Homer Garden Club November membership meeting

November 19, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 PM by President, Francie Roberts. Reading of the October minutes was dispensed with since they are reproduced in the newsletters and are available on line.

Peggy Pittman gave the treasurer's report. We currently have $17,002.38 in the treasury.

Next addressed were committee reports: Jeannette Lawson, co-chair of the Gardeners' Weekend committee, advised that our venue ( I & O auditorium) has been secured for July 28, 2018, for our speaker's presentation. The event takes a huge number of volunteers and signup sheets are available at all meetings.

Jeannette, who is also Social Secretary, has signup sheets available for those willing to bring refreshments to one of our monthly meetings.

Co-V.P.s Kathy Dube' and Tim Quinn said that they have found speakers for the February meeting, a seed producing and selling company called Foundroot out of Haines (www.foundroot.com). Members who have ideas about who they might like to have speak to the club are encouraged to let Tim and Kathy know.

Francie reported on other projects the board is working on which include the production of new gardening aprons which will be sold to members and others (she passed around a photo of the logo which Skiffchicks would be able to produce for us) and producing HGC rack cards.

A major project is the updating of Kachemak Cultivating - From Seaside to Summit, the HGC garden guide authored by club members (members are encouraged to sign up to help with the project.) The deadline for updated entries is the last Sunday in January (1/28) coinciding with the January membership meeting. Brenda commented that botanical names should be double checked by those volunteers as they sometimes change over time.

Kathy then introduced the day's guest speaker, Brenda Adams, whose topic was, "Designing Your Garden as a Haven to Attract and Support Pollinators". Brenda provided handouts for that general topic as well as a comprehensive guide identifying specific plants favored by bees, butterflies and hummingbirds as well as for the larvae (caterpillars) of the butterflies and accompanied her talk with a beautiful power point presentation.

Defining pollinators as "anything that moves pollen from one flower to another", Brenda identifies not just those insects and hummingbirds but also water, wind, even mammals who brush against flowers and transport their pollen. In general, she suggests the following: insure your gardens have season-long continuous bloom and incorporate a diverse array of plants in size as well as color and flower shapes; include native plants and those that are fragrant; plant in groupings since large plantings ease the passage of pollinators from one plant to the next; allow spent flowers, herbs and foliage to stay until spring to serve as nesting and overwintering sites for these species; be sure to remember ground-dwelling bees; include a water source and a place for basking in the sun; provide cover. And NEVER use pesticides whether or not they are labeled "organic".

Turning to Butterflies she provided these specifics: 84 butterfly species in Alaska; 4 stage life cycles; attraction to the colors red, yellow, orange, pink and purple; prefer flat-topped flowers for landing zones; butterflies lay eggs on plants that will also provide a food source for larvae; need sunny spots protected from wind; need other flat surfaces for warming themselves and for rest; a permanently muddy spot is required for "puddling"- gathering nutrients.

In her discussion of bees, Brenda made the following references: bees are the most successful pollinators in Alaska; they need a diverse landscape all season long; 4,000 species in U. S., and Alaska has at least 95, including 19 of bumble bees. Although bumble bees are communal, most native bees are "solitary" and raise only their own young. Colors that attract them include purple, blue, yellow and white. Bee "hotels" (purchased or homemade) should have refreshable tubes to avoid parasite buildup. Flat or shallow flowers, single rather than double, are the best choices. Bees are attracted by sweet or minty fragrances. Water sources should be shallow and need to provide a pathway out for the bees to prevent drowning.

The discussion of hummingbirds was next and proved timely since members reported that some had been seen as recently as the past week in the area off East End Road near Wasabi's. Concerning hummers, Brenda provided the following specifics: They will return to the same garden each year if they find food, water, nest building materials and cover; they are territorial; they have no sense of smell so rely on sight to locate the flowers they seek for nectar; attracted to red and orange flowers; they should be provided with vertical elements like trees, shrubs, vines and hanging baskets; floral nectar supplies 90% of their diet and they must eat several times their weight in nectar every day; flowers are best, but feeders can be used ( if no dyes are included) to the 1:4 sugar to water mix; protein sources are needed as well; they prefer mist or a trickle of water to standing water such as a bird bath; nest building materials are needed and they find them in moss, lichen, leaf bits, twigs, frothy seed-heads and even spider silk. Trees and shrubs are good nesting sites.

Reiterated throughout her talk was the admonition NEVER to use pesticides whether chemical or organic since either will prove detrimental to all of our essential pollinators.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roni Overway

Recording Secretary