

Newsletter

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The next meeting of the Homer Garden Club will be a Zoom meeting February 20 at 2:00 pm.

Homer Garden Club

February 2022

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The Zoom Meeting February 20 will feature Debbie Hinchey discussing fruit grown locally

Debbie Hinchey has been working in various aspects of the Alaskan horticulture industry since 1974. After receiving an Interdisciplinary Master of Science in Horticulture from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1985 she began her landscape horticulture business. She is a founding member of the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association (1985), Alaska Native Plant Society (~1978), Cook Inlet Bonsai Study Group (late-1990s) and Alaska Botanical Gardens (~1983). Currently she maintains the Centennial Rose Garden, and is active in the Herb Study Group, Anchorage, Pacific Region, and National Garden Clubs, and others.

Debbie will give an introduction to the many common and not so common types of fruit that are grown in south-



central Alaska (mostly knows about Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Valley.) She also will give us some growing tips and discuss the "technical"

terms commonly used in catalogs.



(c) Debbie Hinchey

Instructions for attending the February Zoom Meeting are on Page 2



Treasurer Report

by Louise Ashmun, Treasurer

January 2022

Income

Book Sales	\$261.94	
Membership	\$140.00	
Total Income		<u>\$401.94</u>

Expenses

Drop Box Storage		
for recorded meeting videos	\$119.88	
Bank Fee	\$5.00	
Total Expenses		<u>\$124.88</u>

Checking Beginning Balance 01/01/2022	\$	6,618.56
Income	\$	401.94
Expenses	\$	124.88
Interest	\$	0.28
Ending Balance 01/31/2022	\$	6,895.90
Money Market Beginning Balance 01/01/2022	\$	15,071.81
Interest	\$	1.28
Money Market Ending Balance 01/31/2022	\$	15,073.09
Total Ending Balance 01/31/2022	\$	<u>21,968.99</u>

February 20, 2:00 pm, Garden Club Meeting via Zoom

Hope everyone is braving the winter/snows and at least looking through seed catalogs for inspiration of Spring. Looking forward to chatting with everyone at our February Zoom meeting. Below is the link to the Zoom meeting. As always, we will have a short business meeting first and then enjoy the speaker (hopefully!) If you click on the link it should get you directly into the meeting, or you can go to Zoom on your web browser and type in the meeting ID and passcode. See you then!

Topic: Homer Garden Club - February 2022
 Time: Feb 20, 2022 02:00 PM Alaska

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87545817680?pwd=VEdvaWR4VUV3Z3hGcDNCL1ZJVjgyUT09>

Meeting ID: 875 4581 7680

Passcode: 650182

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,87545817680#,,,,*650182# US (Houston)

+17207072699,,87545817680#,,,,*650182# US (Denver)



January Meeting Minutes

by Connie Cavasos, Secretary

Homer Garden Club
Membership Meeting via Zoom
January 16, 2022

Meeting called to order by President Kathy Dube' at 2:05

26 attendees; no new announcements

Secretaries Report – Nothing to report

Treasurers Report – Louise Ashmun: We have \$21,690 in our total bank resources, so we are doing well despite COVID and lack of face to face meetings. Want everyone to know that we are staying abreast of everything. Bills in the budget are being paid. Brenda: Rather large bank account, are there any plans to spend some money on anything in particular? Louise: No big money plans, we have the \$1,000 scholarship and we generally have about \$2,000 we make in donations to various projects within the city. Last year we did make a small \$250 donation, but we didn't have some of the big things we usually do because of COVID. Last year's plant sale yielded almost \$3,000 in profits which was mind boggling.

Committees:

Gardeners Weekend – Francie Roberts: Planning first gardener's tour for the third weekend in July, large like we've had in the past. We are also planning a smaller event for HGC members only, similar to the one last year, one or two weekends after. We are in preliminary stages of planning, more details to come but we think we will have some very interesting gardens to see.

Brenda Adams: Are you planning walk-about type gardens like a couple of years ago? Francie: For the big event we are planning a healthy garden event.
Ruth Dickerson: We like the idea of connecting quite a few gardens and make use of some trails.

Speakers Committee – Jan Peyton: The speaker today (Jaime Rodriquez) hasn't come on board for today. Next month Debbie Hinche from Anchorage will be presenting on what fruits grow well in Anchorage and our area. March will be Brenda talking about garden design. Brenda: Would like some feedback on different options, one would be art and viewing the garden as an art form. The other is colors in the garden, what colors go well with others. Consensus is for

the second option – colors. Michael Murray asked if timing of when things bloom and whether to cut back or not could be incorporated. Brenda will address much of this with the color scheme theme.

Baycrest Gardens – Brenda: Volunteered to co-chair the committee. Last year the clean-up was the same weekend as the plant sale and it went well. The clean-up usually happens in early May. Then we ask for two people to sign up for maintenance each week. We will have sign-up sheets here in another two months or so; March newsletter would be a good time to get the word out and start the process of people picking their weeks.

