

# Homer Garden Club

March 2014

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# Newsletter

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**Next Homer Garden Club  
meeting:  
March 23rd, 2014,  
2:00, at the Bidarka Inn**

**Pete Kinneen with  
Fish and Chips  
Composting**

**will present:**

**Taking the Mystery &  
Hard Labor out of  
Backyard Compost**

**Pete will share how he  
converts fish scraps and just  
about anything that's made of  
plant matter into rich soil for  
the garden and high tunnel!**



**From this.....**



**To this!**

## President's Report

by Jack Regan, President

Saturday morning Farmers' Market in Palm Springs, California, presents a burst of vitality. Vendors line up in makeshift booths to sell their produce representative of locally grown food. Some items are identical to those appearing in the Homer Farmers' Market: lettuce, radishes, potatoes, tomatoes, but others are unique to the more southern climate: citrus, avocados, papaya. Organic eggs and chicken, beef, and honey are also available. There is an atmosphere of the importance of organic, chemical-free food grown in a sustainable fashion similar to the values encountered in the Homer community of growers.

As I walked through the aisles of vendors enjoying the warmth of the sun and the pleasure of wearing shorts and sandals, without the need of wool socks, I came across a booth staffed by a nutritionist and market chef, Lori Cohen-Sanford,

who was recruiting people for a class in food preparation. I decided to sign-up for the class so I took her card. The class was held the next day at a spice shop in downtown Palm Desert. Lori demonstrated several recipes for preparation of the market produce. The class was able to sample dishes that she prepared. One of my favorites was one that could be made from Homer produce: potato salad. Here is what she did:

Prepare a sauce using crushed brown mustard seeds, yellow mustard powder, vinegar, salt, honey, olive oil, thyme, minced scallion, lemon juice, and black pepper. Combine the ingredients and add to potatoes boiled and cut into one inch pieces. Using fresh ingredients and making the recipe from scratch seems to bring the prepared food to a new dimension.



## Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig

### Homer Garden Club Treasurer's Report February 2014

Income		Expenses	
Membership	\$120.00	Meeting	\$335.89
		Venue	150.00
		Program	234.94
		Hospitality	35.89
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	Total Income		Total Expenses
	\$120.00		\$335.89
Beginning Balance 1/1/14	\$13,214.64		
Income	120.00		
Expenses	-335.89		
Ending Balance 1/31/14	<hr/>		
	\$12,998.75		

Winter damage can occur on many plants. A rapid temperature drop following a mid-winter thaw can cause bark splitting. Dead twigs and branches in the spring may be the result of ice and snow damage from the winter. Injury during the winter or early spring season can be from frost or freeze injury.

Foliage can turn yellow and other off colors from cold. Some evergreens exhibit yellowing or bronzing of the needles when exposed to winter sun and wind, but return to normal color when growth resumes in the spring. Winter injury may be confused with early stages of some fungal diseases. Needles turn from bronze to reddish brown or brown, as a result of exposure to cold, dry winter winds. Freezing and thawing cycles can lead to browning or blighting. Permanent damage occurs when conditions are severe, prolonged, or when temperatures change suddenly. Tissue death is caused by the removal of water in the needles faster than the plant can replace it through root uptake from frozen water in the soil. Winter scorched needles eventually drop off.

Blighted and browning can be caused by warm temperatures in February or March that stimulate buds, flowers or shoots into growth too early. Subsequent spring frost kills young buds and tender new growth, resulting in fewer flowers and later leaf development. Diagnosis is easy because frozen tissue turns blackish brown. The damaged buds and leaves usually drop off and the remaining bare branches should be pruned out, if new growth does not emerge as spring progresses. Blasted or damaged blooms can be result from freezing of flower buds in early spring before or during flowering. Branch dieback and leaf yellowing can be caused by sun-

scald, root damage, and cold weather following a warm spell.

Cultural practices that conserve soil moisture, prevent root damage and promote "hardening off" prior to winter will reduce winter damage. Avoid fertilization or pruning in late summer, which stimulates late season growth that does not have time to "harden off" properly and is much more susceptible to winter injury. When watering, soak the soil several inches deep, and then allow to dry between waterings. This encourages deeper rooting. Avoid frequent shallow sprinklings, which encourage surface roots that are easily injured by drought and cold. The use of mulches conserves soil moisture and prevents temperature fluctuations. Mulches also keep the soil cold in early spring, which helps



to reduce premature bud break.

