

February 2017

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Homer Garden Club

Newsletter

The Homer Garden Club meeting will be held February 26 at 2:00 pm at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs.

February 26 Meeting to Feature Lori Jenkins on Garlic Growing

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Forget the chocolate Valentines, February is for garlic lovers! Lori Jenkins, garlic guru of Homer and owner of Synergy Gardens, will be our featured presenter for the monthly meeting on February 26, 2 pm at the Bidarka Inn, Homer. Lori will introduce the Alaska Garlic Project, provide a brief history on garlic, and tell us about garlic varieties. She will cover planting, growing, harvesting, curing and storing garlic.

Synergy Gardens, a 2016 Gardeners' Weekend tour participant, is a 4-year-old Micro Agricultural Business devoted to sustainably growing the best, most delicious, organic, nutrient-dense food for Homer's restaurants, Homer Farmer's Market, and the Kenai Food Hub. They offer a wide array of vegetables, herbs, edible blossoms, flowers and, most significantly, premium quality garlic for culinary use and planting.

Please join us for this fascinating presentation. Vampires not welcome.



Treasurer's Report

by Peggy Pittman, Treasurer

January 2016

Income

Membership	90.00	
	Total Income	<u>\$ 90.00</u>

Expenses

Venue	150.00	
Speaker Honorarium	50.00	
Copies for speaker handout	27.41	
	Total Expenses	<u>\$ 227.41</u>

Beginning Balance 1/1/2017	\$10,687.42
Income	90.00
Expenses	<u>227.41</u>
Ending Balance 10/31/16	\$10,550.01

Kachemak Bay Campus Presents:

Gardening Workshops

TREE PRUNING AND GRAFTING — March 1, 6—8:00 pm

With Casey Matney, Cooperative Extension Agent

Introduction to tree pruning and grafting. Students will explore techniques and procedures for properly pruning and grafting of trees.

FEE \$25. Registration deadline February 25

TREE PLANTING AND TREE CARE — April 19, 6-8:00 pm

With Casey Matney, Cooperative Extension Agent

Learn how to properly plant and care for a tree. Students will cover topics such as soil preparation, tree placement, planting depth, watering and other primary tree care practices.

FEE \$25. Registration deadline April 18

GARDEN DESIGN AND CREATION — March 25 and April 1, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

With Brenda Adams

Covers design basics, plan development, cultural requirements of plants, foliage, northern light, combinations and hardscape elements.

FEE \$85. Registration deadline March 24

Growing Little Gardeners

*“In every gardener there is a child
who believes in the seed fairy”
Robert Brault*

Despite this morning’s snow flurries and ice upon the stairs, spring is whistling up the walk. Already the black-capped chickadee has taken up his wistful mating call, and our early morning dog walks are done in the blue of first light. Within a month the varied thrush will return and the snow will begin to recede, exposing the first green spears of daffodils and the moldering tangle of last year’s garden. If you’re itching for green and blossoms, it’s time to help spring along.

In our dining room, under the glow of full spectrum lights, we have short but robust tomatoes with their frilly leaves. If I look closely I can see the first buds forming, covered in fine silver hairs. Over the next few weeks I’ll plant seeds for some of the flowers that will grace our hanging baskets this summer; labella, pansies, bachelor buttons and snapdragons. Then I’ll clear off a desk in a sunny spot and get to work on the garden starts; broccoli, kale, cabbage, corn, and more.

I inherited my love of gardening -- like freckles or a cowlick, from a long line of gardeners and farmers. Gardening was just something we did together each year. By the time I was four or five, my grandparents would pour seeds into my cupped hands and set me to task. Eager to help, I planted crooked rows of green beans and over-crowded beds of carrots, walked clumsily where I wasn’t supposed to, and needed a bath after the whole wonderful process was done. My grandparents, perhaps drawing upon their own fond memories of working the soil as children, made

spring planting into a joyful event. Within a few years I was planting little flowerbeds of my own design and thumbing wistfully through the colored seed catalogs that came in the mail.

