



Homer Garden Club

Newsletter

January 2011

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The January meeting will be held at 2:00 the 23rd at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs.

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Panel to Speak on Ornamental Plants at January 23 Meeting

Two-time winner of a prestigious national design award from the Perennial Plant Association and owner of Gardens By Design, **Brenda Adams** will present some of her favorite perennials and grasses, each of which has special attributes that make it stand apart from the crowd. Some have extremely long blooming times or stretch the season by offering their floral displays extremely early or very late. Others have spectacular foliage or an interesting architectural structure. Still others perfume the air with a lovely fragrance or invite us to touch them with their alluring texture. All are well behaved and easy-care plants. Most are tolerant of a broad range of environmental conditions and deserve a much wider use than they currently enjoy.



Rita Jo Shultz is the owner of Alaska Hardy Peony, LLC, and Fritz Creek Gar-

dens where she offers for sale over 500 varieties of perennials, trees, shrubs and roses. An Alaskan gardener for 44 years, she has lots of experiences to share.

She is excited to share with the members her most favorite trees and shrubs. She will have a power point presentation with pictures of these garden backbones in our

own gardens. She'll also have a hand-out with numbers so you can easily mark your favorites too.

Teena Garay has been passionately gardening for over 30 years, 20 here in Homer. She grows many different perennials, shrubs,

trees, grasses and vines. Teena will be talking about her favorites for the landscape, why they are her favorites, where to place them, companion plants and sources to purchase them.

Horticulture Conference

Julie Riley, Horticulture Agent, UAF Cooperative Extension Service, Anchorage

This year's commercial horticulture conferences, the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference and the Alaska Peony Growers Conference, are being held in Anchorage January 26, 27 & 28 at the Hilton. On the agenda are a couple of good out-of-state speakers that may appeal to home gardeners.

Dr. Harvey Lang, from Syngenta Flowers, will be giving three presentations at the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference. He will speak on Greenhouse Production of Flowering Annuals, Greenhouse Production of Hanging Baskets and New Flower Varieties on the Market. One of your own, Master Gardener Jason Coe, will report on Using a Solar Panel Hot Water System for Greenhouse Heating. Jason was a recipient of an Alaska Division of Agriculture Innovation Grant last summer. This

conference also includes two talks on small fruits by Agricultural Research Service researchers from Palmer.

The keynote speaker for the Alaska Peony Growers Conference is Roy Klehm, owner/operator of Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm and Nursery in Wisconsin. Roy will be presenting Variety Selections for Peony Cut Flower Growers and Growing Tips & Strategies. This conference is a must for anyone considering going into commercial peony production.

For a copy of the conference agenda try CES at www.uaf.edu/ces or the Alaska Peony Growers Association web site, www.alaskapeonies.org. Registration for each conference is \$125 and includes a lunch and coffee breaks.



It's January and the Homer gardeners have started a new calendar. The winter solstice has recently occurred, so the daylight hours have begun lengthening. Soon the seed catalogues will arrive, encouraging members to dream of and plan new additions to their gardens.

In the garden, the plants are sleeping and only icicles are growing. Why not harness this process to make ice sculptures to enjoy? A large ice vase encasing a candle provides a delightful outdoor decoration. Here is how to make one for your garden:

On a very cold night, fill a five gallon plastic bucket with water. By the following morning ice will have formed around

the edges of the contained water. When the ice thickness is about one inch, carry the bucket to a large laundry sink and place the bucket upside down in the sink. Run warm water on the outside of the bucket and the ice structure will separate from the bucket. Using gloves pick up the ice structure and turn it right side up again. Using an ice pick, make a large hole in the top of the ice structure. Pick up the ice structure and dump the water out, leaving an empty ice vase. Place the ice vase in a shaded spot in the garden. When a lighted candle is placed in the vase it will be shielded from the wind and sparkle inside the ice vase.

Neil's Notes

by Neil Wagner

Last week I went home to Minnesota to celebrate the 93 years my father spent on this planet. His was a life well lived and quite different than what we have today. Both his farm lifestyle and diet of homegrown food contributed to his lifelong robust health. Grandson to German immigrants, Dad grew up on a subsistence-type farm just outside Duluth. His family raised a menagerie of livestock such as chickens, pigs, ducks, rabbits and geese which they raised for food, to barter or sell. Cows were milked by hand morning and night. The milk kept cool until picked up by the dairy wagon by storing the cans in a shed in a trough of cold well water pumped around them. Back then horses were the means of transportation, garden fertilizer and pulling power in the fields. The mineral soil was so well stocked with rocks that it required annual spring pickings to keep ahead of them. His folks grew all the traditional crops and stored a couple hundred sacks of potatoes, rutabagas, carrots, onions and cabbage in their stone basement for winter sales.

