

# Homer Garden Club

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## Newsletter



April  
2015

The next Homer Garden Club meeting will be **May 24 at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs, at 2:00 pm.**

**Danny Stanislav & Steve Veldstra from Alaska Hardy to Discuss Microclimates at May 24 Meeting**

### Board of Directors

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On May 24th, Danny Stanislav and Steve Veldstra from Alaska Hardy will be bringing a bit of Spring to our monthly meeting, the last official meeting before we move into our non-stop summer gardening months. They will share with us what to look for when growing in our challenging microclimates as well as showcase some of their exciting new introductions for 2015.

Alaska Hardy was originally established by Rita Jo Shoultz as Fritz Creek Gardens in 1995 as the premier source for quality plants suitable for the great north



and expert advice on how to grow them. In 2013, Dutch Boy Landscaping purchased Fritz Creek Gardens, relocated the greenhouse to Sterling Highway near the top of Baycrest Hill, and officially became Alaska Hardy. Danny and Steve have continued Rita Jo's commitment to delivering over 500 varieties of exceptional plants, as well as advice to Homer gardeners and have added their own flair to this magical place.

I can't think of a better kick-off for gardening season 2015!

**DON'T FORGET**  
**THE HOMER GARDEN CLUB PLANT SALE**  
**JUNE 6, 11:00 am, AT THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**



© Can Stock Photo - csp3565564

## **HOMER GARDEN CLUB PLANT SALE – SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 11:00AM AT THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

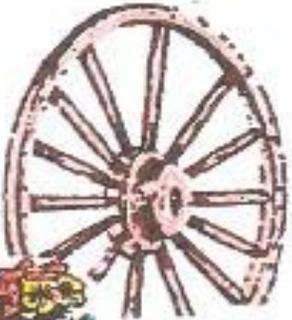
**We need your help!!  
Here's how:**

**PLANTS!!** The more the better, and the prettier the better. Perennials (good time to divide them), annual/vegetable starters, house plants, native plants, berries, shrubs, trees...  
(drop off at the Chamber beginning at 9AM)

**VOLUNTEERS!!** We need people to help set-up, cashier, and clean-up. Contact Marylou Burton at [burtons@mosquitonet.com](mailto:burtons@mosquitonet.com) or call 235-6469 if you can help.

**CARDBOARD FLATS!** Save them and bring them to the sale.

**CUSTOMERS!!** Give some away, buy some new ones.  
You can never have too many flowers.



**BRIGHTEN your yard  
GROW your garden**

# **WAGON WHEEL**

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1506 OCEAN DRIVE   ■   HOMER, ALASKA 99603  
PHONE 235-8777

**Lots & lots of**

**Bedding plants – flowers, tomatoes, vegetables, herbs – seeds,  
garden supplies, fertilizers, soils, chicks,  
and more!**

**Monday -Friday 9:30-6:30, Saturday 9:30-6:00, Sunday 12:00-5:00**

# April Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig, Treasurer

## April 2015

Membership		135.00	
Books		60.00	
		Total Income	<u>\$195.00</u>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Meeting		193.75	
Hospitality	19.05		
Venue	150.00		
Program	24.70		
Roni's Gift		79.55	
Plant Sale		18.00	
		Total Expenses	<u>\$291.30</u>
Beginning balance 4/1/15		\$8,785.56	
Income		195.00	
Expenses		<u>(291.30)</u>	
Ending balance 4/30/15		<u>\$8,689.26</u>	

 Alaska Hardy®

3800 Sterling Highway, Homer, Alaska  
907-235-4969  
[www.alaskahardy.com](http://www.alaskahardy.com)



Alaska Hardy Nursery is the home of over 500 varieties of Alaska Hardy® perennials, trees, shrubs, vines and roses.

Our goal is to provide the largest variety of Alaska Hardy® plants suitable for the great North.

 Dutch Boy  
LANDSCAPING

970-235-7140

How do you know you are a Master Gardener?  
There is a decorative compost container on your kitchen counter.  
You would rather go to a nursery to shop than a clothing store.  
You prefer gardening to watching television.

