

CONTENTS	
Article	Page
Kathy Mailer	1
Announcements	2
Treasurer's Report	3
Jan & Feb Minutes	3
Germination Process	4
Quack to Basics	5
Sowing Timetable	6

**The next Homer Garden Club meeting will be March 22 at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs, at 2:00 pm.**

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# Homer Garden Club



**March  
2015**

**Kathy Mailer of Willow, Alaska, will discuss growing her garden in Willow at March 22 meeting**

Kathy Mailer, of Willow, Alaska, will be presenting Growing My Willow Garden to the Homer Garden Club on Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2:00 pm. Kathy will be sharing her knowledge of delphiniums and describing the evolution of her garden.

Kathy Mailer and her husband Bill began designing their garden shortly after moving to Willow in 2002. While the two of them worked on building their home there, they also found time to design a cottage style garden with curving beds and an emphasis on English delphiniums. Peonies, roses, iris, lilies, thalictrum, monkshood, hostas and astilbes along with many other unusual perennials are interspersed throughout.

A small vegetable garden is also enclosed. They built rock walls to add depth and interest. A beautiful greenhouse that they

designed and built has provided the ability to start many of the plants from seed.

Gardening is a passion for Kathy and Bill and the garden is an evolving and learning experience. Kathy and Bill's garden has been on several local garden tours and has been featured in the Matanuska Valley Frontiersman, a local newspaper.





# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**FISH BONE MEAL** — Michael and Peggy Craig have advised they will once again be making the trip to Palmer to pick up fish bone meal fertilizer from AK Sea-Ag. If you are interested in ordering please sign up at the March meeting or contact Peggy at 235-0631. They will be limited to 2 tons (80 sacks 50 pounds each). First come, first served, so sign up early. Other products that AK Sea-Ag carries will also be available, including kelp powder, microbial inoculant, and lime. If you wish more information, please refer to their website at [www.alaskasea-ag.com](http://www.alaskasea-ag.com). Michael and Peggy will be going up in April, date depending on the weather. You will receive an email the day before so you can plan on picking it up promptly.

**KPC'S KACHEMAK BAY CAMPUS** presents Northern Garden Design with Brenda Adams, national award-winning garden designer. She will teach this two-day, in-depth, how-to workshop. Gain the confidence that your gardening goals can be achieved and a sense of direction on how to do it. It will be held at Kachemak Bay Campus—Kenai Peninsula College on April 18th and 25th, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. The fee is \$90. To register, go to the KBC campus on Pioneer Avenue or register online at [uaonline.alaska.edu](http://uaonline.alaska.edu), or call 235-7743. Deadline to register is April 10.



### SVT THRIVING THURSDAYS—

**March 19** at 6:00 pm SVT Wellness Center will present “Shopping 101—Healthy Foods on a Budget” with host Amy Rattenbury, local acupuncturist and Chinese herbalist. She will discuss ingredient lists and strategies for purchasing healthy foods on a budget. If time permits, there will be a short shopping trip to utilize all that was learned.

**March 26** at 6:00 pm — Kyra Wagner, founder of Sustainable Homer, will present “Building Soil Good Enough to Eat.” She will examine many areas of concern for soil such as composting, soil amending, soil testing, when to rototill, when not to, micronutrients and how to warm the soil.

**April 2** at 6:00 pm —Janice Chumley, IPM technician with Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Extension Service, will discuss dealing with pests that eat or crowd out your garden flowers and vegetables and provide helpful tips and tools, including ways to identify, deter and eliminate pests gently and effectively.

**April 9** at 6:00 pm —Lark Ticen, certified Square Foot Gardening (SFG) Instructor, will discuss this simple and versatile system that adapts to all levels of experience, physical ability and geographical location. This gardening method takes less space, less work, less water and can even be done on patios and decks.

## OCEANSIDE FARMS HOMER, ALASKA



Oceanside Farms is offering Alaska certified seed potatoes grown in Homer using organic methods!

The eight varieties are:

Magic Molly	Pimpemel
Yellow Finn	Robinta
Yukon Gold	Donna Red (22-1 exp)
Red Gold	French Fingerling



We suggest you plan to get them a month before your planting date so they can sprout in low light.

They are \$4.00 a pound or \$3.00 a pound for 5 pounds and over.

Call Don “Iceman” McNamara at 299-7873.



## Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig, Treasurer

FEBRUARY 2015

Membership	60.00	
Donation	85.00	
	Total Income	<u>\$145.00</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Hospitality	20.00	
Meeting—venue	150.00	
	Total Expenses	<u>\$170.00</u>
Beginning balance 2/1/15		\$9,332.46
Income		145.00
Expenses		<u>(170.00)</u>
Ending balance 2/28/15		<u>\$9,307.46</u>



## January & February Minutes

by Brenda Adams, Secretary

### January 25, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 2:08 PM by President Jessica Shepherd. She asked HGC Board members to stand and introduce themselves. Recording Secretary Brenda Adams read the minutes from the last meeting. Treasurer Peggy Craig reported that the treasury currently stands at \$9,482.46.