Social Committee – Michael Murray: Looking forward to having live meetings again to provide snacks.

Data Base Report – Barbara Kennedy: Just sent renewal notices to everybody, there were 55 people who voted for our board members so have their membership renewed with another 20 paid members in addition. Everyone needs to pay their dues by next month so you can continue to get the newsletter, attend the members only gardener's weekend and hear all of our speakers.

Newsletter – Paula Riley: Encouraging people to send in commercial or self written articles; always looking for interesting items for the newsletter.

Plant Sale – Jan: Julie Parizak and Jan have volunteered to take charge. Waiting to see what the weather does to finalize date, possibly end of May.

Scholarship – Kathy: Anyone interested in gardening and learning how to garden, the \$1,000 scholarship is available. Francie: The committee has everything organized. Preferential for high school graduates, but anyone can apply who wants to learn more. There is a fine line between businesses and individuals who want to further themselves.

Guest speaker still not present so Francie has graciously volunteered to do a slide presentation on Biosphere 2 in Arizona as generated by Tony Burgess.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30



Planting Fruit Trees

by Elmer Kidd, Stark Bro's Chief Production Officer (retired)

Few things in life bring the same satisfaction as planting fruit trees. Learn to avoid future problems by following simple planning steps before you plant.

When it comes to planting fruit trees, we can never stress enough the importance of the planning stage. This includes choosing the best spot for your new planting above the ground and below the ground. We highly recommend that you contact your local utility department before digging to prevent damage to cables, pipes, and other underground structures. Too often we encounter troubles because we act first and think later. That's why, when planting an orchard or even a few trees in the back yard, it's a good idea to take a step back and visualize how our efforts will look 10 years from now. Remember, the time difference between a vegetable garden and productive fruit trees can be years! It's also well worth the wait, so, to start things off right, let's avoid future problems by considering a few key things before planting.

I. The Planting Site

Have you chosen a place free of interference? Is it far enough from power lines, sewer lines, sidewalks, etc.? Visualize your tree 10 years from now in the location you've chosen, and ask yourself those questions.

1. What is the mature height & width of my tree?
2. Is the planting site far enough away from power lines? Sewers? Sidewalks?
3. Will the tree branches interfere with other trees growing nearby?
4. Does my planting site get 5-8 hours of sunlight?

5. Is my planting site well-drained, or does it hold water?
6. Does my planting site have fertile soil, or will I need to amend it with a medium like coco-fiber or compost?

If your tree could talk, it would ask for a well-drained, fertile location with plenty of sunlight. While a full day's sun is great, trees can still thrive and produce on a half-day's light; and most trees are forgiving of imperfect soil conditions. If your ground is a little heavy, consider using coco-fiber medium. Just drop the brick into 1 1/3 gallons of warm/hot water, 30 minutes before planting. When refilling the hole, work the coco-fiber into the soil and finish planting. This will give the root system air and allow for water absorption as the roots develop.

II. Digging the Hole

When digging the hole, a good rule of thumb is to remove a space nearly twice the width and depth of the roots. You don't want the roots cramped or circled. The area you loosen is the area the roots will quickly grow into to anchor and sustain the tree's top. This simple task helps determine both how good the foundation will be years later and how well the plant utilizes two much-needed ingredients: air and water.

III. Planting the Tree

The Soil

You know the soil you dug up first, right underneath the grass? When refilling your planting hole, it's always best to place that soil in first.

It's usually more fertile, as well as more porous, and when placed down near the roots, it will help the tree grow better. The remaining soil (from the bottom of the dug hole) is heavier and works well



when mixed with the Coco-Fiber Medium. From top to bottom, work the soil with your hands to avoid large clods that create air pockets

Graft Placement

When you refill your planting hole, hold the tree up a bit to allow loose soil to fall beneath, as well as around the sides of, the roots. Center its position so there is adequate space on all sides for the root system to grow out. If you are planting a dwarf or semi-dwarf apple tree, hold the bud union up above the refill line – this is the "bump" above the root system of the tree where the rootstock was grafted to the varietal top. If given the opportunity, grafted apple trees will self-root; if the variety self-roots, you'll lose the size-restrictive nature of the rootstock. *(Did you know the rootstock is responsible for the mature size of your tree, i.e. dwarf, semi-dwarf, standard? We don't want to lose that sizing characteristic — it would definitely throw a rock in your long-term plan!)*

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Finishing Touches

Through the process, keep the tree straight (perpendicular) and, upon finishing, tamp the tree in with your foot to remove air spaces and seal it in. If the tree is planted on a slope, create a slight berm on the lower side to utilize water throughout the summer. If it's not pre-pruned before you plant it, be sure to prune your tree, and water it well.

There are few things in life that have the sustainability and bring the same satisfaction as growing a fruit tree. The years following be spent measuring the tree's progress and reaping its rewards. That's a "10-year" vision – yep! I saw the future before I began; how about you?