## Growing Self-Reliant Gardeners

by Jessica Shepherd

My grandpa Tom came from a farming family, as many in his generation did, and he worked the soil every spring and harvested the fruits and vegetables of his labor every fall throughout his long life. Grandma Alyce transformed the food he grew into stews and soups, and pies and jams. As a child, growing up with my grandparents in Colorado, I was an eager understudy in the garden, squatting next to grandma as she demonstrated how to poke bean seeds into the ground and picking Early Girl tomatoes with grandpa. We never had much money but we always had a wealth of good food – shelves of canning jars with jewel-colored peaches, beets, and plums, frozen bags of strawberries and raspberries, and drawers full of potatoes and carrots and onions.

Fast-forward fifty years and I am the grandparent, here in Fairbanks on a family visit. Today I'll spend the afternoon with my granddaughter, Winter, pouring tiny lettuce seeds into her cupped hand and watching her sprinkle them evenly onto soil-filled plastic trays. Later she'll help me cook dinner using spaghetti sauce I canned last sum-

mer and we'll make a piecrust for frozen raspberries that we harvested together last fall. Like my grandparents before me, I'm sharing with her a love of working the soil and bringing forth food to nourish my



family. My hope is that she will carry this gentle tradition forward to her own children and grandchildren. So while I simply enjoy this time spent together, heads bent over colorful packages of seeds, I am also encouraging a connection to the food she eats and showing her a path toward self-reliance.

In addition to gardening, my grandpa was a World News junky. He tuned into Tom Brokaw and Walter Cronkite morning, noon, and night. He may have only had a 7<sup>th</sup> grade education, but he liked to be in-

formed. Like Grandpa, I too check the headlines several times a day, only I do so on line, which gives me the ability to refine my focus, skipping over the latest political scandal in favor of topic-specific news. And the topics that draw me are often food related.

I devour news updates about the prolonged drought in California where 50% of the country's produce is grown; articles that raise the alarm about the rapid expansion of genetically modified foods; farming reports that document the detrimental impacts of higher temperatures on corn crops; websites that bemoan the lack of young people interested in or

*(Continued on page 5)*

Maintain your garden with help from **JUST ASK RENTAL**, featuring mowers, weed eaters, tillers, thatchers, landscape tools and much more.



**Ulmer's**  
**Drug & Hardware**

Located in the  
Lakeside Mall,  
3858 Lake Street,  
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Let **ULMER'S** help  
make your garden a  
showplace with our  
great assortment of yard  
ornaments and planters,  
as well as all your gar-  
dening tool needs.





financially able to supplant a workforce of aging farmers; and government studies with dismal graphs depicting the depletion of the aquifers that make all of this production possible. I won't belabor this, but you can guess by now what conclusion I've drawn from all of these reports - the very means by which we grow food in this country is destabilizing.

And then there's the local news. Yesterday the Fairbanks Daily

News Miner reported on the Senate's passage of a State budget that will translate into deep funding cuts. As I chatted with old friends and store clerks one topic surfaced with regularity - job loss. Nearly everyone I spoke with, from long-time University employees to dedicated store clerks, expressed a concern about continued employment. I've been tied into the Fairbanks community for over twenty years and I've never seen this town so somber.

So, as a grandmother and gardener, I'll do what I can to help my little clan. Shortly I'll be heading out the door to buy potting soil, planter boxes, seeds, and fertilizer for my son and his family. They may live in an apartment, but they have a sunny patio that will be perfect for a container garden. And with luck and a little help from me, they'll harvest at least a bit of their own food this sum-

mer. In time I hope they get the gardening bug, as I did, and this little beginning will grow into something more sustaining, building, as it were, a buffer against the challenges ahead.



## Cookie's Country Greenhouse

2340 East End Road, Homer, 235-8915 or 399-8915

### Opening date — April 16



Featuring Proven Winners® plants  
We also carry vegetable starts, organic seed and seed potatoes, as well as farm fresh eggs and red wiggler worms.

