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# Homer Garden Club

November 2018

## New Meeting Date

*(Moving to the 3rd Sunday  
of the month!)*

The next Homer Garden Club meeting will be on November 18th at 2:00 pm at the Bidarka Inn, downstairs.

# Newsletter

## The November 18th Meeting will Feature Beau Burgess

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Join us this month for an inspiring talk about installing a garden pond on your property! Beaugard Burgess will share his knowledge and expertise in unique land use and sustainable development practices.

Beau first came to Homer thirteen years ago to start an excavation and land improvement company. In 2014, with help of friends and his father, he started Blood, Sweat and Food Farms which focuses

on local pasture-based meat production. Between these two business ventures he's helped hundreds of customers better utilize and improve their land. We look forward to hearing about his experiences and practices We hope to see you there!



**Upcoming Garden Club Meetings:**

Sunday December 16 – 2 PM, Best Western Bidarka Inn – Speaker TBD

Sunday January 20 – 2 PM, Best Western Bidarka Inn – Speaker TBD

**Treasurer's Report - October 2018** by Louise Ashmun, Treasurer

<u>Income</u>	
Membership	210.00
Newsletter Ads	120.00
Apron Sales	<u>75.00</u>
Total Income	\$ 405.00
<u>Expenses</u>	
Venue	150.00
Program	<u>50.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 200.00
Beginning Balance 10/1/18	\$ 17,938.73
Income	+ 405.00
Expenses	<u>- 200.00</u>
Ending Balance 10/31/18	\$ 18,143.73

# October HGC Meeting Minutes

by Sharon Wilson

President Kathy Dube' called the October 21 meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. She welcomed one visitor, Astrid, to the meeting.

The minutes from the prior meeting are posted online on the Homer Garden Club Website. Treasurer, Louise Ashmun, gave her report. The fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30. The year began with \$17,938.73 in the account, and will consider requests for donating funds to nonprofit groups. Homer Garden Club contributed to the Chef at the Market program last year. Members can pay your dues after the meeting.

Gardeners' Weekend Committee coordinator, Brenda Adams, announced a special speaker for the Gardeners' Weekend, 2019. Fergus Garrett, head gardener of the world-famous Great Dixter Garden in Sussex and Director of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust will come from the United Kingdom. Great Dixter is known for its innovative use of color and style. The speaker event will be at Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, 150 seats, so buy your ticket early. The event will be Saturday evening, the last weekend in July. The committee is looking for two more gardens for the tour. We need ideas, volunteers, and new steering committee members.

Renee' Patten and Jan Peyton, co-Vice Presidents charged with finding speakers for the club's general meetings, are looking for suggestions.

Brenda also announced that the security camera the club purchased for the Baycrest Garden has been installed, and no more plants have been removed. The committee that spearheads the tending of the garden club's plot consists of Joan Splinter, Carol Demers and Brenda Adams. A signup sheet will be passed around in the spring for people to sign up to work at keeping it looking nice. Two people sign up for one week, and they can work out their own times during that week. She also mentioned that the Food Garden next to our garden needs help with weeding. They are very short on volunteers. Tourists love the gardens at Baycrest and it is a great introduction to our community!

President Kathy mentioned that the club still needs a Social Secretary. Beth and Dave Shore coordinated this meeting's refreshments and set up the tables. The sign-up list for the November meeting was passed around. She also displayed the Homer Garden Club's aprons that were available for sale... "Everyone needs two because they are in two different colors!" \$25 for members, \$30 for non-members. The club's gardening manual, *Kachemak Cultivating, Seaside to Summit* has been compiled, edited, and the committee is still figuring out the most economically feasible format for final production

Renee introduced Guest Speaker Judith James. Ms. James visited farms and gardens in Europe but made clear that she is not a

"flower expert!" Her main interest was in food production and how people farmed in the countries they visited. Her slide show included maps and she explained that she flew Condor Air at 82 degrees North—close to the North Pole, landing in Frankfurt, Germany, then traveling to Munich on a train at 245 kilometers/hour. She visited Prague, CZ, Bratislava, SK, the Slovakia/Carpathian Mountains, Budapest, HU, and Vienna, AU, before returning. Judith shared Central European history within her talk.

