Homer Garden Club General Membership Meeting

 October 22, 2017

The October 22 meeting was called to order at 2:15 by President Francie Roberts. The meeting was delayed because of morning snow and icy roads.

New members, Marion Kinter and Susan Dunson were introduced.

Francie then introduced new officers who were elected at the Harvest Dinner. They are: Francie, President, Tim Quinn, V. P., Peggy Pittman, Treasurer, Roni Overway, Recording Secretary, Jeannette Lawson, Social Secretary, Barbara Kennedy, data base manager, Julie Parizek, Website. Absent were co-V.P. Kathy Dubé, Sharon Froeschle, Historian and Paula Riley, Newsletter.

Francie advised that minutes from the last meeting, held prior to the Harvest Dinner, are available on the website.

Peggy Pittman reported that our fiscal year ended on September 30. Julie Parizek did the required audit. Peggy also reported that the board had passed the budget for the 2017-2018 term. The current balance in the treasury is $17, 254.08. She welcomes questions.

Jeannette gave a quick wrap-up report on Gardeners' Weekend. Over 400 attended the tours, which will now be limited to 400, 288 attended the winery reception, which is now limited going forward to 300. 150 (I & O maximum capacity) attended Ciscoe Morris' talk. Gardeners' Weekend will be held on July 28 and 29, 2018. Five gardens have been selected and a speaker has been engaged.

Francie called attention to the continuing thefts that have occurred at the Baycrest garden and asked that members be aware. Means of monitoring that garden are under discussion and ideas are welcome.

Barbara Kennedy, chair of the plant sale, reported that a date has not yet been set.

Jeannette passed around sign-up sheets for members willing to bring refreshments to club meetings.

Francie announced that Cathy Ulmer would like help with her nominating committee.

Tim said he is following up on suggestions of speakers for upcoming meetings. He also reminded the members that there is no meeting in December. The November meeting will be held early, on November 19, to avoid the Thanksgiving holiday.

Francie reported on ongoing projects: Gardening aprons are being discussed as a fundraising project and companies that make them are being sought. There are only two of the Kachemak Cultivating books left and chapters need to be updated before a new printing can be done. Members are encouraged to sign up to do so. A chapter on high tunnels and preserving the harvest are being considered. Francie had a signup board posted in the room and volunteers are also encouraged to call her.

Francie presented Barbara Kennedy with a belated birthday card, signed by the membership, and flowers and recognized her for her continuing volunteerism with the club.

V.P. Tim Quinn introduced the day's speaker, Marsha Rouggla of Sweet Berries. Marsha was one of the founders of the Homer Farmers' Market and has, for years, preserved veggies, meats, berries etc., by various methods. Her jams and jellies are sold through the Farmers' Market and at craft fairs. Her presentation was titled, "Preserving Homer Harvests".

Marsha grows berries, rhubarb and veggies for her own use as well. Most of her preservation is done with a pressure canner. Her recipe for success has been sticking with the recommendations presented in "The Ball Canning Book" and the 1958 edition of the Kerr book on canning. She also freezes and dehydrates. She showed examples of canned asparagus, tomatoes, jam and even an herb salt. Other food items she harvests and preserves include green beans, apple butter, pesto, chicken and zucchini. She advised that for the best tasting canned tomatoes that they be oven roasted first to preserve flavor, consistency and color. She also recommends following instructions on pectin packages for jams and jellies.

Also discussed were the temperatures at which root vegetables should be stored, between 32 and 40 degrees being optimal, but she has had success with potatoes and onions in her 50 degree crawl space as well. Eliminating light is essential. She recommends refrigerating garlic and said carrots are best stored in the refrigerator as well, but they need air circulation.

In Marsha's high tunnel in she grows kale, lettuce, squash, tomatoes, pole beans, bush beans and herbs. Other vegetables are grown outdoors.

Another product suggestion she had was the use of Plantskidd to deter moose. For her it's been highly successful in keeping moose away from her apple trees. On the subject of her apple harvest, she does not core or peel them, but boils then until they are the right consistency to put through her food mill, which she bought at Ulmers.

Another tip she shared was that she reuses rings and lids from canning jars. If she doesn't tighten the ring too tightly they can be removed without damaging the lid. Reusable bands can be purchased but are much more expensive. She also does not pre-sterilize jars since they will be filled with a boiling mixture and subjected to a hot water bath for 20 to 30 minutes. Questions were then taken.

After the meeting Marsha also provided tastes of several of the foods she preserves. At the end of her presentation the meeting was adjourned at 3:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Roni Overway

Secretary