A new member, Liam, introduced himself. Welcome Liam!

The plant sale will be held June 6th. Jessica said she would send around a sign-up sheet for this event and other opportunities to volunteer. Brenda Adams gave a brief Gardeners' Weekend update. Co-Vice President, Joan Splinter, did an update on speakers for February and March.

We had a discussion of the pros

and cons of the club activating our Facebook page. There was little enthusiasm for the project, but Kyra Wagner pointed out its usefulness in attracting younger members. No decision was made on the topic.

Joan Splinter introduced our speaker, Cathy Ulmer. Cathy talked about an all year harvest with a focus on sprouting. Cathy, a lifelong resident of Alaska, has been sprouting for years. She gave a presentation with more details than we can repeat, but here are a few highlights: She asked us rhetorically, "Why do we sprout?" Her view is we are what we eat. We need vitamins, and sprouts are an incredibly concentrated source of vitamins. Though she normally uses cold water when sprouting, this time, because she had just gotten back into town two days before the meeting, she grew sprouts using a warm water wash two

times per day. The low light requirements of sprouting allow us to do this year around even in the pale light of an Alaska winter. Depending on what you are sprouting, there are different techniques. In some cases, you will plant seeds that have been sprouted by soaking for 12 to 24 hours. Cathy uses Alaska Earth as her soil medium. Some are sprouted and ready for eating in jars. It's important to let sprouts breathe. Jars need a screen on top. One and a half cups will nearly fill a gallon jar. One member said he uses a colander covered with a towel instead of jars. The key is it must breathe and hold seeds. She also showed us bag sprouting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15.

### February 22, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 PM by President Jessica

*(Continued on page 4)*

Shepard. She introduced herself and recognized the other board members for those in attendance. Sharon Froeschle read the minutes from the last meeting. Treasurer Peggy Craig reported that the treasury currently stands at \$9,247.46. She announced that Jeanne Bernhart has audited and has the inventory of the club's Garden Manuals.

Jess asked members to sign up to help with the upcoming Plant Sale, maintenance of the Baycrest Garden and to write articles for future newsletters. She passed out sign-up sheets.

Jess announced that the Plant Sale will be held June 6th at the Chamber; Gardeners Weekend will be August 1st and 2nd; and the Harvest Dinner is scheduled for September 27th.

Jess opened up discussion by the membership regarding what gardening activities they are doing differently this year. Many reported noticing the emergence of perennials in their yards and the possible need for additional mulch to be

added to protect them; others reported planting seeds including tomatoes, artichokes, celery, onions, herbs, pansies, petunias, bacopa, and sweet peas. Several members reported they are not planting anything yet as more winter is likely.

Francie Roberts announced that she and Joan were working hard to replace the speaker scheduled for March who recently cancelled. They expect to have one scheduled in the next few days. There are three more meetings before summer. The April meeting will host Dave Shroer and the May meeting Danny Stanislaw from Alaska Hardy.

Jessica introduced our speaker, Susan Houlihan of Alpenglow Skin Care. Susan uses botanicals from the Homer area to make healthy skin and hair care products which can be found at local businesses and at the Farmers' Market. Susan shared her background and the personal experiences that led her to the creation of her Alpenglow business. With the help of her family they grow many of the plants used for their business in a large garden, greenhouse and high tunnel. Native plants are also gath-

ered and used in her products. Susan discussed a variety of plants she uses, including Arnica, Calendula, Chickweed, Comfrey, Cottonwood, Horsetail, Lavender, nettles, Chamomile flower, Rosemary and Yarrow. The importance of how the plants are gathered, preserved and handled was emphasized, as well as the scientific knowledge needed to produce a safe and effective product. Susan showed us some of the critical equipment she uses during production and discussed many of the details that contribute to providing a quality product. Susan described how to make oil and water infusions with plant parts and then how these are made into salves, massage oils, hair rinses, facial cleansers, herbal bath bags and other wonderful products. Susan's expertise was impressive and the knowledge she shared was appreciated.

In addition to all the very interesting information, Susan also displayed a nice variety of her products which the membership enjoyed sampling and discussing with her. Her favorite books were also available for members to browse.

The meeting adjourned at 3:20PM.



## The Germination Process

Mother Earth News.com

All seeds contain specialized cells that mobilize and grow when the germination process is triggered by moisture, temperature and sometimes light. Moisture and stored nutrients energize the embryo, which contains the latent structures for a plant's root, stem and leaves. Most vegetable seeds that germinate quickly (such as cabbage and tomatoes) enter their dormant state with mature, fully formed embryos. The carrot family is at a disadvantage, however, because most Umbelliferae seeds (think parsley, fennel and dill) need time for their underdeveloped ovaries to grow before they can sprout. Other slow sprouters —

spinach, for example — have compounds that inhibit germination in their seed coats. These compounds have to break down in the soil before the root and sprout can burst forth into the world.

