HOMER GARDEN CLUB GENERAL MEETING

May 20, 2009

Meeting called to order by President Kathy Dube at 2:00.

She asked for any announcements from the members present. The library is thinking of starting seed bank so save any seeds you would like to save.

Seed potatoes are available for sale – 12 varieties, some rare. You can call 299-4404 for more information.

Donna Rae said they have a rhubarb squisher available. They had put in 10 lbs and brought sample of juice. It will be demonstrated at various venues and they will set a time in June for Club members to squeeze their own. Can sign up for a time to bring your rhubarb to their farm.

Jan passed around survey on preferences for harvest dinner food and potluck.

Three guests introduced themselves.

No secretary report as the April meeting was canceled due to weather. In the absence of Treasurer Lois Ashmun Francie Roberts gave Treasurer report - $18,375.36.

Brenda Adams reported the Gardeners’ Weekend is the last weekend of July, July 27 and 28. The speaker on Saturday is Fergus Garrett, head gardener of Great Dixter. Seating is limited and members have first chance at speaker tickets, available after the meeting.

Brenda said the Baycrest garden cleanup was very successful and finished in an hour and half because of the numerous volunteers. She passed around a signup list for weekly cleanups.

Barb Kennedy reported on the upcoming plant sale on Saturday, May 25. She asked volunteers to wear their Garden Club aprons. She has a plant ID book for identifying the various plants. She needs volunteers to come at 9:00 to set up tents, tables, etc. Please label any plants you bring. She also needs parking lot attendants and people to bring cookies and muffins.

Jan Peyton said she is working on speakers for the fall meetings. Linda Gorman speaking about bees r is set for Oct. or Nov.

Kathy announced we need a social secretary and historian for next year so asked members to think of applying.

Kathy introduced Paul Marmora for his bonsai demo. He said bonsai translates as “tree in a tray.” Making a bonsai you need a woody plant. Since a house is hot and dry, Ficus works, but outdoor plants need time to rest, so they do better outside. Cool frames or greenhouses can also work for bonsai. It is a small part of nature for you to enjoy.

Although bonsai started in China, Japanese made numerous rules, such as how many trees make a “forest” bonsai. Generally, there should be an odd number of trees and they should be planted randomly, never in rows.

A bonsai should look old and is a living sculpture. It takes a lot of commitment and requires a lot of work pruning and wiring.

In caring for a bonsai, think: “What do they need in nature?” Is it winter loving or a tropical species? Winter loving can be outside all year. Tropical can be in a house or greenhouse. They need the same light, moisture conditions and air movement as in natural surroundings. Use rocky soil to promote fine root growth. For tropicals add a little potting soil.

If digging up a tree for bonsai, the time to dig it up is in the spring when candles are forming before needles open, or when leaves are swelling but not yet burst. Capture the root ball by digging to the drip line, then plant in a large shallow box or pot. If the roots go beyond the drip line, use a shovel to cut the roots at the drip line, then wait until the tree has put out additional roots inside the drip line. Use patience.

Some of the trees that bonsai very well are:

Birch - back-bud extremely well as moose prune all the time

Larch - slanted style, ancient tree, informal upright.

White spruce, black spruce - harsh environment creates ancient look

Aspen, arctic willow, mountain hemlock – can be temperamental about being dug up

Amur, maple, cotoneaster.

For pots use cheap pots use second rate ceramic, plastic, clay. Inside use clay pots and outside usually use mica and heavy plastic.

Some of the styles for bonsai are formal outline, informal upright (crown above root with bend) cascade (branches go down), semi cascade, forest random (not have in row or equal distance), windswept (all branches same direction), weeping style.

To determine which branches you want to initially cut off, put paper over different branches to get a better perspective. Trees have a front and back. The tree should welcome you, not have branches that seem to push you away. He sometimes trims them 3 or 4 times year on bigger ones. You can change branches, but roots are set. Be patient as you can always cut more off but can never cut less after you have already cut. When you chop a branch, the tree goes into panic mode and puts more energy into remaining buds. If starting on a new tree, cut some off and then step back.

Paul demonstrated his techniques on a potted larch he had brought with him. He took it from about five ft. to 18 in. and trimmed side branches to make bonsai. He said it is best to cut a bar branch, which is when two branches come out together. Do the cutting when the soil is dry so the plant does not have so much moisture in the branches. Use clay or putty to seal off the cut, which will be callused after the putty falls off. For fertilizer use worm castings or something equally weak. When planting, trim the roots as otherwise the roots become a solid ball.

Paul completed his talk and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Riley