At the Bojnice castle north-east of Ternava, Slovakia, is a 700-year-old Lime Tree (Little Leaf Linden) planted by King Matthias Corvinus. Judith said that people grow gardens for a reason: to eat. At the old monastery in Seligenstadt, Germany, the monks still grow fruit and herbs. Stone-tiled roofs there were quite artistic, with one showing a figure sowing grain as part of the motif within the tiles

The "orangery" on the castle grounds in Prague, Czech Republic, was the most high-tech "high tunnel" she had ever seen, with dozens of large orchids growing inside. In Slovakia red geraniums were in windowsill boxes everywhere. Judith spoke of the concept of time; in Alaskan history, a cabin 50 years old is considered old. In Europe, "old" is measured in centuries. The people have been farming the same land for centuries.

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## Why Wait to Plant

With bulbs appearing in stores earlier and earlier each year, many of us can't help feeling swept up in the need to plant earlier, too. However, for those who have excitedly planted their newly purchased bulbs into the ground in August and even September, they have been sadly disappointed by a bare garden in spring. There can be too much of a good thing for anything - and the convenience of a selection of bulbs early on in the season has spoiled many gardener's hopes once the temperatures warm.

## The Lifecycle of a Bulb

Typically coming from mountainous regions, spring flowering bulbs have adapted to the cold winters and hot, dry summers of their habitat. They are used to making their growth in the short span of time in spring when the weather is nice and there's plenty of moisture.

In summer, when it's hot and dry, the bulbs move into their dormancy period. Underground, they are protected from the harsh elements, preventing them from withering and dying. Then, in autumn, as the temperatures fall, they take advantage of the easier cool weather to initiate their roots.

## Why Plant in Fall

Since they are used to being dormant in the summer, bulbs typically have a much harder time setting roots earlier in the season when it's warm. They also don't deal with moisture very well then, either.

When the weather is wet and warm, bulbs can easily become stressed and susceptible to fusarium. Nick-

named basal rot, fusarium is much like the cold/flu that we often catch when our immune systems are compromised. It causes the bulb to mold, rendering them lifeless for the coming year.

In fall, though, when the weather has cooled to an ideal 50-60°F, any moisture that the bulbs are exposed to will not put them at risk for catching fusarium. In fact, it actually provides them with the ideal, comfortable conditions they need to quickly and effectively set their roots. Below 50°F, they will continue setting their roots, too - just at a much slower pace.

These roots are very important since they're what keeps the bulb from freezing in the winter. Without them, bulbs can easily freeze when the soil gets cold. When roots are set, though, the physiology of the bulb changes as it gets ready for the cold. They become more elastic in nature, giving them an almost antifreeze-like quality that keeps them healthy and strong even in the depths of winter. Years of growing in harsh mountain climates has made our bulbs skilled at navigating the harshest sides of seasonal weather and they've adapted well to change with the seasons and emerge gorgeous in the spring.

## Planting Your Bulbs in Fall

Since most people don't have a soil thermometer to know when to plant, we recommend waiting until just around the time when you see your first frost in the fall, but before the ground freezes solid.

To ensure the bulbs will go through dormancy in summer next year, you'll need to find somewhere to plant them where they can sleep in a dry bed. Plenty of well-draining soil and sunshine should do the trick!

Once you find that perfect place, begin planting about 6" deep. The golden rule for planting bulbs is to plant as 3x as deep as the bulb's height. Given that most bulbs are 2"

tall, a hole 6" deep should do the trick. Drop your bulb in the hole with the pointy end up and cover with soil.

As we know, moisture is key to promoting root growth, so if you happen to be experiencing a dry fall, it is very important that you remember to water your bulb frequently. If there is adequate rainfall, though, chances are you may only need the occasional watering before the snow falls.