Oxygen is vital to the germination process. Until seedlings have leaves to enable them to use solar energy, they rely on the food reserves in the seed combined with oxygen found in the soil to grow new cells. This is why you should always use a light-textured potting medium to start seeds, and why over-watering can cause seeds to rot instead of grow.

Appreciating the hard work that seeds must do during the germination process will likely enhance your seed-starting experience. You can watch time-lapse videos online of fast-growing bean seeds germinating, but watching them in person is even more amazing. The seeds that impress me most are squash. By the time the seedling leaves shed the seed coat, the little plant is already supported by a small mountain of roots.



I don't know about you, but my windows and counters and desk are brimming with trays of leeks and artichokes, tomatoes in 6" pots, and now broccoli and cabbage starts that need their own place under the lights. Where to put it all? It's been way too cold this week to move things out to my little greenhouse, so I'll have to cope with all this eager greenness for another week or so. And to think that a month ago I was almost tempted by our no-snow winter to plant peas outside!

Before I can start anything in the high tunnel below the house, I'm going to have to find other accommodations for Wally and Rosy, a pair of ducks who overwintered in high comfort there, waddling among garden boxes and eating any hope I had for late kale and lettuce. We got the ducks last summer in a desperate attempt to combat a particularly bad influx of slugs, including numerous three-inch long black and tans that arrived in the neighborhood for the first time. First we acquired Wally, a flashy French Roan. He set right to work on the slugs and we quickly grew fond of him as he followed us along the fence line, quacking in a low, reedy tone.

My husband Hal, a self-described 'coupler,' was sure that Wally was lonely on his own, so after a bit of deliberation, I placed a singles ad for a female duck. "Handsome single drake seeks friendly female for communal bathing, and possibly romance. Age and race are secondary." Rosy joined us soon thereafter. She's a Swedish hen in grey and white like a favorite t-shirt. And while Wally's quack could be compared to a chuckle, hers is more like a loud belly laugh, sounding throughout the neighborhood if she thinks we're home.

Because of the lack of snow and

overall warmer weather, it's been super easy to keep chickens and ducks this winter. We run food out to them daily, and when it's above freezing we empty a bucket of water into a plastic sled for the ducks to bathe in. They do so with relish and much splashing. I spread sawdust down for them at the start of the fall and replenished it again recently, which keeps things fairly dry, and once we move the ducks to their summer yard, I'll shovel the sawdust onto the garden boxes for



ready fertilizer. (Duck doo isn't "hot" in the same way chicken poop is, so it doesn't have to age before incorporating into the soil.)

There have been a few issues with the ducks to be sure. For starters, they eat more than just slugs and chicken feed. Rosy in particular is fond of greens of all kinds, so I can't trust her around any new bedding plants. And they pulled the slug-deterrent copper banding off of all my high tunnel beds – who knows why. Additionally, a remarkably robust field mice population found the duck's food to be to their liking and I yelped more than once to find them trapped in the food bucket. Over the winter months they've dug dozens of tunnels throughout the garden beds and I suspect they'll require some effort to eradicate. To that end, I don't

plan to winter ducks over in the high tunnel again.

The question we've been asking ourselves lately is - what do we do with the ducks in the long run? My husband says we're failed farmers because we find it so hard to turn our ducks and chickens into food for the table. Neither of us is eager to off our ducks, or a hen who's stingy with eggs. Perhaps there's an organization we could join called Failed Farmers of America?

For now though, Rosy started laying a week ago, so we're enjoying a fresh egg every day and we're ready to take on the slugs come spring.

I probably owe you an update on the chickens.

My new advice would be to hold off until the first of April to have a hen set on eggs. A deep cold spell in the months before that are just too likely, and losing eggs and especially newly hatched chicks is a sad business. Of the six eggs that Ginger faithfully sat on for well beyond the 21 days they take to hatch, we have three rowdy chicks. Cold temperatures did in the rest. Ginger is now back with the other hens and has started laying again. Chickens are amazing that way.

The weather is supposed to warm up on Sunday and after we fill the ducks' sled with warm water for an overdue bath I'll tackle transplanting the artichokes. Question is, where will I put them?



## Sowing Timetable

To plan the best time to start seedlings indoors in spring, you need to know the approximate date of the average last spring frost in your area. Count back from that date the number of weeks indicated below to determine the appropriate starting date for various crops. An asterisk (\*) indicates a cold-hardy plant that can be set out 4 to 6 weeks before the last frost.

- **12 to 14 weeks:** onions\*, leeks\*, chives\*, pansies\*, impatiens and coleus
- **8 to 12 weeks:** peppers, lettuce\*, cabbage-family crops\*, petunias, snapdragons\*, alyssum\*, and other hardy annual flowers
- **6 to 8 weeks:** eggplants, tomatoes
- **5 to 6 weeks:** zinnias, cockscombs (*Celosia* spp.), marigolds, other tender annuals
- **2 to 4 weeks:** cucumbers, melons, okra, pumpkins, squash



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