**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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Committee Reports
   1. Speaker’s Committee – Jan introduced Marsha Rouggly, 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.

* 1. Social Committee – Michael said all snack slots are filled up and he thanked everyone who has signed up
  2. 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.
  3. 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.
  4. Plant Sale – Sally said to contact her if you want to help with the plant sale.
  5. Scholarship Committee – Scholarship forms have been provided to Homer High School (KPBSD) and the college. The deadline for applications is April 1.

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 Rouggly 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 currents.

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