

Homer Garden Club

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The next HGC meeting will be **September 21** at 2:00 at the Aspen Hotel.

Newsletter

June 2025

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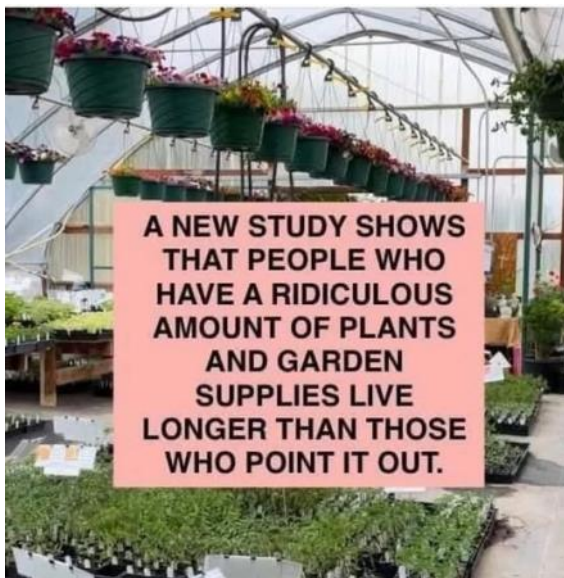
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September 21 HGC meeting will be the annual Harvest hors d'oeuvres at 2:00 at the Aspen Hotel. Bring your gardening stories and an appetizer for a fun afternoon.



Treasurer's Report

by Kendall Dellaesperanza, Treasurer

Since our Treasurer is out of state, the May Treasurer Report will be published this fall.



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May HGC Meeting Minutes

by Tina Seaton, Secretary

Homer Garden Club Meeting – 5/18/25 Minutes

Attendance and Announcements – There were 24 attendees, no announcements, and 2 guests from Soldotna introduced themselves.

Additions to Agenda – no additions.

Secretary's Report – The minutes from the last meeting can be found on the website and in the monthly newsletter.

Treasurer's Report – The Treasurer's report can be found in the monthly newsletter. Kendall reported that \$10,000 was taken out of the checking account and transferred to an 18-month CD. The Garden club paid \$250 for a Peony sponsorship to the Chamber of Commerce. Louise reported we have 125 members paid up. The Aprons and Gardening books sell for \$25 each and the books can be found at the bookstore and Wagon Wheel.

Committee Reports

Garden Tour – There will be no big garden tour this summer for lack of volunteers, but there may be members-only pop-up tours if members have gardens they want to share. Notify Francie or Kathy if you want to offer your garden!

Speaker's Committee – Fran has done a wonderful job lining up speakers this year but would really like a

co-VP to help her! Let us know if you would be willing to help.

Baycrest Garden Committee – The Baycrest Garden crew did a great job cleaning up the garden. Primroses and bulbs are in bloom now. Be sure to sign up for a turn to help maintain the garden this summer! Thanks to Brenda for organizing this project each spring!

Social Committee – Michael thanked the people who brought treats.

Newsletter – Paula said the newsletter goes out to all paid members September through May. She encourages contributions of articles & stories from members.

Plant Sale – Plant sale is May 24. Volunteers are needed for set up at 9, cashiers, clean up, etc. Sale starts at 11 and is usually over by noon. The Pratt Museum will also have native plants for sale at the same time.

Scholarship – nothing to report.

Giving Committee – nothing to report.

Guest Speaker

(Continued on page 3)

Brenda Adams has written a number of gardening books: Cool Plants for Cold Climate and There's a Moose in my Garden, among them. She is a past president of the Homer Garden Club, is a Master Gardener and has had a garden design business. She took a poll at a previous meeting and there was overwhelming interest in the topic of "Having it all: Beauty and Low Maintenance". Brenda pointed out that there is no such thing as a "No Maintenance" garden, but you can choose to build a lower maintenance garden.

Size Matters - There is a tipping point between how much time you want to spend maintaining your garden and how big a garden you want. If it is too big for you, figure out how to cut down. Containers are a fine way to garden. You can give the impression of a big garden by incorporating a gazebo, steppingstones, etc. Size is the driver of the maintenance required.

Borrow a View – Natural fields, forests or mountain views can become part of your garden. Incorporate framing with trees and a sitting area. A bird bath or other focal point in front can draw the eye toward the view.

Beware of friends bearing gifts of plants they have 'plenty' of – Be cautious of unruly spreading plants, such as common daisy and Butter & Eggs, even beautiful native flora can be a management headache. Lupine speedwell is meant to grow in rocky, windy soil, but it can overwhelm a garden of amended soil.

