

Homer Garden Club

October 2018

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New Meeting Date

(Moving to the 3rd Sunday of the month!)

The next Homer Garden Club meeting will be on October 21 at 2:00 pm at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs.

Newsletter

The October 21 Meeting will Feature Judith James on Food Processing and Storage

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Judith James, our October featured speaker, will take us on a tour of gardens, food processing, and food storage practices in Germany and Slovakia. Growing up on a farmstead east of Homer, she translated her gardening experience into the development of extensive orchard cultivation. Recently she traveled in Europe reviewing food production in different cultures, climates, and locations. Her travels included small family

gardens, to larger production facilities. Please join us in a wide-ranging culinary tour of European gardens, orchards, and food production.



Upcoming Garden Club Meetings:

Sunday March 25 – 2 PM, Best Western Bidarka Inn – Lori Jenkins from Synergy Gardens – Succession Growing

**** Note different date/time/place!! **** Sunday **April 8 – 3 PM**, Homer United Methodist Church – Kit Strange from Kew Botanical Gardens in the UK – How to be a Better Propagator

Sunday May 27 – 2 PM, Best Western Bidarka Inn – Jodie Anderson from AK DNR - Composting and Soils

Treasurer’s Report - September 2018 by **Peggy Pittman, Treasurer**

Income

Memberships	395.00
Newsletter Ad	80.00
Donation	45.00

Total Income \$ 520.00

Expenses

Gardeners' Weekend	
Committee expenses	852.00
Chamber of Commerce	37.00
Harvest Dinner	387.82

**Total Ex-
penses \$1,276.82**

Beginning Balance 9/1/2018	\$18,695.55
Income	520.00
Expenses	<u>1,276.82</u>
Ending Balance 9/30/18	\$17,938.73

Submitted by Peggy Pittman, Treasurer

If There's Such a Thing as Garden Envy... by Roni Overway

I have to admit right up front, that a little over a year or so ago I was not the least bit familiar with a British gardening destination called Great Dixter. I was, in fact, more than a little chagrined when the name cropped



up at a Gardeners' Weekend committee meeting and elicited some knowing nods. Not me though, as I gazed down at my lap, heedless of such a remarkable place. Right away I set to work learning about this horticultural wonderland, one that a few of my knowledgeable gardening friends knew so well. I read about its history, ordered a small gardening journal featuring lovely color photos of this wonderful place, learned of its founder, Christopher Lloyd, and his head

gardener and collaborator, Fergus Garrett. So, though I probably don't have the depth of knowledge others might have, I do now know, for certain, just what a gardening accomplishment "Great Dixter" was and

still is today. And, I'm afflicted with garden envy, for certain!

Sadly, the garden's founder passed away in 2006 but next year, during Gardeners' Weekend, you will have the incredible opportunity to meet "Christo" Lloyd's successor and still Great Dixter's head gardener, Fergus Garrett. As

Christo's long-time friend and acolyte, it has been Garrett's enviable task to maintain the integrity as well as the "liveliness and vibrancy" of Great Dixter's gardens. Now world famous in his own right, as he has continued the rich tradition begun by his friend so many years ago, Fergus Garrett is a hands-on gardener who has now become a sought-after lecturer and writer, serves, in addition, on Royal Horticultural committees and holds the position of Chief Executive of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust.



September HGC Meeting Minutes

by Roni Overway, Secretary

September 23, 2018
General Meeting Minutes

The September meeting of the Homer Garden Club was held at the beginning of the annual Harvest Dinner, which was well-attended. The meeting was called to order at 5:35 P.M. by President Francie Roberts.

Treasurer, Peggy Pittman, reported that there is currently \$17,418.73 in the treasury.

Brenda Adams, on behalf of the Gardeners' Weekend committee, gave a report on progress toward the 2019 event. The primary focus was on gardens to be included in the tours and the under-attended winery event.

Regarding the winery, it was pointed out that there were only 148 in attendance this year and that included all of the garden club volunteers working in the kitchen and handling the security

and ID checks at the gates. The committee is considering eliminating that part of the weekend due in part to the low turnout, the cost, lack of a volunteer to head up the event and the need to use 16 volunteers in this capacity, while finding people to serve as garden hostesses is difficult. It is thought, however, that our giving up that weekend could preclude us from obtaining it again in the future if we chose to do so. Various comments came from members:

Elaine Grabowski felt that the kind of tickets that were being sold might have been part of the problem.

Cathy Ulmer suggested that instead of including the winery, we might give consideration to holding the after-event get-together at various restaurants. That way the money allocated for this part of the weekend could go to the chosen restaurant; they would prepare the food and there would be a

no host bar available to those wanting a glass of wine. Brenda felt that would be worth considering and the committee will look into that option. The initial savings would come from not having to buy the alcohol permit, not having to purchase event insurance, and not hiring musicians nor the shuttle. It would also allow the committee to staff the tour gardens with hostesses serving just two hours and having more time to get out into the gardens themselves.

The Gardeners' Weekend committee only has two gardens at this point, while they usually have all 5 chosen by this time of year. Garden nomination forms were placed on the dinner tables in the hope that some suggestions of new gardens would be forthcoming.

