Homer Garden Club General Meeting

May 27, 2018

President Francie Roberts called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM. She began by having new members introduce themselves. We had three new visitors.

Next Francie asked how everyone's gardens are coming along. Among the plants lost to the freeze- thaw winter were sedums and a Canadian violet.

The membership was referred to the website for minutes from the last meeting. Peggy Pittman, treasurer, gave her report. The club has, for the second year in a row, received a generous $500.00 contribution, from anonymous donors. The plant sale profit after expenses was $1660.00. She also announced that we have rack cards to distribute and a storage facility has been rented for club items that have, for the last 30 years, been stored in members' homes. The balance in the treasury is $15,265.32.

Francie announced that the approved donation to the Farmers' Market was made in the amount of $1,000.00. The club will be acknowledged on a banner at the market.

The question of whether to move club meetings from the last Sunday in the month to the third was briefly discussed. This was to avoid holidays like Thanksgiving and Memorial Day weekend. A show of hands indicated that the club was overwhelmingly in favor. That result will be taken to the board for action.

Jeannette and Roni gave a Gardeners' Weekend report, Jeannette asking for more volunteers in certain positions and Roni advising that talk tickets would be available to members after the meeting. The Baycrest Garden project also needs some more volunteers to sign up for the weeks of June 10th, July 8th and the month of September.

Francie then presented a farewell gift from the club to Jeannette Lawson who has been a valuable member of the club for the last two years as co-chair of Gardeners' Weekend, Social Secretary, and as an active board member helping with rack card production, the research and purchase of the new security camera at the Baycrest pullout and various other time-consuming tasks. She will be missed by the entire cub. The gift was a pottery "cookie" jar filled with flower and veggie seed packets signed by grateful members. The social secretary position will be filled by Renee Patten beginning with the Harvest Dinner in September when other elections will be held.

Francie also announced we will need a new president. Cathy Ulmer could also use help on the nominating committee.

Kathy reported on progress with the Kachemak Cultivating book. Although she has now formatted the text, work still needs to be done on the cover and index pages.

Yarrow Hinnant, who is working on cleaning up the Pratt Museum's garden, announced volunteer opportunities this summer for those interested in helping out. He will be there on Thursdays from 11 to 4 or you can call him when you're available. Information will be published in the June newsletter. His partner, Carolyn Westbrook, also announced that volunteer gardeners would be welcome to assist with the garden at Haven House. Barbara said that left over plants from the plant sale were donated to Haven House.

Shirley Forquer invited members to stop by her house off of Bear Creek Drive to see her spring garden. There were no further announcements.

Vice President, Kathy Dube', then introduced the May speaker, Dr. Jodi Anderson, who spoke on composting and soil development. Jodi is also the Farm to School coordinator for the State of Alaska.

Beginning with the statement that "Dirt is soil that's not where it's supposed to be", Jodi defined soil as a living, breathing thing and that it's study includes chemistry, biology, geology and even physics. She began her career as a biologist but is now a soil physicist. After summarizing where her research has taken her, she began her presentation by explaining how one can determine if pallets are appropriate/ safe to use in composting. Pallet treatment codes can be found on the internet ([**www.1001pallets.com/pallet-safety**](http://www.1001pallets.com/pallet-safety)**)** with HT (heat treated) and DB (debarked) being safe to use. Others may include properties including chemicals which are not safe to use. Next, she simply began taking questions from the audience.

The audience had questions related to composting fish, what cardboard to avoid and volcanic soil. Homer soil, she said, is generally in the 5.5 range and is thus acidic. Her recommendation is the addition of lime, lime, lime. The Extension Service has information about shifting pH. Lime is depleted in about 5 years so she suggests adding it every year. Powdered forms work well, while pelletized takes longer to breakdown. It should be mixed into the soil about 4" down but should not be tilled in as that process interferes with the food web found below that level. Use of a broad fork or other tools that mix just the top 4 inches are best. Whether lime should be added in the spring or fall is a personal decision.

Asked about adding coffee grounds, she said that for the addition of nitrogen and capturing heat it's a good thing.

Speaking to the issue of gardening in soil which includes volcanic ash, Jodi stated that ash really "messes" with phosphorus. It forms artificial clay particles that hold on to phosphorus so that it doesn't leach into the soil. So, what do you do? You can add green sand (phosphorus) but here she advises that it not be broadcast but used to side-dress plants at their base. Jodi also recommended fish bone meal and bone meal as other good sources of phosphorus. When asked how often a person should have soil tested, she recommended that you just watch your plants. If not performing optimally, have soil tested.

With a small amount of moistened soil, Jodi demonstrated how to determine whether soil is sandy (by rubbing it between fingers and imagining it in the mouth) and thus supplies good drainage, silt, which sticks together when rolled in the hand, and clay with tiny particles which allow little if any drainage. A mix including 18% clay will allow you to roll it in your hand, then form a circle with it which doesn't immediately break. Both sand and "fluff "(compost) are needed to fulfill soil requirements.

When asked about dandelions she said that they naturally supply N,P and K to the soil so they should be taken advantage of!!

Advantages of compost is that bacteria is already there so no inoculants are needed. Good compost can't be killed and will usually supply a neutral pH. The recommended ratio of brown (supplying carbon) and green (supplying nitrogen, carbon and oxygen) plant matter is 3 : 1. It should be put down in the following order: carbon, nitrogen/carbon/nitrogen and finally carbon again. That last carbon application should provide about 8" of cover which also serves as a visual barrier to help deter foraging critters.

Dry hay and fish take about 11 days to deteriorate. Temperature should reach about 140 degrees (measured in the center of the pile) in a few days. This temp. kills bad bugs and weed seeds. At 160-170, good bacteria will die. If the pile seems too wet, carbon should be added. In 10 - 15 days the temp. usually drops, then the pile can be turned and watered. She recommends that the pile not be used until the next year since that's when good things begin to happen: the heat evaporates the moisture and the compost can be fluffed up. Also, this extra year allows the fungi to break down the woody particles. Putting compost on too early will cause the bacteria to pull nitrogen out of the soil as decomposition continues. She did strongly recommend that kitchen scraps NOT be added periodically after the initial pile has been built, since the processes must then begin again.

The meeting lasted until about 4:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roni Overway

Recording Secretary