

Homer Garden Club

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The next HGC meeting will be February 18 at the Aspen Hotel at 2:00 for both Zoom and in person.

February 2024

Newsletter

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At February 18 HGC Meeting Emily MacDonald Will Present on Soil Health

Emily MacDonald is a Soil Conservationist at the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Homer. NRCS is most commonly known for the High Tunnel Program but works with a wide array of natural resource concerns including forestry, low tunnels, Irrigation, livestock management and fish passage work. She started her career with NRCS in 2019 in South Dakota and moved to Alaska for the position she is currently in during February of 2022. She grew up in the Boston area where her first job was working at a 35 acre organic vegetable farm and continued to work there through college in the summers. She attend Unity College, a small school in rural Maine, and earned a degree in Earth and Environmental Science with a focus on sustainable Agriculture. While in Maine she also

took various odd jobs at a dairy farm and vegetable farms in the area.

She will be presenting on soil health and talking specifically about indicators you can look for in your own garden. Topics covered will include principles of soil health, soil testing, walking through how to evaluated your soil at home, cover crops for all kinds of gardeners and a rainfall simulator demonstration.



Directions for February Zoom meeting are on page 2



Treasurer's Report

by Kendall Dellaesperanza, Treasurer

Homer Garden Club Treasurer's Report for January 2024

Income

Membership \$215.00

Total Income \$215.00

Expenses

Speaker Honorarium \$200.00

Dropbox yearly fee \$119.88

Total Expenses \$319.88

Checking Beginning Balance 1/01/2024	\$	4,601.34
Income	\$	215.00
Expenses	\$	319.88
Interest	\$	0.20
Ending Balance 1/31/2024	\$	4,496.66
Money Market Beginning Balance 1/01/2024	\$	6,116.41
Interest	\$	1.04
Money Market Ending Balance 1/31/2024	\$	6,117.45
CD Beginning Balance 1/01/2024	\$	15,000.00
Interest [received at maturity (02/19/2024)]	\$	-
CD Ending Balance 1/31/2024	\$	15,000.00
Total Ending Balance 1/31/2024	\$	25,614.11



Zoom Mtg & Notes from the HGC President By Kathy Dube'

Happy Halfway to Spring!

Although it doesn't feel very Spring-like at my house – the snowblower and shovels and skis and snowshoes have been getting a real workout. At least it's warmed up enough to go outside. I keep thinking that maybe the really cold weather will kill off some of the pests, but maybe that's wishful thinking (slugs be gone!) Anyway, as usual the February meeting will be a hybrid in-person and Zoom meeting. I will be calling via Zoom myself because I'm in Oregon for three weeks of work. It will give me a chance to test the Zoom meeting platform from the participant end and maybe see if there are any improvements we can make. See you all in person in March (NOTE the March meeting will be one week early, on March 10, due to scheduling conflict with the Aspen hotel).

February Zoom meeting:

Topic: Homer Garden Club February Meeting

Time: Feb 18, 2024 02:00 PM Alaska

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84374580752?pwd=MJRKSXjIQHIOSc5bdYB3bGIUwc7Qil.1>

Meeting ID: 843 7458 0752

Passcode: 617912

OR One tap Mobile call in: +12532050468,,84374580752#,,,,*617912# US



January Meeting Minutes

by Tina Seaton

Homer Garden Club Meeting

Sunday, January 21, 2024 2-4 PM Aspen Hotel

President Kathy Dube' welcomed members and guests to the Garden Club and reminded members to renew their membership.

Secretary's Report - Tina reported that the November Homer Seed bank request for a \$1,000 grant was approved and has been paid. She said the minutes from the November 19 meeting can be found in the beautiful, emailed newsletter which members receive and on the website: homergardenclub.org.

Treasurer's Report – Kendall was unable to attend. Louise reported the total balance of Homer Garden Club accounts is \$25,717.75. Expenses in November included \$1,000 to the Homer Seed Bank. She said there are 78 paid members this year. 54 additional members from last year have not renewed and another 23 from 2022. A question was asked about paying for multiple membership years and Louise said yes, she could keep track of that. Membership continues to be \$10 per year, as it has always been. Peggy Pitman did a review of the 2023 'books' and they are approved.

Committee Reports

Speaker's Committee – Jan introduced Marsha Rouggy, one of the first people she met when she moved to Homer 45 years ago. Always a forager and gatherer, Marsha showed her some spots where strawberries grew wild on the Homer bench and taught her about nettles- how to gather and cook them. They harvested wild rose hips out East End Rd before there were homes and subdivisions, and bonded over their love of berries and growing food. The February presenter will be Emily McDonald from Homer Soil and Water, March is not confirmed yet, but may be Ellie Vande Visse from the Good Earth Garden School, April is Tina Garay on perennials, and May is Brenda Adams on garden design.