Open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 to 6:00

## New Local Businesses

★ **Grandpa's Organic Fertilizer** is a new, local vermiculture (composting worm growing) business owned and operated by Michael & Melodie Hicks out of their home in Kasilof. A 1200sq. ft. heated, below ground work/storage area was built, where the worms are raised primarily for agricultural interests. Their worm castings make a rich black organic soil supplement that does amazing things for plants.

The Hicks first started thinking about raising worms about twenty years ago and now, after lots of research and work, the worms have become a reality, and with a much wider scope than initially imagined. In October 2014, they began with just under 200 worms and now have over 12,000 worms working day and night with a goal of 90,000.



Worm Castings

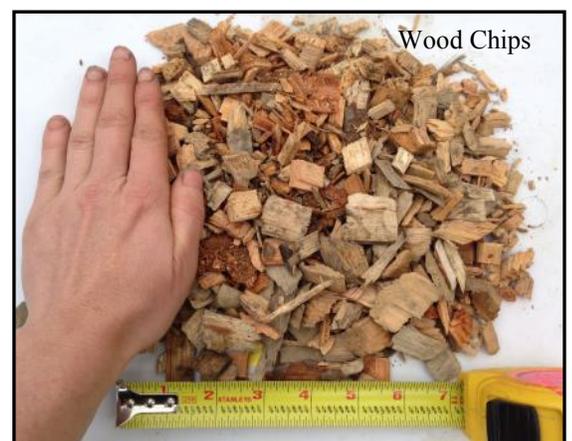
They are selling the fertilizer in 15lb and 1cu.ft. (50#) bags and currently have five yards (130 50# bags) of product to sell while they continue to ramp up the inventory. It takes time to hatch and raise the stock needed to be at full production, and "We are not in a hurry." Right now the worms are producing nearly a yard of 100% worm casting every six weeks, but in twelve months, they hope to be producing one yard per week, or about 50 yards per year. Grandpa's Organic Fertilizer is available for purchase this spring. You can read more about it or order at: [www.alaskavermiculture.com](http://www.alaskavermiculture.com). (Information provided by Michael Hicks, Kasilof.)

★ **Southern Exposure, LLC**, a Homer-based excavation and construction company, can source and deliver local gravel products, topsoil and wood chips for your project. Many gardeners anticipate spring after a long winter of planning for garden additions, opening a new field for cultivation, or creating the best soil for their prized plants. These new projects, however, often require resources that can seem out of reach to the small-scale gardener.

What does it take to turn the idea of a decorative new garden path or improving drainage on the low side of the garden from a dream to a reality? A key part of planning is knowing the best materials available for your job, their cost, and getting them to your site. Familiarity with the materials involved in your vision will help you get exactly what you want.

Sand and gravel come in a wide selection of sizes and blends. When choosing a gravel, you'll want to pay attention to the size and texture of the product as well as whether it is likely to allow drainage or to compact well. Do you need 1 1/2" drain rock to improve water flow in a ditch around your garden? Or attractive, 3/4" chips for a path through your flower beds?

As gardeners, we have to think of ourselves as soil farmers. Adding compost rich in organic matter to soil improves plant performance. Local compost and Fishy Peat is available that is ready to be applied directly to your garden beds. Other products, such as wood chips and biochar, can be helpful additions to your own compost production by increasing biomass and surface area for beneficial microbes. Southern Exposure LLC and its suppliers have many products available to help build your soil and enrich microbial life.



Wood Chips

They strive to provide high quality service and are committed to helping you find the best product for your garden project. They can be found on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/southernexposurealaska> or call 907-235-2352 for current product availability and estimates. (Information provided by Jenni Medley.)

Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless,  
but because they're priceless.