Out on his own with no work during the Great Depression, my dad also started gardening. He figured at least they'd have something to eat. With a farmer's income they lived frugally and as inde-

pendently as they could. During winter he cut wood for heating and made stakes for tomatoes out of young saplings. Summers were spent working on 10 acres of gardens with most of our sales made at the Duluth Farmers Market on Saturday and Wednesdays. We kids quickly learned arithmetic in our heads while making sales. Working in his gardens he never hurried, just kept the pace from morning until night, day after day, year after year, working until his mid eighties. All of us kids grew up with that regimen, learning garden work long before kindergarten. We were always a bit embarrassed that we were "just farmers." Later I came to realize (as did all my siblings and we all told dad) how lucky I was growing up being shown how to work as a child, being financially poor (and without sense of entitlement) but rich in love and solid experiences.

Now, many decades later as we again live in uncertain financial times with energy and food prices going up, it again seems like a good idea to start or expand our gardening practices to provide our own food security. We are experimenting not only with what we can grow and store efficiently, but also with what will provide the healthiest diet for us and our ecosystem. Lucky for all of us we

have a good climate and land here in Homer. The Garden Club can provide advice for anyone starting out or a platform for anyone with experience willing to share with the rest of us.

For those lucky enough to qualify for the high tunnel program, putting one up will expand your range of available vegetables and the season harvest length. Jeff Werner, the high tunnel pro from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, will be our May speaker and address those very questions. This January we will have a panel discussion on ornamental plants with Homer's top flower gardeners. Our February panel discussion will be on some interesting specialty vegetables. Meanwhile with these short days of winter it's a good time to dream of next year's gardens and order your seeds.

Be sure to check out "Starting From Seed" on the Homer Garden Club's web site: www.homergardenclub.org, under "Archives." It is an instruction sheet passed out by Jeanne McArthur when she presented to the club last January. It is chock full of the nuts and bolts of how to get your seeds to germinate in time to get your garden

Homer Garden Club Constitution and By-Laws Proposed Revisions

The Homer Garden Club By-Law Committee has suggested revisions to update the club Constitution and By-Laws. These revisions have been reviewed by the Board and approved. They now need to be approved by the membership. The entire Constitution and By-Laws are set forth below. The proposed changes are written in blue italics and the previous version is red and enclosed in parenthesis. Please review these changes as they will be voted on at the January 23rd meeting. The current version of the Constitution and By-Laws, as well as the club's Articles of Incorporation, are also available for review on the club's website, www.homergardenclub.org. If you have questions or comments, you can call or e-mail any of the Board members listed on page 1.

HOMER GARDEN CLUB CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Homer Garden Club.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

This organization shall be conducted on a non-profit basis. Its purpose shall be to educate and exchange reliable information about gardening and related activities.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

Any person interested in the purpose of this Club and willing to pay the annual dues may be a member.

ARTICLE IV – GOVERNMENT

Section 1

The Officers of the Club shall consist of a President, (a) Vice-president, (a) Recording Secretary, (a) Treasurer, (a) Social Secretary, (a) Newsletter Editor, (an) Historian, *Publicity Chair*, and *Database Manager*. No salary or compensation shall be paid to any of these Officers.

Section 2

The Board shall consist of: the officers of this Club and the immediate past President. No salary or compensation shall be paid to any of these Officers.

Section 3

The Officers shall be elected at the September meeting by a majority of the Members present and voting and shall assume office immediately and shall serve for a period of one year or until their successors have taken office.

Section 4

In case of a vacancy in the presidency, the Vice-president shall become President and a new Vice-president shall be elected *by the membership*.

Section 5

All decisions of the Board shall be by majority vote of (those) *a quorum of the* Members of the Board. (present and voting.)

ARTICLE V – DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND BOARD

Section 1

The President shall preside at the meetings of the Club and the Board, and shall perform such duties as regularly pertain to the office. The President shall be an ex-officio member of all Committees of the Club *with the exception of the Nominating Committee*. The President shall co-sign all checks with the Treasurer and shall select one additional co-signer from among the Board members.