The next order of business was election of officers. Cathy Ulmer has served as the one-woman nominating

(Continued on page 3)

The Little Wars We Wage

by Jessica Shepherd

Donning rubber boots against the morning dew and pushing my sleeves up past the elbows, I headed out to the garden on a fine clear day. This warm fall has extended the growing season through September, but I knew a hard frost is one clear night away. It was time to cut the last of the summer squash, gather the remaining raspberries, and turn over the potatoes. There were still two small cabbages too, but they were malignant with slugs.

This summer marks my tenth year gardening in Homer. When I bought this small cabin, with its view of the bay and the Kenai Mountains beyond, a path ran from the upper road down to the house and another wove through shoulder-high grass down to the lower road. Everything else was overgrown with fireweed, alder and pushki. That first summer's garden, elbowed into a sunny spot against the house, provided a modest but encouraging yield.

I had more energy than experience back then. But over the years, thanks to sage advice from long-time locals and a love of putting seed to soil, I burned and tilled and raked, constructed raised beds, dug in fence posts and used a come-along and my truck to stretch wire. I met and married a good man with a strong back and together we planted fruit trees and berries and erected a small high tunnel to extend the growing season. We've succeeded with tomatoes, experimented with corn, and triumphed with carrots and kale.

This year, when my husband Hal asked me to grow pumpkins, I humored him and bought two diminutive Sugar Pumpkin starts from Bay Crest Greenhouse. I didn't expect much, but despite a long cool spring, we now have thirteen pumpkins in a window turning from green to orange. Go figure. I grew them in a raised bed covered with red plastic mulch to increase the soil temperature, and clipped heavy plastic onto hoops over the bed to keep in more heat. The vines shivered for a

couple of weeks after I planted them out then took off, growing well beyond the confines of their 4 by 10-foot bed. I cut them back in early August to allow the largest squash to fill out and to



curtail the meandering plants from taking over adjacent beds. Most of the resulting pumpkins are cantaloupe-sized and I couldn't be more pleased.

For the second year in a row I lost most of my onions. I dedicated a full bed to them only to find them rotting from the roots due to tiny white maggots. The wreathing maggots must be specific to onions because they left adjacent turnips and carrots alone. It galls me to spend three dollars apiece for someone else's perfect white orbs at the farmer's market, but it's that or buy them at the grocery store.

On my drive to the last Farmer's Market of the year I called my father in Colorado. As always, he asked about the garden. He grew up as a farm boy, and even into his seventies he cut hay fields each summer for his neighbors. He knows about the compulsion to work the land. I told him about the pumpkins and he sounded pleased.

He is dying, my father. Of cancer. During mid-June, when they thought he wouldn't make it through the week, I flew down, trusting Hal to keep up with the watering. Now I hang on to my father's voice, laughing at stories he's told me a dozen times before. I know that, like a frost-tender plant, any small chill might be his undoing.

Making the rounds at the market I bought onions, an apple scone and fresh brewed coffee. I chatted with the vendors about their year. It seems we all suffered an abundance of slugs, thanks to the wetter-than-average weather.

I dislike slugs more than any other garden pest. I step on them, cut them in half with my garden knife, or flick them into a ready cup of vinegar. Spiders, caterpillars and bees don't bother me at all. Even aphides don't repel me the way slugs do. It's the discovery of them, burrowed deep within an otherwise gorgeous cabbage, like little tumors, that gets to me. I carve them out, but sometimes the damage they leave behind is so extensive there's little left to salvage. They find the strawberries just as they ripen, pock the radishes, hide inside heads of lettuce, and even riddle sub-surface potatoes.

Perhaps I'm overlooking some greater balance, but I struggle to accept a thing that chews away at life. I know our efforts to eradicate the cause, be it slugs, or cancer, or onion maggots, are often futile, yet we can't help but try. Maybe if I were more insightful I would see it as life's ephemeral nature – the way a venerable tree falls and allows light to reach the saplings below. But I'm not feeling that generous. I hate slugs all the more because of my father's cancer. They are not the same thing, but attempting to eradicate them from the garden feels like I'm doing something helpful.



committee but says she would like help in the future. Brenda and Julie said that they would help with this task. Kathy Dube' was elected President and Jan Peyton and Renee Patten will work together as Co-Vice Presidents, tasked with finding speakers for the club's general meetings. Louise

Ashmun was elected treasurer and Roni Overway will continue as secretary. She has found 4 volunteers to take minutes at the 4 meetings she will miss this winter. We are still in need of a Social Secretary. Other officers will continue in their positions: Barbara Kennedy- Data Base, Julie Parizek- Public Relations, Paula Riley- Newsletter, Sharon Froeschle -Historian and

Francie Roberts- Past President. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM.
Respectfully Submitted,

Roni Overway
Recording Secretary

*****Our Membership Year is October 1st to September 30th*****

THE HOMER GARDEN CLUB MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: _____ Membership Type: Basic(\$10) __ Supporting (\$15) __ Business (\$25) __

Name _____ Phone # _____

You will receive the newsletter by E-Mail. This saves us printing and postage costs. Plus, the E-mailed version is in fabulous color!

E-Mail Address _____

How would you like to participate in the Garden Club *this Membership Year?*
(please check any activities in which you would like to help)

Meeting Refreshments Board of Directors Nominating Committee Newsletter
 Spring Plant Sale Harvest Dinner Baycrest Garden Gardeners' Weekend

Suggestions for future Topics or Speakers _____

Please make check payable to "Homer Garden Club" and mail along with this form to:
Homer Garden Club, P.O. Box 2833, Homer AK 99603
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