Select well-behaved plants - Learn about plants to help you choose the right ones. Shooting Stars or Dodecatheon pulchellum are a well-mannered native plant. Primula Auricula, Trollius Chinensis, Lillium Asiatic, Hosta Patriot, Geum, Iris, Sedum Autumn Fire, Ornamental Rhubarb, and Pulsatilla Vulgaris are all examples of well-behaved plants.

Select shrubs that Moose eat Last. Moose eat woody plants. Some they don't eat are: berberis thunbergia var. atropurpurea "Crimson Pigment", Mock Orange, Haskap berry.

Choose clumping, not running grasses.

Long-lived plants that stay healthy without division.

Peonys, Sedum, Blue Poppys, Aconitum carmichaeli and Daffodils

Do you love it enough to want to stake it? For example: Delphiniums or Veronicastrum virginicum apollo. Plants that don't need to be staked: Aconitum bi-color (Monkshood), Philipendula,

and Ligularia.

Look for plants with a long bloom time, need no deadheading, and are interesting throughout the summer. Catmint (can cut it off when it looks ratty, it may rebloom); Aстранtia Major, "Hadsphen Blood"; Jacob's Ladder; Columbine (does need to be deadheaded but will bloom for 6 weeks); Sedum; Dianthus; Lewisia.

Know your environment – Match horticultural needs to your garden. Learn your zone, sun and wind exposure, PH level, moisture, drainage, and fertility. If you have a steep slope, you should plant drought hardy plants because the water will drain faster. Some plants are well behaved in shade gardens but not in a sunny space. Look for microclimates.

Lay out your garden and design before planting.

Use circles to show how big plants will get proportionally so you can allow as much space as needed. Shrubs and trees especially need enough space. The size marked on the label will be 5-10 years growth, but the plants will continue to grow. As you are planting, measure distances and give enough space to last a few or more years. If the garden looks too spaced out add bulbs and annuals to fill in.

"A Garden is a living thing that changes dramatically over the year and from year to year"

Prepare your soil. Till the first year and add amendments. Get rid of everything you don't want before you start – weeds & natives.

Protect against unwanted intruders such as turf grass. Stop grass from getting into your garden to begin with: use professional grade weed barrier; edging between grass and garden should be at least 5" tall, otherwise it will cross the barrier. Two thirds of the edging should be above the soil level.

Paths – Place 6-8 layers of newspaper or a layer of cardboard under weed barrier, then stone, gravel or wood mulch. Avoid walking on soil to keep from compacting it. Any stepping-stones should be sunk to soil level so a lawnmower can run over them.

Weed early and often – and into fall. Brenda hides a trowel out in her garden, so it is always handy. She stressed the importance of weeding once a week and not letting weeds go to seed.

If your garden becomes too big for you to keep up maintenance – reduce the footprint, block weeds and use well behaved plants.

Create beauty and pleasure for yourself, put in a place to sit in the garden and enjoy it!



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Garden Décor

Garden Club Plant Sale

by Paula Riley

I wish to thank all our wonderful HGC members and friends who supplied plants and/or worked on Plant Sale Day! As usual, the volunteers are what make this club such a success. Everyone, volunteers and buyers alike, had a wonderful time and at the end of the sale all the plants were gone.





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Bird Brains

by Jessica Shepherd

A pair of robins, hell-bent on defending their nesting territory, throw themselves against our bedroom window. They sit by turns on the slim branch of alders growing near the house while the window mirrors the sky, the alders and spruce, and their own angry reflections. Their soft bones and feathers bounce off the window again. And again. Again, and again.

All afternoon, they keep up the effort to drive away imaginary competitors. Hal prints out hawk silhouettes and tapes them to the glass. When that has no effect, he nails a blanket across the window, casting our bedroom into a twilight pall. But it makes no difference to the robins, fluttering and crunching against the window. I think of the eggs she carries in her belly and hope these soft collisions don't damage them. I worry about the energy they're expending when they should be out gathering grubs and building a nest. Knowing it's not tall enough, I set up a ladder and hold it while Hal climbs up with a piece of opaque plastic and a staple gun. The ladder seems too insubstantial, and we both decide it's foolish to risk his life to save theirs.

They're still at it when we don earplugs and attempt sleep, only to abandon our bedroom for the too-soft bed in our little trailer. One day stretches into two. Still, they flap and knock against the glass. I stand outside, seeing how the window reflects the sky as if



you could simply fly through. I try to reason with the birds, but my voice does nothing to appease them. If anything, they appear more frantic. Hal and I spend a second night in the trailer while the assault continues.