Most gardeners, I would wager, were introduced to gardening as children. Like learning to ride a bike, or acquiring a second language, playing in the soil and finding magic in the garden comes naturally to children. If the experience is fun, and they are around to witness the miracle of tiny green shoots that evolve over time into tasty peas or sweet carrots



washed clean under the garden hose, they are sure to see the value of tending a garden.

It behooves us then, as keepers of this craft, to pour seeds into the palm of a child and show him how to push them into the soil and water them in gently. Children have busy lives these days -- traveling in the car from soccer practice to violin lessons to orthodontist appointments, with a stop for a quick burger and fries in route. When they’re not engaged in some organized event, they’re watching TV or thumbing their way through a video game. You’ve heard the statistics – our kids spend, on average, seven and a half hours a day in front

of a screen. One of the many downsides to this focus on an electronic world is that they are not forming a connection with the natural world. The truth of it is, children do not grow up to miss what they’ve never come to love.

So how do we, as parents, grandparents, aunties or neighbors, plant the seeds of cultivation in these fertile young minds? If we hope to pass along our own lineage of stewardship in the garden, where do we begin? I have some ideas.

Start small. On a blustery day in February or March you might line up a little row of 3” pots on the kitchen counter or, lacking those, paper coffee cups, or an egg carton. Bring out a bag of potting soil and a few packets of seeds and ask them to help you. Make it sound fun – it’s an experiment, a mystery the two

of you will solve, or a story you’ll invent together. This is especially effective for children between the ages of 4 and 10.

If you’re wondering what kind of seeds to grow, sunflowers are fun, or green beans, two per pot, or one per cup. Two or three radish seeds will provide a little peppery snack in about six weeks. A tiny pinch of lettuce or kale will produce a modest salad within a month. Or you can even plant apple and orange seeds to see what happens. It doesn’t matter that much at this point. If they suggest it, more’s the better. Once planted, line them up in a sunny window in a seed tray or

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baking pan, water them, and celebrate the eruption of tiny green leaves in a week or two.

Let the child peruse old seed catalogs with a pair of scissors and glue to make a collage that could, with a trip to the nursery, inform their first flower garden or vegetable patch. Show them the wonder of a few beans sprouted by soaking them for a week or so on a damp paper towel kept moist in a plastic bag. Once the long root and first leaves begin to emerge, let them explore this little wonder. Name it's parts, draw it together, then plant it and let it grow. Foster the wonder. Read them garden-related stories. *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney was a favorite at our house, or you might remember *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, which is definitely worthy bedtime reading. As the growing season

progresses put a little bowl in their hand and send them down to the garden to pick raspberries for a pie, or harvest the evening's salad.

If you have socially aware children who are forever asking to visit the homeless cats and dogs at the shelter, or begging change for the fundraiser canister by the checkout in Safeway, or listening solemnly to news accounts of other's misfortune, you could engage them in planting an extra row of produce just for the food bank. Potatoes are the easiest crop in the world to grow, and digging for them in the fall is like a subterranean Easter egg hunt. Wash the potatoes together,

then gather them in cardboard boxes that they can help carry out to the car. Bring them along when you take the yield to the foodbank so they can experience for themselves the satisfaction of giving away something they've grown. This small effort may inspire a lifetime of generosity. In this way we grow new gardeners by carefully nurturing their curiosity and sense of identity.



January Handout

by Brenda Adams, Recording Secretary

As the January minutes are not available as the moment, I am copying the January handout presented by our speaker Brenda Adams.

Truly Compelling Combinations
Creating Sizzle and Subtlety
Homer Garden Club
January 22nd, 2017
by Brenda C. Adams

Why focus on combinations when designing your gardens?

Combination planting is the art of arranging plants in pairings or groupings in which each plant compliments another so that the ensemble is much more beautiful and impactful than any of the individual elements. Simply stated, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts!

What makes a combination work?

The inherent tension between contrast and repetition makes a combination compelling. Combinations can be formed with any mix of plants – trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, grasses, ferns, annuals, or bulbs. Wonderful arrangements can also be created using only one category of plant. The options are endless.

