

# Homer Garden Club

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April 2023

## Newsletter

The next HGC meeting will be held April 16 at 2:00 pm via Zoom or in person at the Aspen Hotel.

### April 16 HGC Meeting will Feature Jason Davis with Sweetgale Meadworks

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Jason Davis grew up in Kasilof and Soldotna in the 1960's and 70's. As a teenager he enjoyed beekeeping, berry-picking (including for AK Wild Berry Products in Homer), and growing flowers and vegetables in his own corner of his dad's big garden. In college he majored in biology, but ended up having a career as a U.S. diplomat, serving at embassies in Tel Aviv, Cairo, Beirut, Jerusalem, Dubai, Malta and Brussels.

It was a grape-growing neighbor in Malta who first helped Jason extend his passion for fermentation into wine-making, and soon Jason and his family were the owners of a small vineyard in nearby Sicily. When the family returned to the Kenai Peninsula after nearly 30 years abroad,



Jason assumed his winemaking days were behind him -- until it occurred to him to try making a wine with raspberries from his Homer garden, supplemented with honey from his own beehives. When applying for a license to sell his berry wines commercially, he learned that the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms requires honey-based wines to be sold as "mead" rather than wine -- and with that

Sweetgale Meadworks came into being.

Jason will talk about his experiences as a winemaker and grape-grower in Malta and Sicily, and more recently as a "mazer" (mead-maker) at Sweetgale

*(Continued on page 3)*

The April 16 meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Zoom and also in person. Directions for the Zoom meeting are on page 2

# Treasurer's Report

by Louise Ashmun, Treasurer

## Treasurer Report March 2023 (FY 2022-23)

### Income

Membership	\$25.00	
Book Sales	\$141.94	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b><u>\$166.94</u></b>

### Expenses

Meeting Venue	\$150.00	
Meeting Speaker	\$200.00	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b><u>\$350.00</u></b>

Checking Beginning Balance 03/01/2023	\$	11,734.72
Income	\$	166.94
Expenses	\$	350.00
Transfer to MM	\$	6,000.00
Interest	\$	0.25
Ending Balance 03/31/2023	\$	5,551.91
Money Market Beginning Balance 03/01/2023	\$	15,097.42
Transfer from Checking	\$	6,000.00
Interest	\$	4.44
Money Market Ending Balance 03/31/2023	\$	21,101.86
<b>Total Ending Balance 03/31/2023</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>26,653.77</b>

# Instructions for Zoom Meeting April 16

by Kathy Dube'

**Yay, It's Spring!!!! ..... Wait, it's Not ..... Wait, it IS Spring .... Wait, it's Snowing AGAIN.....**

Happy Alaska Springtime everyone! I know that it will eventually decide that Spring is here to stay and skiing and snowshoeing will be done and we can all get out in our gardens with spades instead of snow shovels. I am still looking at 2 feet of snow in my garden, but have gotten a few seeds started and planted all those Spring bulbs in pots that I optimistically bought and didn't quite make it into the garden before the ground froze hard and then forgot in the corner of my cold storage area. The green sprouts coming up give me hope that the snow will eventually melt and I can put the starts into real soil.

We have another great presentation scheduled for our April meeting, and then in May we will have the

Baycrest Garden cleanup and the annual Plant Sale to look forward to. Please join us in person at the Aspen Hotel on Sunday April 16 at 2 PM or on Zoom for our April meeting.

Zoom link: Homer Garden Club April Meeting  
Time: Apr 16, 2023 02:00 PM Alaska  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81653182068?pwd=dktXZTF4aElzbXZVNkt3Rkt3UEdmQT09>  
Meeting ID: 816 5318 2068  
Passcode: 341969  
One tap mobile:  
+12532050468,,81653182068#,,,,\*341969# US



(Jason Davis, SweetgaleMeadworks  
Continued from page 1)

Meadworks and Cider House on Main Street in Homer. He will also discuss his passion for the arctic bramble, or nagoonberry (*Rubus arcticus*) and his efforts to cultivate it for wine making, and touch on other locally farmed and foraged ingredients that he uses in his award-winning meads.



## Invasive Plants—Bonus Speaker

**Jen Chauvet, Homer Soil & Water Conservation Service**

**As a bonus for the April HGC meeting,** Jen Chauvet with Homer Soil and Water Conservation Service will give a short presentation on invasive plants as described below

### **A Garden Free from Invasive Plants: How Can We Help You?**

Invasive plants threaten our native ecosystems and wildlife, and can invade your garden. Ironically,

some of Alaska's most troublesome invasive plants were originally introduced as ornamentals. Some even remain available for purchase at local plant retailers and online. The Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (KP-CISMA) wants to keep these plants off our shelves, out of our gardens, and out of our wild spaces. And we need your help! As a gardener, how can we support you in your efforts to maintain a yard

free from invasive plants? As a plant retailer, what kinds of resources might help you make informed decisions about avoiding invasive plants in your business?

