



HOMER GARDEN CLUB NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2011

CONTENTS:

Article	Page
February Speakers	1
President's Report	2
Treasurer's Report	2
Neil's Notes	3
Spring Garden Conf.	4
Host a Garden	5
Landscape Design	5

The February meeting will be held at 2:00 the 27th at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs.

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VEGETABLE GARDENING IS TOPIC FOR PANEL AT THE FEBRUARY 27TH MEETING

Paul Castellani will discuss growing herbs. He has been growing for the Homer Farmers Market for eleven full seasons now and has gardened in Alaska for twenty years. He grows a variety of vegetable and herbs for sale including onions, celery, carrots, lettuce, cabbage, leeks, basil, thyme, marjoram, rosemary, sage and oregano. He sells the fresh herbs at the market as well as to Finn's pizza. He also sells a dried herb-salt blend from the product he and his wife Jen keep at home to dry.



Paul and Jen at the Farmers' Market

Carole Demers came to Fairbanks, Alaska in 1958 with her family and homesteaded on Chena Ridge. Her mother was an avid vegetable and flower gardener, which she learned from her grandmother in Germany. All the children helped in the garden and the three girls are avid gardeners today. Although the two brothers aren't gardener's themselves, they married avid gardeners. Carole and her husband Greg moved to Homer in 1976, built a house and started their garden in Hidden Hills at about 1200 ft. Carole has been gardening continuously since then. Greg has helped with building and large projects in the garden. She has perennial flow-

ers and shrubs and a large vegetable garden. She uses a root cellar, freezes, smokes, cans and dehydrates a lot of their food. Carole also makes sauerkraut in the late summer and will be sharing her techniques with the Garden Club. She will also be sharing one of her newest passions, growing hardy garlic. During her presentation she will have a slide, a hand-out and some garlic catalogs from the Filaree Organic Garlic farms where she obtained her original bulbs for planting. She has planted hardy garlic from Siberia, Romania, Poland and Germany and now uses her own garlic and fall plants.

Joe Litchfield spends most of his time at sea, but when he's on the beach, he loves working in the garden. He has been gardening in Homer for about eight years and likes to experiment with different crops. Although he knows he's not the first person to try growing artichokes in Homer, he has been quite successful in this endeavor. He is also growing lots of asparagus and has finally found a root that promises to be very productive. He has about 10 different Arctic kiwi varieties and this spring should be able to decide which one or two he will keep on the trellis. Joe is also having some fun with cultivated mushrooms-four different spawns. He feels his most failures have come from my experiments with grapes. He has eight different varieties right now and hopes to know this spring which one or two vines winter over and will be the ones for Homer. Joe will be giving out some seeds for anyone who would like to try some artichokes this year.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT—A KITCHEN COUNTERTOP MICROSCOPIC GARDEN

By President Jack Regan

Sourdough yeast is a wonderful organism to cultivate even when plants do not grow outside in the garden. I obtained a sample of sourdough from a restaurant and if fed, the culture will continue to grow indefinitely. Add equal parts of flour and water every few days and withdraw the desired amount for your recipe. A pint canning jar works well as the reservoir. Poke a nail hole in the lid to let the gases escape and store the jar on the kitchen counter. A similar technique can also be used with buttermilk yeast, but the added nutrient is milk and after 24-hour incubation at room temperature, the reservoir is kept in the refrigerator.



Here are two recipes I have enjoyed making and eating:

Sourdough Oatcakes

In a bowl, beat one egg and one tablespoon cooking oil. Add leftover oatmeal from previous day's breakfast. Whisk in about a cup of sourdough starter. Leaven with:
 1/2 teaspoon baking powder,
 1/2 tsp baking soda, and
 1/2 t salt.

Add handful of blueberries if available.

50 grams sourdough starter
 3/4 teaspoon dry yeast

Ladle the batter onto a hot skillet. Turn the cakes when dry around the edges. Serve with maple syrup.

Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and combine but do not knead.

Pretty Good Bread

Mix dry ingredients:
 150 grams all purpose flour
 150 grams bread flour
 50 grams whole wheat flour
 25 grams rye flour

Let the sponge incubate overnight in a covered container at least 12 hours.

Mix wet ingredients:
 275 grams water

Transfer the dough to a loaf pan or a pizza stone and bake at 450 degrees for 30—40 minutes until golden.