~Sherry Anderson

Gardeners' Weekend has become, over time, many things to many people: it is a community Happening, with a capital H; it's a gathering of friends; it's a happily anticipated "event" which draws appreciative gardeners from all over the peninsula and beyond; it is a learning environment; it is just downright fun...almost

This year we *celebrate* our ninth formal Gardeners' Weekend. We have come a long way since Lorna Olson provided its name! A long way since 179 people "showed up"! A long way from that first felt flower - as a matter of fact, that first year of the "flower", we ran out and Lorna improvised on the fly with beaded safety pins!! Now we draw between 350 and 400 people, always an enthusiastic bunch sharing their passion rain or shine. They've learned to plan as much for a rain jacket and break-up boots kind of day as for one requiring just a t-shirt and tennies! Gardeners are Great!!

With just one regular meeting left on HGC's spring calendar, we do need a few more helpers. I have to add, though, not nearly as many as we sometimes need by this time of year. So, for all of you who signed up early, thank you so much. You ARE priceless. If the rest of YOU want to count yourselves among the priceless, here are the positions we still need to fill:

**Veggie plates:** Hey! You out there with the gorgeous vegetable garden! We would like **two** more people to supply a home grown veggie tray!

**Bear Creek Winery:** Would you like to come a little early, help with organizing the food and getting it out to the tables? We can use **two** more helpers there!

**Hostesses:** We have 8 and one alternate. We need **four** more....you know how essential you are!!!!

Call me any time, well, almost any time, if you'd like to help out: Roni Overway - 226 3404 or 907 242 1966. Or contact one of the other committee members: Brenda Adams, Jessica Shepherd, Sharon Froeschle, Joan Splinter, Lorna Olson, or Millie Lewis.

Thank you, thank you...All it takes, in my book, to be considered one of those "priceless" volunteers is to sign up! Remember too, that our HGC website will have a link to our brochure near the first of July: [www.homergardenclub.org](http://www.homergardenclub.org).



Right of Summer! And it wouldn't happen if it weren't for volunteers, those priceless individuals who share their time and their talents helping out with a *Celebration of Summer* in which we can all share!

**The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before.**

- Vita Sackville-West, 1892 - 1962

April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015

President Jessica Shepherd brought the meeting to order at 2 pm. Two new members introduced themselves and were welcomed by the club.

Jessica asked folks about what is currently blooming in their gardens. Answers included daffodils, primula, pasque flowers, crocus and more. It's an early spring.

Jessica explained that the minutes from the last meeting were published in the newsletter so would not be read. If members have additions or corrections, please contact Recording Secretary Brenda Adams with your input.

Treasurer Peggy Craig reported there is \$9,656.22 in the treasury. Jessica pointed out that the HGC book, *Kachemak Cultivating from Seaside to Summit* is available here at the meeting. It's also available at the Homer Bookstore. Co-Vice President, Francie Roberts, reported the May meeting will feature the folks from Alaska Hardy. They will present new varieties

of perennials available at their nursery this year as well as their recommendations of tried and true favorites.

Jessica said that at the last meeting we talked about doing a clean-up at Toby Tyler's. Apparently this raised some concerns and he prefers we do it individually. Please contact Toby or Dale Coreman directly if you would like to help. Brenda Adams announced a volunteer day at the Homer Public Library on 4/30 from 10-1. Please help with spring maintenance at the library.

Jess asked for someone to chair this activity and organize volunteer activity for maintenance at the new HGC Baycrest garden. Beth Cummings said she would do this.

Marylou Burton, Chair of the Plant

Sale Committee, talked about volunteer opportunities for the plant sale. It will be held June 6<sup>th</sup> at 11 am at the Homer Chamber of Commerce.

Co-Chair Roni Overway gave an update on Gardeners' Weekend. This year it will be a three day event, July 31<sup>st</sup> through August 2nd. Our speaker, Bill Cullina, will speak Friday and Saturday evenings, both at 6:30 pm at the college, and lead a macrophotog-



raphy workshop Saturday from 9 am until 2 pm. On Sunday five gar-

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Ground Control Hydroponic & Garden Supply

**139 Ocean Drive, #1, Homer, Alaska 99603 — (907) 235-1521**  
**OPEN Monday through Saturday 11:00—6:00**

**NEW SECOND LOCATION:**  
**205 S. Willow, #A, Kenai, Alaska 99611 — (907) 283-1511**  
**OPEN Monday—Saturday 10:00—7:00**



### **Your source for:**

*Hydroponic supplies, irrigation supplies, grow lights, seed starting supplies, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, soil amendments*

dens will be open for touring from 11 to 5 followed by a reception for participants at Bear Creek Winery. The talks are no charge, the workshop is \$30 and the tours are \$15 each. We continue to make the tours complimentary to Gardeners Emeritus who are 80 years of age or older.