What are the tools at your disposal?

Look at all aspects of each plant including its flowers, buds, foliage, bark, stems, seedpods, berries, and fruit, as well as how these might change throughout the seasons. You might also include garden art, structures, or containers in your combinations.

What qualities should you feature in creating your combinations?

In analyzing the plants you might want to include, consider the qualities of texture, shape, dimension, color, structure, form, and architecture. Texture refers to either tactile or visual "feel". For example, some foliage will be truly soft and fuzzy to the touch while shiny, reflective foliage might look smooth and silky. The leaves, flowers, berries, or other plant elements may have distinctive shapes you can utilize in your designs. The dimension of an element and how it compares to another in the combination can set up a powerful contrast or be used repetitively. Color may be found in any aspect of each plant, not merely in its flowers. Not only is color a useful tool to repeat or contrast, but the intensity or saturation of color as well as whether it is cool or warm can play a vital role in making memorable combinations.

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The structure, form or architecture of a plant can also be used as a repeating theme or a contrasting element.

What are the roles of repetition and contrast?

Repetition is a unifying tool which infuses a combination with a strong *raison d'être*. Carried to the next level, repetition of a combination, color, or form throughout a garden will also unify the landscape. Contrast, on the other hand, is used to add zest and excitement. How you

balance these two will determine the kind of overall impact your combinations will impart.

How do you create more sizzle?

For more sizzle and excitement, emphasize contrast by increasing the use of contrasting elements and by increasing the degree of contrast. Hot, saturated and complimentary colors increase sizzle. So do strongly architectural plants. Truly compelling sizzling combinations will also include some repetition as a unifying force.

What if you prefer a more subtle or elegant look?

To create more subtle and soothing combinations do the opposite. Emphasize repetition and increase its use. While still including some contrast to give the combinations pizzazz, the differences will be more understated, less dramatic, and more nuanced. Pastels, cool, and analogous colors produce more subtle results. A very special case is monochromatic combinations in which there is total unity of color.

Can you combine these concepts?

Combining sizzle and subtlety – in other words using a lot of repetition and a lot of contrast – will lead to stunning, deeply interesting, and all around, great combinations.

Les Brake and Thando

When he was here presenting during our October meeting, Les Brake from Willow, Alaska, provided the opportunity for club members to voluntarily contribute to an educational fund for a needy South African student. The following is an update from Les on the status of Thando and her educational pursuits.

“Dear Homer Garden Club,

Thanks to your magnanimous donations last October, the South Africa girl I am sponsoring is now in her new school. This mission could not have been done without your help, and we are all grateful for the assistance you provided. Thanks to your generosity, young Thando has been presented with an opportunity to be the best person that she can be. The abyss in South Africa is unimaginably terrible. I have seen it, but Thando now has the chance to avert it. You can see the joy you have given her in the attached photo, which was taken two weeks ago when she enrolled in the new school (pictured with her mother, Cosy Zulu, and the senior finance officer at the school). Thank you.

Sincerely, Les Brake, Willow”



Correction to the bio of Brenda Adams in the January newsletter: The article about Brenda Adams' first book, *There's a Moose in My Garden*, appeared in "The American Gardener, The Magazine of the American Horticultural Society", rather than "Horticulture" magazine.

Old ranch owner John farmed a small ranch in Montana. The Montana Wage and Hour Department claimed he was not paying proper wages to his workers and sent an agent out to interview him.

'I need a list of your employees and how much you pay them,' demanded the agent.

'Well,' replied old John, 'There's my ranch hand who's been with me for 3 years. I pay him \$600 a week plus free room and board. The cook has been here for 18 months, and I pay her \$500 a week plus free room and board. Then there's the half-wit who works about 18 hours every day and does about 90% of all the work around here. He makes about \$10 per week, pays his own room and board and I buy him a bottle of bourbon every Saturday night.'

'That's the guy I want to talk to, the half-wit,' says the agent.

'That would be me,' replied old rancher John.

*Homer Garden Club
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