Building a Fruit Tree Guild

by Stark Bros., The Growing Guide

How to Build a Permaculture Fruit Tree Guild

Maximize your growing space and create a thriving edible oasis with a fruit tree guild!

What is a Fruit Tree Guild?

A fruit tree guild is a permaculture technique based on natural ecosystems, like what you would find in the forest. A guild is a community of plants that grow and support each other by recycling nutrients back into the soil, providing shade and conserving water, attracting beneficial insects, repelling pests and diseases, building soil, and preventing erosion. You can have a standalone tree guild or link them together with fruit bushes and other trees to form a food forest. Permaculture principles guide home growers to stray away from conventional orchard rows. Instead, incorporate other edible plants around your tree, ensuring



each plant works together for the benefit of the others, for the environment, and for you! Think of it as companion planting taken to the next level.

Benefits of a Fruit Tree Guild

Permaculture gardens and fruit tree guilds are perfect for small spac-

es. By imitating nature, you promote a healthy eco-system with a variety of productive plants in a garden of any size.

Diversity attracts bacteria, fungi, insects, and birds. Incorporating

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edibles, medicinal plants, and flowering plants to grow alongside your tree allows those natural processes to take place—which ends up reducing your overall workload in the garden.

Watering is more efficient, due to weed suppression and decreased erosion. In addition, some companion plants may be able to shield your growing fruit tree from sunscald and wind.

Building a Fruit Tree Guild

Don't be intimidated—just start with your tree and work your way out. Be sure to plant a fruit tree that thrives in your zone. For smaller gardens, choose a dwarf fruit tree or a small berry bush as the central element to your guild. You will want to consider how much space it will need and the shade it will create as it matures when selecting locations for other perennials.



Step 1: Preparing your space

Decide what shape you want your guild. Then, prepare the area around your fruit tree. You can start with a circle around your tree—reaching out to where the canopy of the mature tree's size will reach. Dig out the grass and weeds of your site. If you want good drainage, consider terracing the ground.

Once your guild has its shape, do a soil test to see if amendments are needed for nutrients. All soils are different. Nutrient levels, which are necessary for plant growth—as well

as soil pH, texture, and structure—vary from site to site. It is hard to know what your soil needs without knowing what is there already. Soil tests are the way to find this information.

To give your guild an extra kickstart, consider adding a layer of compost and soil (around 5 inches deep) but keep it away from the tree trunk. Then, add a thick layer of mulch like wood chips.

Step 2: Choosing your plants

There is no single formula for the perfect tree guild. If you see a need in your garden, experiment with different perennials until you find a system that works. Typically, a guild consists of nitrogen fixers, repellents, attractors, suppressors, mulchers, and accumulator plants.

Nitrogen-fixing plants—Planting “fixers” will be the source of fertilizer for your fruit tree. Fixers refer to plants that are nitrogen-fixing, meaning that they add nitrogen to the soil as they grow. These can be silverberry, goumi, and pretty much any legume (clover, peas, lentils, etc.)

Plants for pollinators and pest control—Attracting the right insects can be crucial for the overall health of your fruit trees. Plant flowers as attractors for pollinators and repellents, like garlic, that will deter deer and other pests.

Suppressors—Suppress the weeds and decrease water needs with a ground cover—such as strawberries, clover, or mint.

Mulchers & Accumulators—Accumulators rejuvenate soil by pulling up more nutrients. Mulchers, when cut and sprinkled around the tree, hold in moisture and reduce watering needs. The most used plant in permaculture design is comfrey. It is a hardy perennial, easy to care for, and it doubles as a mulcher and an accumulator.

Transforming Your Space

Remember your fruit tree guild or any plant guild can take many shapes. Keep in mind, as your fruit tree grows, your guild will transform and evolve. As your plants mature, you will notice increased yields and plant productivity. Some plants may need to be transplanted due to increased shade. Experiment and find what works in your garden—just don't forget to grow garden plants that not only help your tree, but those you enjoy growing as well.

With this permaculture method your fruit tree will be healthy and in the long run it will save you some time on maintenance. Start building your very own food forest beginning with a fruit tree guild. You will love the natural, lush look of your garden!

A list of helpful plants:

Suppressor Plants: red clover, squash, pumpkins, rhubarb, strawberries, nasturtiums

Attractor Plants: edible herbs like fennel, dill, lavender, and orriander or flowers like salvia, sunflowers and yarrow

Pest Repelling Plants: onion, garlic, daffodils, marigold, oregano, chives

Accumulators: borage, comfrey, chickweed, yarrow, stinging nettle, strawberries, sorrel, vetch, supine, tansy

Mulcher Plants: comfrey, hostas, rhubarb



Nitrogen Fixers: goumi, silverberry, all legumes (clovers, beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas, peanuts, etc.)