## Buying Bulbs Early

Just because it's best to plant them later in fall, doesn't mean you can't purchase your bulbs in advance and take advantage of them hitting the store shelves. If you do choose to purchase your bulbs early, you'll just need to store them in a cool, dry place until it's time to plant.

While many may recommend the refrigerator as an excellent place to store them, be wary of practicing this yourself. Many refrigerators also house many fruits and vegetables, which give off ethylene gas. When bulbs are exposed to this, they tend to abort their blooms, which can be very disappointing to discover in spring.

Instead, store your bulbs in a cool, dark room with plenty of air circulation. This could be a pantry or a basement - whatever works to keep your bulb comfortable until proper planting time.

The importance of planting bulbs before winter is to promote a good root system, which will more than likely give you a spectacular bloom and performance in the spring. While you may be able to purchase them early, a little patience before planting will go a long way to ensuring you get the most from your bulbs as possible.

Taken from Brent's Blog 10/15/18. Read more and shop at <https://brent-beckys.myshopify.com/>.

(Remember Brent was our Speaker at the 2018 Gardener's Weekend!)

In Vienna, Austria, the Hunderwasser Haus (a public housing complex) trees, flowers and vegetables grow on balconies and roof tops. Also in Vienna is a modernistic tower that is actually a trash incinerator. Its output provides electricity for ten thousand homes.

In Budapest, Hungary, near the Gellert Spa and Hotel along the Danube River, there were shrubs with many hanging pods that resembled tomatillo fruits.

As elsewhere in central Europe, the old town square in Bardejov, Slovakia (SK), portrayed a sense of history: statues remind the people of wars and atrocities. For example, at a memorial in north-central Slovakia, four or five World War II tanks have been left in position in the fields, and the people farm around them. There is also a dramatic war museum in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia.

The Kleingartens of Germany are small community gardens along the roadsides, railroad tracks, and streams. Many small cabins/shacks were along the right-of-ways. The law dictated the size of the plots and the number of rooms in shacks. In wartime these were used for shelter and today are used for food production and relaxing.

One slide showed acres and miles of sunflowers in Slovakia. In Germany, Czech Republic, and Slovakia there were fields of corn for miles, as well as fields of poppies, which are grown for seeds. She said the white seeds taste like

walnuts. There were fields of all kinds of grain: wheat, barley, and rape/canola seed.

Wind energy is important to these countries, which have erected many wind turbines.

In Seligenstadt, Germany, as well as in Slovakia, she saw many backyard garden plots with cherry, plum and pear trees as well as grapes. There was a grocery-store sign that she translated with a phone app to say, "Think of your Health." She also saw a robot lawnmower, similar to our "Roomba."

Gardens were neatly planted and trimmed in flowers. One slide showed a greenhouse made of liter-size (5-quart) glass jars stacked and cemented in place. Beekeepers raise their bees in a house style different from ours, and one house was an old stump. Hives produce 20 kilos of honey per month. In the winter they feed the bees 6 kilos of sugar per liter of water. Judith said the bees there seemed larger than ours.

Judith traveled with Ron Matviyak whose family still owns a farm—the Matviyak Family Farm in Sulín, SK. One photo showed the farm with Poland's Carpathian Mountains in the background. Ron's paternal grandparents arrived in America in 1906 and worked for 8 years saving their money. In 1914 they returned to Hungary and bought the farm of about 15 acres. In Hungary in those days, 52% of farms were smaller than 15 acres. After World War I, their oldest son (Ron's father) returned to the

United States to work and raise a family. The problems of maintaining a farm in Slovakia are the same as in the US; they struggle to find workers. Many of the younger generation do not want to farm.

Many farms in Slovakia grow potatoes, sometimes using "scare deer" (much like a "scare crow") to keep deer out of the fields. Unfortunately, they bought seed potatoes from the US and inadvertently introduced the Colorado Potato Beetle, which they are now fighting.