TREASURER'S REPORT— JANUARY 2011

By Peggy Craig

Income

		Meeting	282.81
Membership	\$105.00	Venue	100.00
Books	<u>30.00</u>	Refreshments	16.07
Total Income	\$135.00	Program	166.74
		Newsletter	<u>178.38</u>
		Total Expenses	\$462.19

Expenses

Beginning balance 01-01-11	\$13,530.85
Income	135.00
Expenses	<u>(462.19)</u>
Ending balance 01-31-11	\$13,203.66



Orchid plants for sale

NEIL'S NOTES

By Vice President Neil Wagner

Those dreary days in January were right on schedule but only slowly getting longer. When our gardening seeds arrived, we were excited about planting. But then realized that next spring's planting was still months away. So we did it. We tore ourselves away from this cosmic hamlet and went to Hawaii to visit our friends' "other place" for two weeks. The fact that I haven't been to Hawaii yet at my age speaks of my puritan Minnesota upbringing where shoveling snow is somewhat of a sport. Where the frigid winters supposedly bring robust circulation, good health and long life as you run to stay warm. As Garrison Keeler would say, we were always suspicious of those returning from the tropics with those happy smiles and brown tans. "Too much sun isn't good for you" or "It's darn unnatural to have a tan in winter".

Really, it's hard not to be awed when trading icy roads and winter rain for warm sun and lots of edible tropical fruit.

Permaculture makes even more sense down there. With even a little planning you can have a perennial feast growing in your back



Fresh fruits and veggies each day

yard. Our friends' there have over a dozen different varieties of trees that seasonally bear fruit and a small garden where they grow pretty much what we do here. The carrots aren't as sweet and the brassicas tend to head out too early, but everything else looked and tasted pretty good. The tomatoes, eggplant and peppers do fine without a greenhouse, thank you, and volunteer tomatoes, squash and cucumbers start wherever their seeds hit the ground.



Hibiscus

We toured the island and were especially amazed at the lushness of the eastern windward side of the island. Of course, it happened to be sunny and beautiful when we were there with none of the 200+ inches of rain falling to cool down our wonder.

All across the island we saw gorgeous flowers with bougainvillea hedges in red, white and fuchsia. hibiscus also wowed us with their large blooms.

Kyra was crazy about the smell of the jasmine blooms. Teena or Brenda would surely list hundreds of flowers with their proper Latin names. Suffice to say we were impressed and delighted.

Later when crossing through the interior's rain shadow, the terrain quickly faded to dry scrub changing later to lush grasslands where cattle and

horses grazed. We were told that it is only recently that the ranchers started selling their beef in any quantity on the island rather than sending it all to the mainland. Somehow the local beef still costs more than that from the mainland. It's probably explainable by cheaper mainland labor and our low energy costs for transportation. With a population over 1.3 million on the islands, they, like us, also have a long way to go to survive on local food.

We stopped at all of the farmer's markets that we could find. In a land with potential to grow so much we really didn't see that many farmers or much produce for sale. Maybe a lot of local produce is sold directly to wholesalers or just eaten at home. We found lots of tropical fruit for sale; papayas, bananas, oranges, grapefruit, limes, lemons, tangelos, avocados, rambutan, custard apples, melons, star fruit, pineapple and more. A few vendors at each market also carried salad greens, carrots and beets or flowers, coffee, or macadamia nuts.



Produce at Farmers' Market

Peter, a Californian farmer transplanted to the neighborhood where we stayed, was always busy working his leased garden space when we drove by. One morning we stopped over and helped him install about 300 feet of plastic mulch over his transplanted
Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

NEIL'S NOTES

strawberries. We had to pull them through the plastic since he hadn't had the cash flow yet to buy the plastic when he originally planted the strawberries. We started at 9:00 am and by time we got done at noon we wished we had started earlier in the cooler morning. Probably because of my great talent, I got elected to shovel up dirt to cover the edges of the plastic.

Helping Peter mulch his strawberries.



Not much of a learning curve, but it made me appreciate what

we often take for granted. Farming can be hard, hot work without great rewards. We did get strawberries to eat and the peace of mind that we were able to give a fellow gardener a hand.

Now back in Homer we are adjusting to the cold, and I feel healthier and more robust already...

The **April** Homer Garden Club meeting will be held on May 1 as the fourth Sunday of April (our normal meeting date) is Easter Sunday.

5TH ANNUAL SPRING GARDEN CONFERENCE, ANCHORAGE

The Alaska Botanical Garden's 5th Annual Spring Garden Conference "Cultivating Community" will be held in Anchorage March 11 and 12, 2011. The keynote speaker will be Roger Swain of PBS Victory Garden fame.