Social Committee – Michael said all snack slots are filled up and he thanked everyone who has signed up

Garden Tour– Francie said the Garden tour is scheduled for July 21st with 5 gardens. The Mushroom farm is for members-only, the small garden tour on July 10.

Newsletter – Paula asked for submissions of good gardening articles to share. She said if members have not renewed they will no longer receive the newsletter after this month.

Plant Sale – Sally said to contact her if you want to help with the plant sale.

Scholarship Committee – Scholarship forms have been provided to Homer High School (KPBSD) and the college. The deadline for applications is April 1.

Bylaws/Constitution updates – Jan Holden moved to accept the changes to the Homer Garden Club Constitution and By-laws, as printed in the January newsletter. Sally Coleman seconded the motion. 25 members voted approval, 0 against. The motion carries.

Louise noted that she has Garden Club books, aprons and t-shirts for sale.

Marsha Rouggy gave a presentation on food preservation.

She started with canning: hot water bath canning is for acid foods such as berries, fruit and pickles. Pressure canning is for meat and seafood and low acid vegetables such as beans. Tomatoes need additional acid and can be canned with either method, though she stressed that the two methods are NOT interchangeable. She recommends using the Ball canning book and USDA



recommendations. She said it is not necessary to sterilize jars because 10 minutes in a boiling water bath will sterilize them.

Dehydration - she dries herbs, kale chips, jerky, and fruit leather.

Marsha recommends freezing anything that tastes better that way – ie. frozen beans taste fresher than canned beans. She also suggests canning in the size that you are most likely to use – pints rather than quarts unless you have a large family.

Tomatoes – Marsha drops tomatoes in boiling water, then in ice water to make removing the skin easier, then she roasts them in the oven for an hour to give them more flavor. Harvest the fruit from still vigorous vines in the fall before a frost. They can be kept in a cool place inside to continue ripening. Once ripe they can be canned or frozen whole to be used later.

Vegetables – Marsha stores her carrots, washed & dried and wrapped in towels, then placed in plastic bags and stored in an extra refrigerator. She also washes her potatoes and makes sure they are dry before storing them in a cold space. (make sure they are protected from light, so they don't turn green!) Brussel Sprouts should be harvested after a frost but before a freeze. Cut the stalks and store in a cold

room or root cellar in a bucket with a little water in the bottom.

Jams – Liquid pectin and powdered pectin are not interchangeable. Dry pectin can be bought in a 10 # box (Pacificpectin.com), which is much cheaper than the small boxes (IF you are making a lot of jam!). The Sure Jell boxes contain 1/3 c. of dry pectin. Acid is necessary for pectin to form a gel. Bottled lemon juice can be used as the acid in low acid fruits. Jams need sugar to make sure botulism can't form, though some sugar can be replaced by honey. Marsha roasts apples cut in half or quarters in a large pan, then runs them through a food mill to separate the pulp from the core and stems. The pulp can then be used for applesauce or apple butter. The food mill also works to take the seeds out of currants.

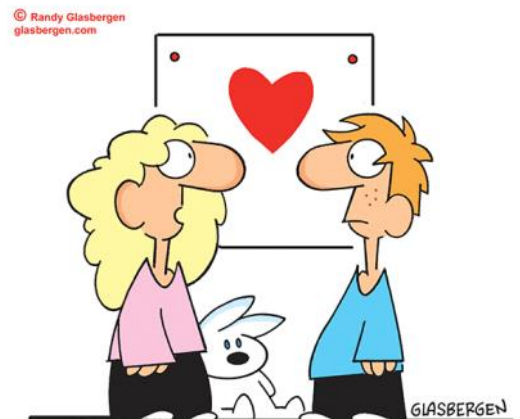
Marsha buys her jars at Walmart, cans her jams during the winter and sells at the Farmer's Market every Saturday. She has 6 freezers that she fills with local fruit and her own chickens, pigs, moose and deer meat.

Marsha noted that the troubleshooting section in the Ball Canning book is a great resource for solving any canning problems.

There were 29 attendees.
Renew your membership!
Next meeting February 18, 2 PM



I didn't let Valentine's Day ruin my diet. I ate the flowers and put the chocolates in a vase.



"Valentine's Day is the holiday where men give presents to the woman they love to make up for the way they screwed up at Christmas."



Tea Bags and Microplastics by Marion Owen, mygarden@alaska.net

Did you know that tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world next to water? (Sorry beer lovers). Tea can be found in almost 80 percent of all U.S. households. If you drink tea, you're in good company. Oprah likes to start every morning by pouring herself a cup of tea. (She takes hers "savory and strong," in case you were wondering.) On any given day, over 159 million Americans are drinking tea. You can understand why tea is a popular Christmas gift.