Even hardy trees may develop sunscald or frost cracks. Tree bark warmed by the sun in winter, can reach a temperature as much as 18 degrees warmer than the air temperature. To cambium layer beneath is damaged. This type of freeze damage is called sunscald.

Frost cracks occur when temperature fluctuations are extreme. Water in the cells of the tree trunk freezes and moves out of the cells, causing the wood to shrink. Tension between the frozen and unfrozen layers of wood is so great that the wood separates, causing a crack. The crack can form suddenly, and is often combined with a loud cracking sound. When temperatures warm, the wood absorbs moisture and the crack closes. Frost cracks can reopen and enlarge in subsequent winters and may extend to the center of the tree. Damage to tree trunks is most likely on the south and west sides of the tree where the sun is strongest.

Frost cracks may begin in previously wounded or pruned areas.

Proper pruning and avoidance of injury may help to prevent some frost cracks. Tree species prone to frost cracking (those with thin or smooth bark) may benefit from applying white latex paint to the tree trunk. The light color reflects light and helps to reduce temperature fluctuations.

The best prevention of winter injury is to select plants that are hardy in your area. Winter damage can be reduced by locating plants in partially shaded areas protected from winter winds. Place physical barriers about 18 inches away on the windward side of young trees to reduce winter injury.

Barriers made from materials such as burlap or plastic can lessen winter wind damage by reducing wind velocity. Maintain adequate soil moisture in the fall to prevent winter desiccation. Inspect plants for winter damage in the spring and prune out affected areas.

I love this time of year. The sun is playing shadow puppet with the alder branches against my bedroom walls by eight in the morning, and by ten there's a steady drip-drip of melting snow off the eaves of the house. Already my windows are crowded with seed starts – leaks and tomatoes, kale and basil and artichokes. Another tray, seeded yesterday in broccoli, cabbage and several varieties of flowers, sits atop the Toyo stove where the extra warmth will speed germination.

I love the act of opening the little packets of seeds, with their color photos of peppers, radishes, and iris, and sprinkling a few of the seeds into my palm. Each variety is a little different. The yellow flag iris seeds are fat disks of shining brown, the lettuce seeds are small and wheat colored, long and pointed at either end, and the lobelia seeds are so fine that I sprinkle them like pepper across the soil and hope for even coverage, because they're too small to see.

And then there are the names. They are descriptive, like Double-Yield cucumbers, Speckles lettuce and Evening Sun sunflowers. Or they are intriguing, like Fairytale pumpkin, and Knight's High Scent sweet pea. Or place-based like Yukon Gold potatoes and Hungarian Hot Wax peppers.

These seeds each carry with them a long history of cultivation and refinement. Because I plant heirloom seeds, sometimes this history has been preserved and is written on the seed pack, or described in the seed catalog that sells them.

Take anise, a perennial herb that spiced the air in ancient Egypt, Crookneck squash, which has been in production since before Columbus, and Cherokee Purple tomatoes, which can be traced back to before 1890.

I love the sharing of seeds and seedlings. It's a special treat to receive extra tomato starts from my

dren and showing them how to poke a knuckle-deep hole into the soil to receive the bean. My grandmother's tanned hands, my grandfather's freckled hands, and hands a generation removed that would have been Choctaw brown. Hands from across the Atlantic slipping seeds into waxed paper for transport to the new world – promising a bit of flavor from home. Hands tucking seeds into packages to be mailed around the globe, expanding their range, and adapting in a few generations to new soils with produce incorporated into new cuisine.

Each tiny seed possesses its own unique history – generations of suc-



friend Anne, or to include a packet of For-Get-Me-Not seeds into a birthday card for a friend in Tucson.

And then there is the history of hands. Generations of grandmothers putting spotted bean seeds into the open hands of their grandchild-

lessful planting and care and seed collection passed down from parent to child, neighbor to neighbor, farmer to friend, resulting in this precious handful of hope I hold today.

Used coffee grounds make good soil amendments. That's the buzz among gardeners lately. But what do your coffee pot's leftovers really add to the soil?

To find out, *Sunset* sent a batch of Starbucks' used coffee grounds — the company gives them away for free — to a soil lab for analysis. Turns out the grounds provide generous amounts of phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, and copper.

They also release nitrogen into the soil as they degrade. And they're slightly acidic — a boon in the Western climate.

Dig or till them into the soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches.



## FULL REPORT

The following information was developed for *Sunset* by [Soil and Plant Laboratory Inc.](#), Bellevue, WA.