Around Plavnica, SK, Judith visited co-op farms. The co-op owns land, and leases/rents other small plots from individual farmers. The entire farm she visited was 2,000 hectares in size while some are 15 hectares. The area is just north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, which puts it just north of the US/Canada border. About 100 hectares were planted in clover and corn, and they were able to harvest 2 corn crops a year. The farms are organic, the plants are vigorous with few-to-no insects. Purple potatoes grow better in Poland than in Slovakia due to different soil. They store potatoes for eating and animal feed at 5 degrees C, and colder (2-3 degrees C) for seed potatoes. They use stone root cellars for storage.

At one co-op, Judith was surprised to see fields of weeds planted in rows. Turned out it was 70 hectares of Plantain! They mash the leaves, cook, and distill for medicinal purposes. There was a smaller beef co-op near Sulín, SK, where they were still

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October 2018 HGC Meeting Minutes

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using communist-era equipment.

Their method of making silage was different than the US: after the green hay or corn stalks are harvested and spread on top of the previous layers in a huge, flat pile, a large-tired tractor packs it down, expelling all the air.

Judith was also impressed by another commercial operation, the Elixir Tea Company, in Plavnica, Slovakia. They use local medicinal plants, flowers, and fruits, harvested by local workers. The tea products are organic, with no artificial flavors. She enjoyed a tour of the production facility while suited up in white gown, hat and shoe coverings. The process is fully automated and machines pack the ingredients into tea bags, completely clean! The product is so special, the company has resisted an offer to rebrand to the Celestial Tea line. The company website is <https://www.agrokarpaty.com/index.php>.

Along the Slovakia-Poland Border, Judith saw more wild plants and flowers: fireweed, cranesbill, lupine, dock, baby's breath, thyme or oregano, and orchids. In Slovakia, villages were clustered in separate valleys with farms or forest in between the villages. In Poland, the houses were scattered, looking more like the Homer area. Her explanation was that

Communism wasn't monolithic, and development depended on the country. Slovakia gave up their individual farms and created co-ops; Poland resisted the effort and small family farms survived.

In Poland, Aronia berries are grown and juice is sold in the stores. The market for black currants is decreasing. Members of one Polish co-op are growing apples on semi-dwarf rootstock in an experimental, intensive method: posts are made of cement, three wires are strung to support branches, and 7-ft bamboo posts are tied with stretchy ties to the tree branches. In this way the trees are trained in espalier-type rows, with the trees 1 meter apart. Harvesting is done by hand with workers walking along picking apples and putting them directly into a tractor-pulled wagon.

For a little history and geography of the region: In central part of Slovakia, the Poprad River forms the Slovak-Polish border, then flows north from the Carpathian Mountains into the Dunjec River, which flows into the Vistula River and on across Poland to the Baltic Sea. This river system was a primary river trade route in pre-history and more recent times. People floated minerals such as copper to the sea on the river, sold their products, then walked back to their farms.

This very informative slide show and talk ended at 3:59 p.m. and the group enjoyed the

wonderful snacks and conversation. Next meeting: Sunday, November 18, 2 p.m., Bidarka - Best Western meeting room.

Sharon Wilson,



\*\*\*\*\*Our Membership Year is October 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>\*\*\*\*\*

### THE HOMER GARDEN CLUB MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Type: Basic(\$10) \_\_ Supporting (\$15) \_\_ Business (\$25) \_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

You will receive the newsletter by E-Mail. This saves us printing and postage costs. Plus, the E-mailed version is in fabulous color!

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

**How would you like to participate in the Garden Club *this Membership Year?***  
(please check any activities in which you would like to help)

Meeting Refreshments    Board of Directors    Nominating Committee    Newsletter  
 Spring Plant Sale    Harvest Dinner    Baycrest Garden    Gardeners' Weekend

**Suggestions for future Topics or Speakers** \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to "Homer Garden Club" and mail along with this form to:  
Homer Garden Club, P.O. Box 2833, Homer AK 99603  
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