We'd love to hear your ideas, needs, and wish list items. Your feedback will be valuable in informing our community outreach and support efforts.

The individuals who will be providing the refreshments for the April meeting are Roni Overway, Marie Williams, and Millie Lewis. Thanks so much ladies.



# Ulmer's

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**March Meeting Minutes** **by Connie Cavasos, Secretary**

Homer Garden Club  
 Membership Meeting at  
 Aspen Hotel and via Zoom  
 March 19, 2023

Business meeting called to order  
 by President Kathy Dube'

Announcements – Brenda: Alaska  
 Master Gardener's Conference in  
 Anchorage April 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.  
 Jan: March 30 will be presentation  
 by USDA in conjunction with Soil &  
 Water Conservation on invasive  
 species being held at KPC Homer.

Secretaries Report – Kathy:  
 Minutes of last meeting in the  
 newsletter, nothing else to report.

Treasurers Report – Louise: Total  
 of \$26,832.14 in Club accounts;  
 moved \$10,000 to \$15,000 into the  
 Money Market.

Committee Reports  
**Gardeners Weekend** –  
 Francie: Scheduled for July 16  
 with 5 unique and beautiful gar-  
 dens. Tickets are \$15 and will be  
 for sale on June 1 and at the Plant

Sale. Looking for volunteers, Annie  
 has a sign-up sheet. The after par-  
 ty will be Tuesday evening July 18  
 for garden owners, volunteers,  
 BOD and guests; location will be  
 announced next month. We have  
 chosen to not have a speaker this  
 year. Members of the committee  
 are Annie Oberlittner, Francie Rob-  
 erts, Nicky Szarzi, Patti Jay, Ruth  
 Dickerson and Susan McLane.  
 Reach out to any of them for volun-  
 teer opportunities for the garden  
 tours.

**Speakers** – Jan: April will  
 be Jason Davis from Sweetgale  
 Meadworks, for May we'll have  
 Beth Van Sandt to speak on Peo-  
 nies, growing and propagation. For  
 next October looking to put togeth-  
 er a panel of guests for gardening  
 Q &A; would like 4 or 5, if anyone is  
 interested in being on the panel,  
 contact Jan Peyton.

**Baycrest Garden** – Bren-  
 da: We will work on the garden  
 May to October, need volunteers to  
 work in pairs once a week for  
 weeding and maintenance, please  
 let Brenda know if you'd like to vol-  
 unteer. The spring cleaning will

happen May 13, the week before  
 the plant sale.

**Plant Sale** – Kathy: Will be  
 May 20<sup>th</sup> at the Chamber office.

**Social** – Kathy: Michael  
 has volunteers signed up for  
 snacks for the next 2 meetings.

**Data Base** – Barb: We  
 have 118 members. Francie:  
 Looks like we still have the largest  
 garden club in the state.

**Charitable Giving**  
**Workgroup** – Kathy: Finalization  
 is still ongoing.

Kathy adjourns business meeting

Jan Peyton introduces Lindsay Ol-  
 sen, co-owner of Spinnaker Sea  
 Farms, a seaweed farm in Jakolof  
 Bay.



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## Gardener's Weekend

by Francie Roberts

### Summer Garden Tour News

Mark your calendar for Sunday, July 16th! We have five great gardens this year. Gardens range from tiny specialty gardens to one of Homer's premier gardens.

Tickets, at the cost of \$15, will go on sale to members at the May meeting. They will also be sold at the Plant Sale in May. After that tickets may be purchased at the Homer Book Store starting June 1st.

As always, volunteers are an important part of the making this event successful. Garden hosts and ticket sellers are needed. You can sign up at the April or May meeting of the Homer Garden Club. You can also email [annobe@gmail.com](mailto:annobe@gmail.com) to volunteer.

The afterparty this year will be Tuesday, July 18th in the late afternoon. All volunteers are welcome to attend and bring a friend.

## Plant Sale

by Julie Parizek

It's April already and time to start thinking about the HGC Plant Sale!!! It will be on **May 20<sup>th</sup>** at the Chamber again this year. As I am writing this, I am still in Arizona wishing I was home planting my seeds and getting an early start on the growing season! Please remember us when you are planting your flower and veggie seeds and dividing those perennials that seem to take over or come up in places where they are not intended in the Spring. As you all know, this is our largest fund-raiser of the year and depends entirely on our members' contributions.

For those of you who haven't helped in the past, we start setting up at about 9:00am but that is entirely dependent on the weather. We always have to set up tables but if the weather is not inclement we don't

need the tents and that requires a lot less time and effort! The sale starts at 11:00 and is over *by* noon. Cleanup is generally finished by 12:30-1:00. My point is that we are always looking for volunteers to help setup, move plants to the tables as they come in, cashier and tear down. If we have enough help most would only need to work for 30-45 minutes and it's a lot of fun!