**Summary:** Use of Starbucks coffee grounds in amending mineral soils up to 35 percent by volume coffee grounds will improve soil structure over the short-term and over the long-term. Use of the coffee grounds at the specified incorporation rates (rototilled into a 6- to 8-inch depth) will substantially improve availabilities of phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and copper and will probably negate the need for chemical sources of these plant essential elements.

The nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium "guaranteed analyses" would be as follows for the coffee grounds:

**Nitrogen:** 2.28 percent

**Phosphorus:** 0.06 percent

**Potassium:** 0.6 percent

**Available nutrient levels:** The pH or reaction of the coffee grounds is considered slightly acidic and in a favorable range at 6.2 on the pH scale.

Salinity (ECe) is a measurement of total soluble salts and is considered slightly elevated at 3.7 dS/m. The primary water-soluble salts in this product are potassium, magnesium, sodium and chloride. The potentially problematic ions in sodium and chloride are each sufficiently low as to be inconsequential in terms of creating problems for plants.

The availabilities of nitrogen, calcium, zinc, manganese and iron are quite low and in some cases deficient. Thus, the coffee grounds will not supply appreciable amounts of these essential plant elements when used as a mineral soil amendment.

However, the availabilities of phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and copper are each sufficiently high that there will be a very positive impact on improving availabilities of these elements where the coffee grounds are used as a mineral soil amendment. The coffee grounds will negate the need for additional sources of phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and copper when blended with mineral soils.

In summary, the available plant essential elements which will be substantially improved where the coffee grounds are used as a soil amendment, include phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and copper.

**Total nutrient levels:** Each cubic yard of these coffee grounds contains a total of 10.31 lbs. nitrogen, of which 0.01 lb. (0.09%) are available. Thus, even though available nitrogen is considered deficient in this product, there still remains over 10 lbs. of total nitrogen per cubic yard of coffee grounds. Thus, nitrogen is primarily bound in the organic fraction and is unavailable to

plants until soil microorganisms degrade the organic fraction. Through this process, the nitrogen is converted to plant available forms. Over the long term the coffee grounds will act like a slow release fertilizer providing long-term nitrogen input which can then be utilized by plants.

Nearly all potassium and all magnesium are in the available forms. This means that immediate availability improvements for these two elements will take place when the coffee grounds are blended with mineral soils. About half of the copper and calcium are in their immediately available forms.

All other plant essential elements are primarily bound in the organic fraction and will thus be subject to slow release over time as soil microbes continue to degrade the organic fraction.

**Physical properties:** Virtually all particles passed the 1 millimeter (mm) screen resulting in a product which is very fine textured. Each cubic yard of the coffee grounds will supply an excellent amount of organic matter, measured at 442 lbs. organic matter per cubic yard. At the use rates indicated in this report, the input of organic matter will be substantial and will result in considerable short-term and long-term improvement of mineral soil structure.

**Carbon/nitrogen ratio:** On the basis of dry matter bulk density (452 lbs. per cubic yard), organic matter content (97.7%) and total nitrogen (2.28%), the estimated carbon/nitrogen ratio is about 24:1. This means that there is more than sufficient nitrogen present in the coffee grounds to provide for the nitrogen demand of the soil microorganisms as they degrade the organic fraction.

**Use rate:** Based on the overall chemistry and physical properties of the coffee grounds, they can be utilized at rates similar to other organic amendments when used in amending mineral soils. These data indicate that 25-35 percent by volume coffee grounds can be blended with mineral soils of any type to improve structure of those soils.

KPC'S KACHEMAK BAY CAMPUS *presents*

**NORTHERN GARDEN DESIGN**

*with* **BRENDA ADAMS**



Have you seen gorgeous gardens and wanted yours to look that way, but didn't know where to start? Is your garden overwhelming you and taking too long to maintain? Or would you like guidance on how to design and build an inviting, easy to care for retreat for you and your family? Then enroll **NOW** in an information-packed workshop called *Northern Garden Design and Implementation*. National award-winning garden designer, Brenda Adams, 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.

When: **April 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM**

Where: **Kachemak Bay Campus-Kenai Peninsula College.**

Fee: **\$85**

For more information: call Brenda Adams at 235-3763. [www.gardensbybrenda.com](http://www.gardensbybrenda.com).

**To register**, go to the KBC campus on Pioneer Avenue or online at [uaonline.alaska.edu](http://uaonline.alaska.edu) or call 235-7743.

Course # OSE AC019 **Deadline to Register: April 3rd**



**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