This east-facing side of the house has long been a favorite spot for nesting robins. They

used to nest on the top of the dryer vent, next to the window, but the location was exposed, and most years, Magpies snatched the naked chicks to feed their own nestlings amid desperate cries from the Robin parents. When the dryer gave up the ghost, we switched to hanging our clothes outside in the sun-sweet air, and removed the vent, nailing a board over the hole.

The robins then took to nesting atop one of the jutting ends of our log house, tucked up in a dark recess. This proved to be a better location in terms of Magpie mishaps. But never before had they shown any interest in their own reflections. Perhaps the increased cloud cover this spring dulls the light and makes the window into a looking glass. Or maybe this is a new pair - young and inexperienced in the ways of win-

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(Bird Brains

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dows. Who can say what goes through their bird brains?

I think about the number of birds that die from window strikes every year (600 million), second only to predation by domestic cats (a staggering 2 billion). Songbird populations are in steep decline, and while the American Robin, found in every state in the US, has a stable population, I can't help but feel protective toward this pair. In some sense, they are "our" robins by virtue of the landscape we share with them. We surely bear some responsibility for their welfare.

Meanwhile, other animals are making the most of the long days and rapidly greening landscape. Overhead, as I work in the garden, Sandhill Cranes call, their reedy voices carrying long distances. I look up and see a trio, legs dangling. And in the same air space, a pair of mature eagles, white heads and tails resplendent in the sunlight, spiral and chitter to one another.

In town, I hear reports of moose twins, hours old, and scan the open fields on my drive home in hopes of seeing newborns on spidery legs. The next morning, Hal walks the dogs on a trail above the house and hears our local cow moose amid the alders, likely the one who destroyed the apple trees this winter, grunting over and over as labor bares down on her.

A third day goes by. The window, dotted with Robin excrement, is quiet. The male, his red breast proud,

sings from an adjacent spruce tree. Curious, we round the corner of the house to have a peek. The female darts furtively from the nest, and we retreat, hoping for the best.

Back in our own bed that night we sleep peacefully until sunrise when the fragile thump of robins at the window wakes us. Their futile aggression is less ardent, more bluster. Later, we watch them gather huge mouthfuls of grass for their nest. It seems they have learned to live with their shadow selves.



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Gardening Can Fight Neurodegenerative Diseases.

Gardening is more than just a relaxing hobby. It is an activity that offers profound benefits for brain health. Engaging in gardening can help reduce stress, enhance cognitive function, and protect against neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Scientific research supports the idea that spending time tending to plants fosters mental well-being and promotes neuroplasticity, making it a powerful tool for maintaining brain health as we age.

Gardening Stimulates Cognitive Function

Gardening involves planning, problem-solving, and learning, which engage various brain regions. Studies suggest cognitively stimulating activities, like gardening, help build cognitive reserve, which can delay the onset of dementia-related symptoms. The physical aspects of gardening—digging, planting, and weeding—activate motor skills and hand-eye coordination, essential for maintaining neural pathways and preventing cognitive decline.

A 2006 study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* found daily gardening was associated with a 36% lower risk of developing dementia. This protective effect is attributed to physical activity, mental engagement, and social interaction in gardening.

Gardening Reduces Stress and Inflammation

Chronic stress and inflammation are associated with neurodegenerative diseases. Research has shown gardening can lower cortisol levels, a major stress hormone, thereby promoting relaxation. Spending time in green spaces is also associated with lower systemic inflammation, which plays a significant role in brain aging and developing neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's.

Gardening Provides Physical Exercise

Gardening is a moderate-intensity physical activity that improves cardiovascular health and is closely linked to brain health. Regular physical activity increases blood flow to the brain, delivering essential oxygen and nutri-

ents while removing waste products. A study in *Neurology* found that individuals who engage in regular physical activity had a 40% reduced risk of cognitive decline compared to sedentary individuals..

Gardening Encourages a Brain-Healthy Diet

Growing and consuming fresh vegetables and fruits provides essential nutrients for brain function. Diets rich in antioxidants and polyphenols—

commonly found in home-grown produce—have been associated with reduced risk of neurodegenerative diseases. As discussed in the March Healthy Living article, incorporating broccoli or broccoli sprouts into your garden can provide significant health benefits.

Gardening offers a holistic approach to brain health by combining cognitive engagement, physical activity, stress reduction, and improved nutrition. Scientific research demonstrates gardening—whether growing vegetables, tending to flowers, or simply spending time in nature—is a powerful, natural way to support lifelong brain health.

—By Lt. Col. Nick Barringer, USA (Ret), chief academic officer and dean of graduate studies at Lionel University.



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