Section 2

The Vice-president shall perform all the duties of the President in the absence of the latter or whenever the President is unable to perform the duties of his/her office, and shall also be in charge of the Program Committee.

Section 3

The Recording Secretary shall be responsible for properly recording and reading the minutes of Board and Membership meetings. The Recording Secretary shall also be responsible for timely distribution of these minutes to all board members.

Section 4

The Treasurer shall collect and distribute all Club funds *and* keep accurate financial records (*and a current*

Homer Garden Club Constitution and By-Laws Proposed Revisions (continued)

membership list.) The Treasurer shall also co-sign all checks and disburse such funds as needed, with approval of the board. The Treasurer shall make a financial report at each Membership and Board meeting, and have the books closed and ready for annual audit by (August 31) *October 31st*.

Section 5

The Social Secretary shall be responsible for (*publicizing all Club events where necessary and for be in charge of publicity*) having refreshments at Membership meetings.

Section 6

The Newsletter Editor shall be responsible for producing and (*mailing*) *distributing* a (*monthly*) newsletter to current members and other interested parties.

Section 7

The Historian shall keep a record of Club activities, using photographs, newsletters and other written material.

Section 8

The Publicity Secretary shall be responsible for publicizing activities and events as appropriate.

Section 9

The Database Manager shall be responsible for maintaining a club membership database in coordination with the club Treasurer.

Section (8) 10

The Board shall be the governing body of the Club and have general control of the affairs of the Club; shall approve the plans submitted by Committees and shall approve expenditures of Club funds.

ARTICLE VI – COMMITTEES

(All Committee chairpersons shall be appointed by the President.)

The President shall appoint all Committee chairpersons. These Committees shall be appointed as needed to conduct Club activities.

ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS

The Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Members present and voting at any regular Membership meeting, provided that the proposed amendment has been approved by the Board and either (1) read at the previous regular meeting, or (2) (*mailed*) *distributed* to each Club Member prior to the meeting at which the action is to be taken.

ARTICLE VIII – RULES OF ORDER

Robert's Rules of Order (revised) shall govern the Club in all cases in which they are applicable.

ARTICLE IX – AUDIT

An annual audit shall be made of the financial records of the Club. *The fiscal year for the club shall be October 1st through September 30th.* A written report shall be submitted to the Board by (*September 15th*) *January 31st* by an auditor to be appointed by the President. (*by August 31.*)

ARTICLE X – DISSOLUTION

Upon dissolution of the Club, the Board shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the Club, dispose of all assets of the Club by donating them to (*an*) appropriate organizations for educational purposes.

HOMER GARDEN CLUB BY – LAWS

ARTICLE I – DUES

Section 1

(Dues shall be determined by the Board with approval of the Membership.)

The Board, with approval of the Membership, shall determine dues.

Section 2

Dues shall be due and payable by the (*September*) *October* meeting each year.

Homer Garden Club Constitution and By-Laws Proposed Revisions (continued)

ARTICLE II – MEETINGS

Section 1

Meetings of the Board shall be called by the President or at the request of a majority of the Board members as may be required but there shall be a minimum of four meetings a year.

Section 2

Regular meetings of the Membership shall be held monthly unless otherwise determined by the Board.

ARTICLE III – QUORUMS

Section 1

A quorum for a meeting of the Board shall be five members.

Section 2

A quorum for a general membership meeting shall be the paid membership of the Club in attendance.

ARTICLE IV – NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Section 1

The Nominating Committee shall consist of a Chairperson appointed by the President. The President (~~will~~) *shall* select any three other members in good standing and not of the Board, to serve on the Nominating Committee. The slate chosen by this committee shall be presented to the Club through the (~~August~~) *September* newsletter. Write-in nominations shall be accepted by the Nominating Committee Chairperson up to ten days before the September membership meeting. The slate shall consist of candidates to fill the offices in Article IV of the Constitution. Nominations offered from the floor during elections will also be accepted. All nominations shall have the approval of the person nominated.

Section 2

Election of the Officers of this Club as defined in Article IV of the Constitution shall take place at the September General membership meeting, by a majority of the (paid) membership present and voting. The newly elected officers shall take office immediately.

ARTICLE V – STANDING COMMITTEES

Section 1

The Plant Sale Chairperson(s) recruits and organizes members to help in the organization and execution of an annual plant sale.

