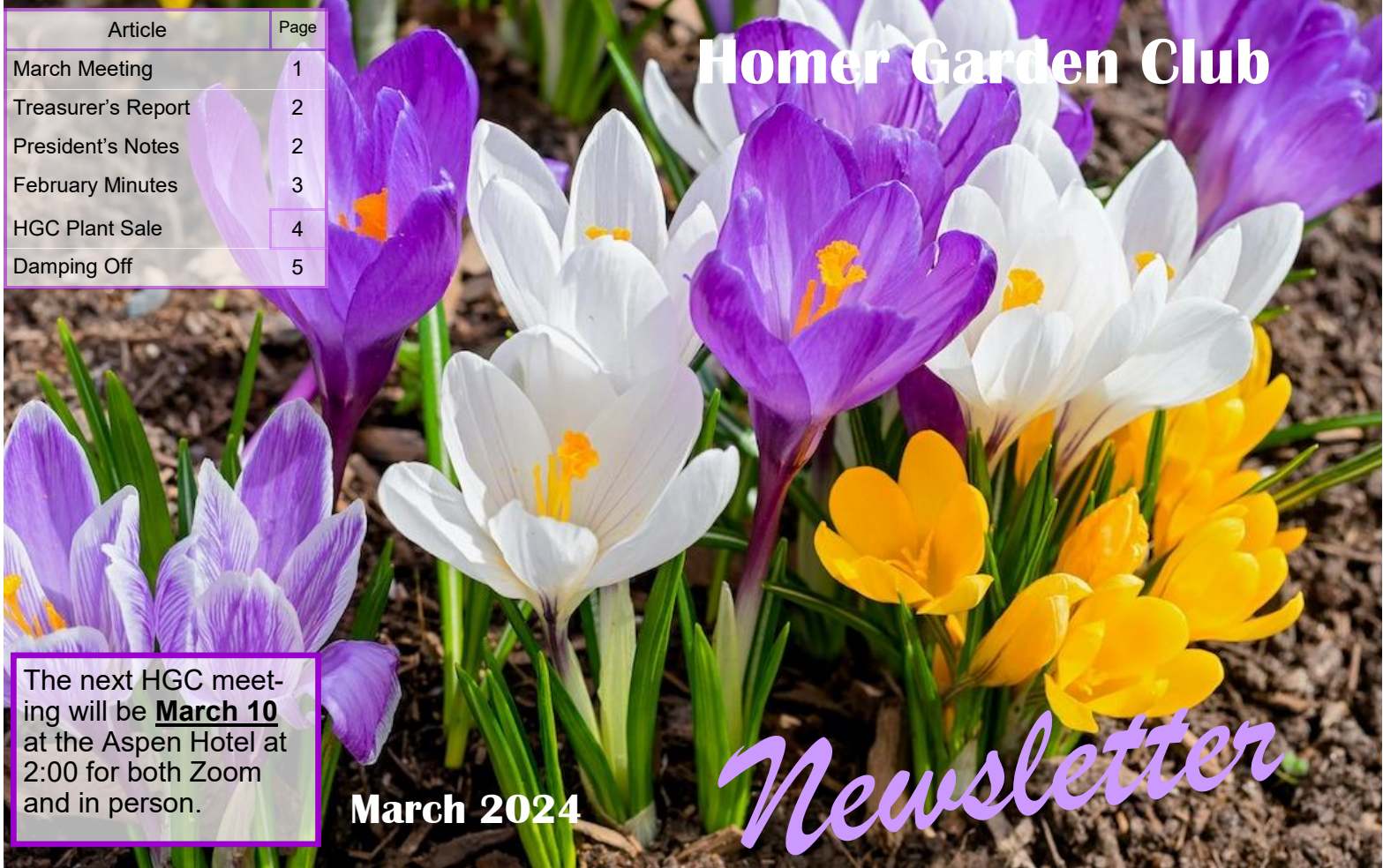


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Homer Garden Club



The next HGC meeting will be **March 10** at the Aspen Hotel at 2:00 for both Zoom and in person.