If you would like to volunteer, you can reach me either by email ([j3parizek@outlook.com](mailto:j3parizek@outlook.com)) or by text (907-299-0343). Also, if you have a lot of plants to donate that need moving or divided and would like some help, let me know and I will put something together! Happy Gardening!!





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## Plants Talking

by Katherine J. Wu, *Smithsonian Magazine*

### Plants May Let Out Ultrasonic Squeals When Stressed

Human ears can't hear them, but other plants or animals might.

Microphones picked up ultrasonic sounds produced when tomato or tobacco plants were cut or dried out.

If a drought-parched plant lets out a scream, but it's at a frequency too high to hear, does it count as a cry of distress? According to a study posted on the preprint server bioRxiv last week, the answer could very well be yes. (And we're not talking about folklorish mandrakes.)

For the first time, researchers appear to have evidence that, like animals, plants can audibly vocalize their agony when deprived of water or forced to endure bodily harm. The study, which has yet to be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, adds another dimension to scientists' growing understanding

of how plants detect and interact with their surroundings—despite lacking many of the sensory organs their faunal counterparts deploy.

In recent years, it's become abundantly clear that plants are far more sensitive than researchers once gave them credit for. They respond when touched by insects, turn toward sources of light, and some even sniff out other plants. Others are even sensitive to anesthetics, suggesting that they're capable of experiencing something akin to "pain."

"Plants are not just robotic, stimulus-response devices," Frantisek Baluska of the University of Bonn in Germany told Joanna Klein at the *New York Times* last year.

"They're living organisms which have their own problems." Actually making that anguish audible, however, is another matter entirely. To test that possibility, a team led by Itzhak Khait, a plant scientist at Tel Aviv University in Israel, placed microphones capable of detecting ultrasonic frequencies four inches from tomato and tobacco

plants, then either stopped watering them or snipped their stems. Measuring in the range of 20 to 150 kilohertz, the researchers found that even happy, healthy plants made the occasional noise. But when cut, tobacco plants emitted an average of 15 sounds within an hour of being cut, while tomato plants produced 25 sounds. Stress from drought—brought on by up to ten days without water—elicited about 11 squeals per hour from the tobacco plants, and about 35 from the tomato plants.

The shrieks were also surprisingly informative. When the team fed the recordings into a machine learning model, it was able to use the sounds' intensity and frequency to distinguish whether they were related to dryness or physical harm, or were just regular, day-to-day chatter. One odd pattern? Thirsty tobacco makes a bigger ruckus than tobacco that's been snipped, reports Adam Vaughan at *New Scientist*. Researchers aren't yet sure how plants produce these sounds, but Khait and his colleagues propose

*(Continued on page 7)*

one possibility in their paper. As water travels through the plants' xylem tubes, which help keep them hydrated, air bubbles will form and explode, generating small vibrations. Previous studies have picked up these waves, but only through devices attached directly to plants. Still, the process, called cavitation, could explain longer-range sound production as well, as Edward Farmer, a plant biologist at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland who wasn't involved in the study, tells Vaughan. But Farmer also remains cautious about the recordings, which may have picked up ambient noise as well. Even drying soil can produce faint sounds, reports Nicolette Lanese for *Live Science*.