Now, would that be tea bags or loose tea? While tea bags are more convenient, they have two strikes against them. First, loose leaf tea tends to be much more flavorful than tea bags. Less packaging, too.

But whether you drink tea, beer, or clam juice, you need to hear what I'm about to say...

It has to do with microplastics, tiny plastic particles that are hidden in tea bags. This is no joke you guys. Before you reach for a tea bag, or consider tossing one in your compost pile, let's take a look at microplastics and they might affect you, your garden, and the environment. And then I'll share some simple ways to keep your next cup of tea

microplastic-free.

Before diving in, you need to know that I no longer toss tea bags into my kitchen compost bucket. Am I overreacting?

I'll tell you a story. Several years ago, I was digging around in the garden, preparing to transplant seedlings. Suddenly, an undecomposed tea bag appeared on top of the soil. What the heck, I thought. Why is this *paper* tea bag still here? I started looking into how tea bags are made... I was shocked. Here's what I found out...

Turns out, microplastics aren't just found in brewed tea. According to a BBC report, microplastics spread easily in soils and can end up in the fruits and vegetables we eat. Yikes.

As gardeners, I think you'll find this interesting: Root vegetables like carrots, radishes and turnips absorb more microplastics than leafy vegetables such as lettuce, cabbage and cauliflower.

So imagine sipping your favorite tea, unaware that the bag is shedding plastic particles into the liquid. Suddenly we're not just sipping tea; we're ingesting billions of plastic particles, especially from *plastic* tea bags.

Whether you drink tea, coffee, or beer, there's an elephant in the room: The increasing presence of nano-sized plastics in our food and in the environment is a huge, global

problem. A study in 'Environmental Science & Technology' found that a single plastic tea bag, when steeped in hot water, releases over 11 billion microplastics.

These microplastics don't just stay in our tea. According to Harvard Medicine, we encounter microplastics everywhere -- from trash, dust, fabrics, and cosmetics, to cleaning products, toothpaste, rain, the air we breathe, seafood, produce, table salt... the list goes on.

So it's no surprise that microplastics have been detected throughout the human body, including in the blood, saliva, liver, kidneys, even the placenta.

Rather than end on a downer (not my style), there's hope. Here's a list of 8 action steps you can take to avoid microplastics in tea bags:



1. **Get Loose!** - Choose loose-leaf teas over tea bags, as they usually don't contain any plastic.
2. **Infuse Sustainably** - When brewing your loose tea, use a metal or bamboo tea infuser.

3. **Plastic-Free, Naturally** - Look for tea bags labeled as "plastic-free." However, be cautious; "100% biodegradable" labels may not always guarantee a lack of plastic.

4. **Perform the Tear Test** - Test the tea bag's material by gently tearing it. If it tears easily, it's likely free from plastic. Bags that are difficult to tear or feel stretchy probably contain plastic.

5. **Packaging Patrol** - Avoid tea bags with a glossy or plastic-like appearance, as these often contain plastic elements.

6. **DIY Tea Bags** - Make your own tea bags using natural materials like muslin, hemp, or cotton.

7. **Stay Eco-Enlightened** - Keep updated with news on tea brands transitioning to plastic-free products and advancements in sustainable tea packaging.

8. **Spread the Word** - Share these eco-friendly tea tips with friends.

Remember, knowledge empowers us. Choose plastic-free tea bags, stay updated, and together, we can cultivate a healthier, more sustainable future.

There is no problem on earth that can't be ameliorated by a hot bath and a cup of tea.
- Jasper Fforde

Have a wonderful week. Cheers!

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Explore organic gardening tips and recipes for Kodiak, at:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thegardenerscoach>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/theupbeetgardener/>
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@TheUpBeetGardener>
Do you have a gardening question?
marion@gardenerscoach.com

*****Our Membership Year is October 1st to September 30th*****

THE HOMER GARDEN CLUB MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: _____ Membership Type: Basic(\$10) __ Supporting (\$15) __ Business (\$25) __

Name _____ Phone # _____

You will receive the newsletter by E-Mail. This saves us printing and postage costs. Plus, the E-mailed version is in fabulous color!

E-Mail Address _____

How would you like to participate in the Garden Club *this Membership Year?*
(please check any activities in which you would like to help)

____ Meeting Refreshments ____ Board of Directors ____ Nominating Committee ____ Newsletter
____ Spring Plant Sale ____ Harvest Dinner ____ Baycrest Garden ____ Gardener Tour

Suggestions for future Topics or Speakers _____

Please make check payable to "Homer Garden Club" and mail along with this form to:
Homer Garden Club, P.O. Box 2833, Homer AK 99603