Roni said we still need folks members to help on Saturday evening at the lecture and a couple more to help at the reception. She welcomed back Lorna Olson who has been on the GW committee since its inception nine years ago. Roni asked that folks volunteer to bring nice veggie plates for the reception. Don and Donna Rae have volunteered, but we could use more. We also need folks to host or hostess in the gardens for the 11-2 shift and for the 2-5 time slot as well. A couple of alternates are needed in case "life happens."

Co-Chair Brenda Adams described our speaker's talks. On Friday night Mr. Cullina will present 'Beyond the Surface: Soil Physics, Biology and Chemistry Demystified'. Saturday the talk is 'Sugar, Sex, and Poison: Shocking Plant Secrets Caught on Camera.'

Tony Burgess announced that his son, Beau Burgess, will have wood chips available for sale.

Don and Donna Rae will have seed potatoes for sale out front after the meeting.

Francie Roberts introduced Dave Schroer who has gardened in Homer for years and in many different areas. He's well known for his pumpkins and fruit trees. A long term member of the HGC and a founding member of the Fruit Growers Club, Dave asked us to bear with him as he has new hearing aids and hasn't taught for 33 years. He encouraged folks to Google questions as the internet offers a wealth of information.

He described his gardening experience in Alaska as an odd story. He got to Alaska in 1953 to teach school. He put in his first garden at Skilak Lake in 1954. On July 4<sup>th</sup> it all froze. He said his first attempt in Homer was also a failure. He was trying to garden on the bluff in three to four feet of peat. Finally, they moved to where the golf course is now and there his gardening experience took off.

He and his wife Beth now live six miles closer to town than the course. He announced that on Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm, he'll have an open orchard and a workshop on fruit tree grafting and pruning. He lives six miles out East Road on Portlock. Turn uphill on Portlock. Find the Schroer resi-

dence and orchard at the bottom of a steep hill. Don't turn; go straight into his driveway.

Dave grows everything outside. He thinks high tunnels will revolutionize fruit growing here. For outdoor growing he recommends apples and cherries. His experience is that pears, plums, apricots, and peaches are a waste of time except for their blooms.

He prefers Parkland and Norland apples, both early varieties. He said to choose only early apples. You could try middle, but never late varieties. He said Yellow Transparent does well.

Since cherries are in the *Prunus* family, he tried 100 grafts. They didn't work. He likes Montmorency, a pie cherry. Bali has a better flavor but is too late for us. Bali is a good root stock. Dave has grafted sweet cherries onto this cherry. Sadly all were destroyed by our recent hare explosion. Since its rootstock comes true he has transplanted suckers.

Montmorency is self-fertile, but this is not true of apples. You must have two trees. Rescue crab is good pollinator.

He enjoys grafting. You should do it when the tree is ready to bud out, not after.

The raspberries he grows he got



from an old homesteader and didn't know the variety. Liz Johnson said her late husband Bill grew them and the variety is Latham.

Dave stressed using other trees: larch, mayday, mountain ash, mugo pines, burr oak, amur maple, birch, spruce, aspen, cottonwood, and sand pear though in fifteen years his has never bloomed!

To successfully grow fruit, location is important. Wind protection is critical. Moose love them. They must be fenced. He recommends the Cooperative Extension Service for pruning information. They have great publications.

Dave demonstrated a cleft graft and said he'd go into more detail at the workshop.

After several questions, the meeting adjourned at 4 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brenda Adams  
Recording Secretary

**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 \_\_\_ 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

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