Section 2

The (~~Summer~~) *Community* Garden Chairperson(s) recruits and organizes members to help with the execution of planning, purchase of plants, planting, maintenance and clean up of the Club garden(s).

Section 3

The Harvest Dinner Chairperson(s) recruits and organizes members to help in the planning and execution of this annual meeting event.

Section 4

(The Publications Chairperson(s) is responsible for the recruitment of members for the writing, rewriting, editing and publication of books, articles, flyers, etc., which may be requested by the Board or membership.)
The Program Committee shall assist the Vice President in programming educational presentations for the general membership meetings. The committee shall consist of member volunteers.

Section 5

The Gardeners' Weekend Committee Chairperson(s) recruits and organizes members to help with the planning and execution of the annual Gardeners' Weekend.

Summer Gardeners' Weekend Committee

by Roni Overway

As the new year begins most of us are already looking ahead to the 2011 growing season! We are 18 days beyond solstice and although it's still difficult to appreciate the lengthening of our days, we are gaining a few minutes of daylight... (say "s-u-n-l-i-g-h-t") ...each day! And with that heady observation the **Summer Gardeners' Weekend** Committee has already begun planning this year's event.

It's encouraging to know that last summer, with a weekend of almost constant rain showers, our attendance was only 10 or 15 participants shy of our record of 317 the previous year. The first year of our expanded program, 2007, we only drew 179. But gardeners are a pretty tough lot; we own raincoats, rain hats, and rubber boots so we're ready for whatever Mother Nature chooses to send our way! And we, on the committee, like to think that our choices of speakers and our determination to continue to identify gardens of great variety and interest, are what keep our garden visitors coming back year after year regardless of the weather!

Now that you have your new 2011 calendar, please mark August 6th and 7th with a bold **SGW!** You will, of course, not

want to miss attending, but we hope that you will also think about helping us make Weekend 2011 successful this year by signing up for one of the various tasks that need to be accomplished to put it all together. We need help intermittently with small chores, like distributing brochures and posters, and we need 12 garden hostesses to spend a 3 hour shift in one of the 6 gardens on the tour (which still leaves you 3 hours to visit them yourselves). We need ticket sellers for the lecture and help with copying maps. There are other opportunities to volunteer as well. So, please check the sheet when it comes around at upcoming general club meetings and see what you think might suit you. Your labors, large or small, will be much appreciated!

Bear Creek Winery will again be the host of our after-tour reception. We look forward once more to working with Bill and Dorothy Fry, Bear Creek's convivial and generous owners, who do a terrific job of helping to make this part of our weekend a fun time

for visits with gardening friends who we might only have passed on the road as we drove from one garden to the next!

If you have questions about what you can do to help or what a specific job entails or even what its time commitment might be, just call one of us. We will be happy to fill you in. In each of the upcoming newsletters we'll give you an update on our progress and introduce you to this year's speaker.

Roni Overway, Co-Chair - 226 3404
Brenda Adams, Co-Chair - 234-3763



Horsetail in My Garden: A New Attitude

by Peg Belcastro

My husband and I moved to Homer from Pennsylvania nearly eight years ago. In rural central Pennsylvania, we lived in an intentional community on a 136-acre farm. There were eight families living on the farm and we all shared the work involved with raising chickens, goats and sheep; managing the apple, cherry and plum orchards; mending fences, mowing the fields and plowing snow; and of course planting extensive gardens. Summers were hot and humid, but the vegetable plants loved the weather and supplied us with seemingly never ending bushels of tomatoes, peppers, squash, potatoes, asparagus and broccoli. We unwittingly shared the bounty with the locals: deer, groundhogs

and rabbits. Several of the men in the community were determined to exterminate every groundhog within a mile of our farm. But for me, crown vetch was my arch enemy. This invasive weed came up everywhere I didn't want it to and seemed to grow several feet in every direction overnight. I was constantly yanking it out of our garden beds like a woman possessed.

When we decided to make the move to Alaska, I thought the days of combating a stubborn weed like that was over. Silly me. Enter horsetail. For the past eight growing seasons, I have been pulling, plucking, tugging, jerking and wrenching this obdurate stuff out of our gardens daily. On my hands and knees, I follow the snaking roots through the depths of our raised beds until the unyielding thing snaps off in my bare hands. The next day, there it is again! I've researched horsetail to see if it even has a purpose in life other than to make me miserable.