It should be another great Garden Conference, with a host of Alaskan gardening experts, including Verna Pratt, Julie Riley, Les Brake, Debbie Hinchey, Dwayne Adams, M. Elise Huggins, Ayse Gilbert, Jeff Lowenfels, David Goodgame, Mel Monsen, Jane Baldwin, Michael Rasy, Ellen Vande Visse, Greg Terry, and more! Talks include Urban Homesteading, Alaska's Territorial Gardens, Fungi, the Culture of Gardening, Slugs, Soil, Garden Design, and much more!

Annual Meeting & Keynote: Friday March 11 6:30 - 9:00 pm at the Anchorage Museum
Keynote Talk: Roger Swain: Planting Villages: How Gardens Make Good Neighbors"

Conference: Saturday March 12, 8:30 am - 5:15 pm at the UAA / APU Consortium Library
(4:15 Roger Swain: "Returning Fruit to the American Landscape")

Supper Reception & Silent Auction: 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

To register, go to the ABG Website: www.alaskabg.org to download the registration form or register on line. You can also mail the registration to the ABG Office (3701 E. Tudor Rd. #203, Anchorage, AK,

Costs:

Early Rate (by February 17):\$75 (\$55 for members of ABG & affiliated gardening clubs)

Late (February 11 & later): \$90 (\$70 for members of ABG & affiliated gardening clubs)

Lunch: \$15

Supper Reception following Conference: \$25

For a complete schedule of events, go to their website www.alaskabg.org

HOST A GARDEN FOR GARDENERS' WEEKEND

By Barbara Landi

When I moved to Homer 6 years ago, I joined the garden club as soon as I learned there was one. Even though I'd been planting and growing for 35 years in other parts of Alaska, I wanted to know what is possible in Homer's unique climate in the most southern part of south central Alaska. Besides that, I'd never belonged to a garden club. I'd been a lone wolf gardener for too long and it was time for some learning and sharing.

When I went to my first Gardeners' Weekend, I was so impressed by the beautiful home displays, I just wanted to learn more and more. Planning commenced for the next year's Gardeners' Weekend, and I volunteered to host a garden. Besides having fun and meeting lots of other people with similar interests to mine, I came away with so much more knowledge and ideas for my own garden. If you've never been a GW host, I strongly urge you to volunteer to be one this year. Here's the lowdown on how it works:

Six gardens are open for 6 hours, 11am to 5pm. There are 2 shifts of 3 hours each, 11-2, and 2-5. You can choose the morning shift, or the afternoon one. And you may even be able to choose the

garden. (I chose the Bear Creek Winery garden the first time.) You have the other three hours to visit the other five gardens.

In case you think you are not qualified to be a host for some reason, forget it! The only qualification is *an interest in gardening*. I suspect every reader of this newsletter already has that qualification. Before the tour begins, the owner will give you a general overview of the garden. You are not expected to know or memorize names of plants. No homework and no test. So what ARE the duties of a host?

1. Welcome arriving guests and encourage them to sign the guest book
2. Check to see if each guest has flower/pin showing that they've paid for the tour.
3. If not, sell them the tour and give them a map showing the garden locations
4. Point them in the direction of where to start and offer the general information about the garden provided by the owner.



Naturally if you DO know plant names, you can share whatever you know.

Saraphine Bailey and Sharon Froeschle are the GW host coordinators, and they will provide you with the guest book, ticket sales materials, um-

brella for your table, and general instructions.

In a perfect world, each garden would have two hosts for each shift, and you would have a partner. An extra host is handy if help is needed with parking. The truth is, we've never had enough volunteer hosts for two at each garden on each shift (24.) Since the reputation and popularity of this event increases every year, we dare to hope for LOTS of host volunteers; the more the merrier! Without a doubt, the GW tour is the superbowl Sunday of gardening; who *wouldn't* want to be a host? So DO volunteer! Put yourself at the heart of one of Homer's best annual events. I promise you will enjoy it!

Kachemak Bay Campus, Kenai Peninsula College is pleased to present the workshop

Landscape Design, with Wayne Vandre (*retired Cooperative Extension Agent*)

**April 16-17, 2011
Saturday & Sunday,
10:00a.m.-5:00 p.m.**

Learn about landscape design including site inventory, site analysis and conceptual and preliminary design. Construction phasing, final design components and resources will be discussed.

**AGRI A227
Cost: \$198.50**

Advanced Registration Required

Call 235-7743 for more information. www.homer.alaska.edu

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

____Nominating Committee ____Officer/Board of Directors ____Gardener's Weekend ____Other

Homer Garden Club
P.O. Box 2833
Homer, AK 99603

