost goes without saying, have gone into our hugely successful weekends. This year I'm choosing to write about **YOU!!**

The Homer Garden Club itself is worthy of superlatives. Its mission statement hardly needs to be repeated to know just what it is: to "educate and encourage gardeners and to provide positive experiences for gardeners at all levels of learning." This club does that so well! In the past year we have welcomed Carole Demers, Paul Castellani, Liz Dowler, Pete Kinneen, Brenda Adams, Jess Ryan, and Ellen VandeVisse as speakers to our monthly meetings. We have raised money for our various educational activities through another successful plant sale. We've enjoyed the special camaraderie with other gardeners and shared our successes and occasional failures during our Harvest Dinner. We've allocated the money necessary to help re-beautify the Baycrest turnout and to provide visitors, whether other Alaskans or those from "outside", a stunning introduction to our end of the road. And since the Homer Garden Club is **YOU.....YOU** are the ones who deserve the credit.



Gardeners' Weekend takes a whole lot of **YOU** to make it successful. **YOU** have stood at the copier until your back said "no more!", **YOU** have perfectly folded and stapled 400 maps, posted flyers, met together and planned hostess duties and fulfilled them perfectly. **YOU** have cooked and

baked and served and cleaned up. **YOU** have sold tickets, counted people, made our guest speakers feel special and welcome in our community. **YOU** have bought tickets and attended this event and have encouraged your friends and relatives to do the same. **YOU** might even be a business owner who has happily publicized who we are and what we're doing.

So, this year's accolades go to the volunteers of the Homer Garden Club who regularly stand up to the plate and hit home runs. Homer, and the Kenai peninsula in general, is fortunate to have all of you. The Gardeners' Weekend committee thanks **YOU!!**

Sharon Froeschle would also like to specifically thank the volunteer Gardeners' Weekend garden hostesses Vonda Nixon, Donna Hinkle, Jessica Shephard, Sandy Early, Julie Parizek, Paula Riley, Barbara Kennedy, Kyra Wagner, Ruth Dickerson and Pat Melone for a job very well done.



Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig, Treasurer

June, July, August 2014

Income

Membership	235.00
Newsletter ads	400.00
Cash box	150.00
Gardeners' Weekend	5,555.00

Total Income \$6,340.00

Expenses

Gardeners' Weekend	2,949.38
Baycrest Garden	4,435.67
Insurance	375.00
Plant Sale	59.36
State Biennial Report	159.00
Meeting	50.00
Newsletter	53.75

Total Expenses \$8,082.16

Beginning balance 6/1/14	\$11,400.94
Income	6,340.00
Expenses	<u>-8,082.16</u>
Ending balance 8/31/14	<u>\$9,658.78</u>



ANNUAL ELECTIONS

At the Harvest Dinner celebration, members will share the bounty from their gardens and will elect the board for the upcoming year. The Nominations Committee has compiled a slate of candidates for the members to consider.

Remember, the candidates presented by the nominating committee are just the individuals who indicated they are willing to serve in these positions. All positions are open to nominations from the floor at the time of the September Harvest Dinner meeting.

REMEMBER: Dues are now due October 1st. 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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