It doesn't, with the exception of using a clump of it as a pot scrubber. Humph.

Now the good news: the other day as I was planting pepper starts and of course yanking out horsetail, it occurred to me that this lowly weed is sort of attractive. And, unlike other unwelcome creatures in the garden, it doesn't eat anything. Nothing. Nada. It doesn't nibble on broccoli like bunnies, or bite off whole Brussels sprout plants like moose, or chomp kale leaves like slugs. It's happy to just exist. So I've decided that I'm going to open up my heart and share my garden with horsetail. I'm not going to stress out over seeing the wispy fronds pushing up through our pristine beds. I'm through with my fanatical digging to find the origin of each tenacious root. I'm forcing myself to smile whenever I find it flourishing next to my flowers or catch it cuddling my cabbages. And it's working. I feel better already.

Surrogate Compost

by Barbara Landi

When we moved to Homer five years ago, we bought a property with "a lot of character." Translation; there is hardly any level area because it's on the hillside. Not only that, it has no soil, unless you consider clay and coal a soil type. What to do? We brought in a load of topsoil and I set about making compost....except I had nothing but our meager kitchen scraps.

Years ago I when I lived in Palmer, we had farm animals who produced plenty of manure. But our new digs in Homer presented 3 strikes:

1. Covenants forbid farm animals
2. No place to grow a lawn, too steep
3. Few leaf producing trees

The general recipe for good compost is layering equal amounts green grass and brown leaves, ideally spiked with chicken manure for good measure. Clearly I have none of any of these ingredients. It's like trying to start a family when both parents are sterile. One day while pondering my dilemma, I suddenly heard the familiar drone of a lawnmower nearby. My neighbor was mowing his considerable lawn! Just for the asking, I



had my green ingredient. A couple of years went by with my brown- starved piles of grass clippings. In the fall, I even travelled with a garbage bag in my car, just in case I saw lots of leaves in one place for easy gathering. I also tried shredded newspaper and office paper with less than good results.

I happened to stop by my neighbor's workshop (same one with the big lawn) to discuss some subdivision matters and had to smack my forehead; His work-

shop is *woodshop*, and right by the door was a garbage bag stuffed to the bursting point with sawdust and wood shavings! The guy is a wood craftsman and produces copious amounts of the stuff all the time. Again for the asking, I had my "brown" ingredient. My compost perks along nicely all summer now, enhanced also with comfrey leaves and occasionally the "secret catalyst" ingredient suggested by Marion Owen. And I gratefully share my bounty with my neighbor.

Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Craig

November 2010		December 2010	
Income		Income	
Membership	\$305.00	Membership	\$190.00
Books	80.00	Books	240.00
Total Income	\$385.00	Total Income	\$430.00
Expenses		Expenses	
Meeting	49.00	Meeting	189.00
Venue	100.00		
Total Expenses	149.00	Total Expenses	189.00
Beginning balance 11-01-10	\$13,053.85	Beginning balance 12-01-10	\$13,289.85
Income	385.00	Income	430.00
Expense	<u>(149.00)</u>	Expenses	<u>(189.00)</u>
Ending balance 11-30-10	\$13,289.85	Ending balance 12-31-10	\$13,530.85

THE HOMER GARDEN CLUB—MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Today's Date: _____

_____ BASIC \$10 _____ SUPPORTING \$15 _____ BUSINESS \$25

Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Resource Info: May we put this information into our *Resource Book* for distribution to members? OK Not OK

May we include your E-mail address in our *Resource Book*? OK Not OK

May we send your Newsletter via E-mail? Yes No

Gardening skill level (Make a guess): Master Advanced Intermediate Beginner

Years Gardening _____ # Years Gardening in Homer _____ Elevation of your Homer Garden _____

Gardening Conditions _____

Gardening Specialties _____

Gardening Goals _____

How would you like to participate in the Garden Club?

Refreshments Spring Plant Sale Newsletter Autumn Harvest Dinner

Telephone Pioneer Avenue Garden Baycrest Garden Program Committee

REMEMBER to review the Garden Club's web site: www.homergardenclub.org. It has old issues of the newsletter, photos by members and a schedule of events. While there, be sure to check out "Starting From Seed" under "Archives." It is an instruction sheet passed out by Jeanne McArthur when she presented to the club last January. It is chock full of the nuts and bolts of how to get your seeds to germinate in time to get your garden planted.

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