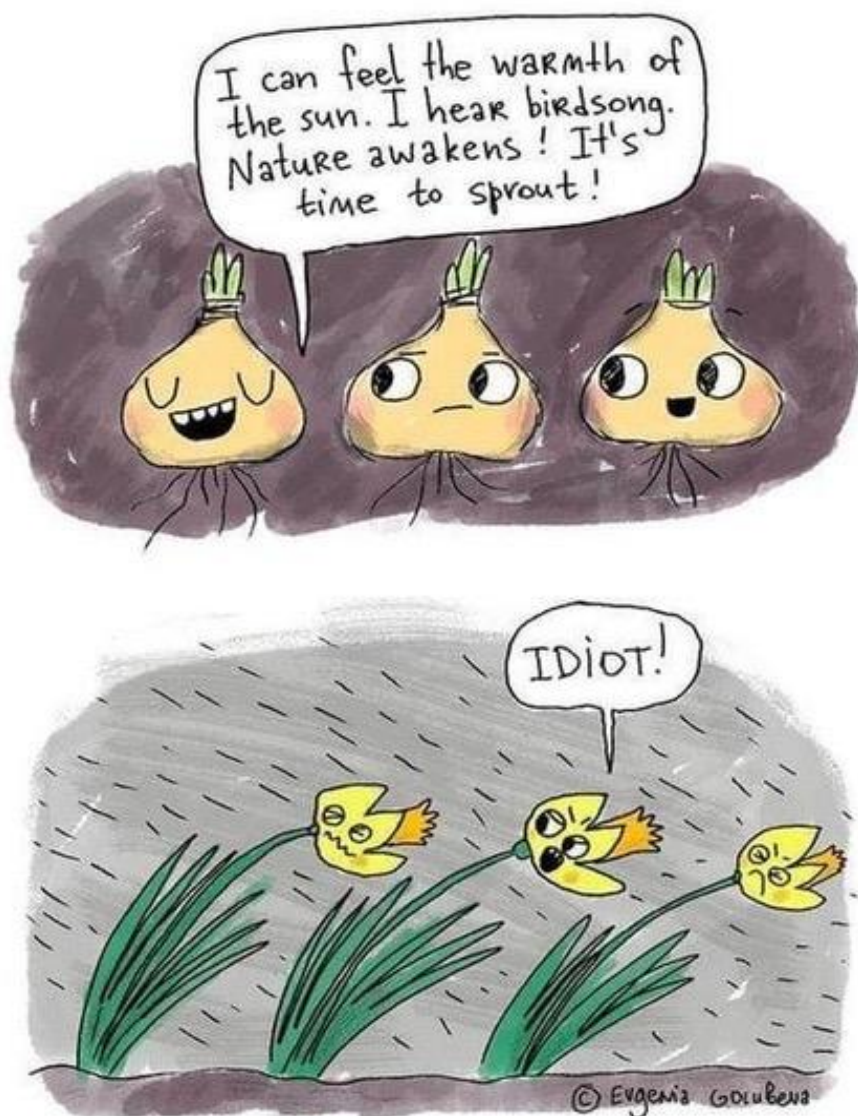
All this stress-induced "screaming" wasn't in a range detectable by human ears. But organisms that can hear ultrasonic frequencies—like mice, bats or perhaps other plants—could hear the plants' cries from as far as 15 feet away.

It's not yet clear how ubiquitous stressed squeals are among plants, though the researchers have started to listen in on some other species. Plants also experience many kinds of stress, such as those brought on by extreme temperatures or salinity, and may not always react in the same way, Anne Visscher, a plant biologist at the Royal Botanic Gardens in the United Kingdom who wasn't involved in the study, told Vaughan. And any ideas on what purpose the sounds might serve—from warning other plants to passing information onto animals—remains speculative, she adds. For now, it's useful to simply know what plants are truly capable of. Something to chew on, perhaps, the next time you're pruning your tomato plants.

## Katherine J. Wu |

December 9, 2019

Katherine J. Wu is a Boston-based science journalist and Story Collider senior producer whose work has appeared in *National Geographic*, *Undark* magazine *Popular Science* and more. She holds a Ph.D. in Microbiology and Immunobiology from Harvard University, and was *Smithsonian* magazine's 2018 AAAS Mass Media Fellow..



Many fermented beverages claim to be the oldest fermented beverage, with wine and beer being common contenders for the title. Unfortunately, since there is a lack of archaeological research into the history of mead, mostly because of the lack of commercial interest, mead makers don't have much in the way of evidence to fight for the title. However, mead makers can count on the fact that honey was the first logical fermentable ingredient to work with.

There is much debate and speculation about the true history of mead since it has appeared all over the world in different civilizations. In fact, people from paupers to pharaohs have been enjoying the nectar of the gods for millennia. Since there is no definitive history of mead, here are just three examples of its possible origin:

### **1. Mead originated in the African bush more than 20,000 years**

**ago.**

According to this version of history, mead was created in the hollowed-out crowns of the Baobab and Miombo trees. During the dry season, wild bees would nest in the hollows of the trees and make honey; during the rainy season, the hollows would fill up with water. By combining water, honey, yeast, and time, mead was born that was then collected by early African tribes and bushmen. In addition, the knowledge of making mead was taken by those that left Africa to travel the world.

### **2. Mead originated 8,000 years ago on the Island of Crete.**

Currently, the oldest known record of mead is the Sanskrit Rig-Veda of Ancient India, and Plato has also mentioned in his writings that the Greeks practiced mead making as well. Within the last few centuries BC, Africa, Europe, and Asia were also enjoying mead and writing about it. Meanwhile, early Celts,

Scandinavians, and Mayans were mythologizing mead and using it for its mystical or religious qualities.

### **3. Some person simply found a random beehive filled with rain-water and was hooked.**

In this version of the myth, there is never any real detail about when or where mead was discovered but it's clear that it happened by accident. Once the first lucky mead drinker had a taste of the sweet liquid, it was likely that they began the intricate art of mead making to replicate the taste. It was common for mead to also be used in religious practices because it was believed to have mystic qualities.

As you can see, although no one knows for sure when and how exactly mead originated, it has been enjoyed by people all over the world for thousands of years. Here's to hoping that people around the world will continue enjoying this unique beverage for millennia more!

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