March 2024

Newsletter

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At March 10 Meeting Ellen Vande Visse Will Instruct on Making Your Own Fertilizer Spray

Author & Environmental Consultant Ellen Vande Visse, MS, somewhere in her shady past, served as Environmental Education Consultant in West Michigan. Since 1987 in Alaska, she's operated Good Earth Gardens as a market garden, a CSA, a demo garden, and now a home garden. Ellen was the grower for the kitchens of the National Outdoor Leadership School, Alaska Branch. She created and supervised a community garden for Mat-Su College, University of Alaska. Ellen is especially fond of all things decaying, and is known in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley as The Compost Queen. She is known to mysteriously brew compost tea for farmers, stores, and markets. She provides consultations on eco-agriculture growing systems (when she's not playing in her multiple bins

of red wiggler worms). amount—a couple parts per million. These deficiencies cause other needed minerals to be disabled, so you have disease problems. But if you over apply, you have a whole set of other problems. Ellen will teach us how to make our own Fertilizer Spray.



(Continued on page 3)

Directions for March Zoom meeting are on page 2

Treasurer's Report

by Kendall Dellaesperanza, Treasurer

Homer Garden Club

Treasurer's Report for February 2024

Income

Membership	\$145.00	
Merchandise sales	\$290.00	
Total Income		<u>\$435.00</u>

Expenses

Aspen Hotel Venue	\$200.00	
Total Expenses		<u>\$200.00</u>

Checking Beginning Balance 2/01/2024	\$	4,496.66
Income	\$	435.00
Expenses	\$	200.00
CD dividend	\$	13.14
Interest	\$	<u>516.28</u>
Ending Balance 2/29/2024	\$	5,261.08
Money Market Beginning Balance 2/01/2024	\$	6,117.45
Interest	\$	<u>0.97</u>
Money Market Ending Balance 2/29/2024	\$	6,118.42
CD Beginning Balance 2/19/2024 6 month term	\$	5,000.00
Interest [received at maturity (08/19/2024)]	\$	<u>-</u>
12 month term (maturity 2/19/25)	\$	<u>10,000.00</u>
Interest (transferred to checking)	\$	<u>-</u>
CD Ending Balance 2/29/2024	\$	15,000.00
Total Ending Balance 2/29/2024	\$	<u>26,379.50</u>

Zoom Mtg & Notes from the HGC President By Kathy Dube'

Marching Forward to Spring!

Hi everyone, Happy March. As I'm writing this during a month of working in eastern Oregon, I know that Spring will be here soon, even in Alaska. There are still snowy days down here (and back home) but they are interspersed with warm(er) sunny days that hint at the end of Winter. I'm looking forward to being home, planning my seed starts, and seeing everyone in person at the March meeting (or online if you want to join us on Zoom)

To join Zoom meeting:

Topic: Homer Garden Club March Meeting

Time: **Mar 10, 2024** 02:00 PM Alaska

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81690638619?pwd=NNBCrmXAtLbWy2gU0UFhoAX9zaYkmD.1>

Meeting ID: 816 9063 8619

Passcode: 166154

OR dial in from your phone if you just want to listen: +16694449171,,81690638619#,,,*166154# US

March Speaker
Continued from page 1)

The Soil Whisperer Reveals Secret Recipes!

It's likely your veggies, fruits, and flowers suffer from Hidden Hunger. Oh-oh, why? Our local soils typically lack two tricky minerals: Boron & Calcium. Why tricky? You only need a teeny amount—a couple parts per

million. These deficiencies cause other needed minerals to be disabled, so you have disease problems. But if you over-apply, you invite another set of problems.

Remedy: Join *Soil Whisperer Ellie* as she reveals two formulas for nutrient sprays you can make in your kitchen.

Why is Ellie so excited about effectiveness? Foliar feeding of plants provides 95% efficiency compared to 10% efficiency when applying the same nutrients in the soil. So, make & spray this nourishment and watch your plants flourish this growing season with your gifts of Boron & Calcium—in just the right amounts.

February Meeting Minutes

by Tina Seaton

2-18-24 Homer Garden Club minutes

Louise Ashmun brought the meeting to order at 2:05.

Announcements: Peggy offered mixed poppy seeds and dwarf tomato seeds to give out to members. Visitors were introduced and welcomed.

Secretary Tina noted that minutes from the last month's meeting can be found in the email newsletter and on the website.

Treasurer Kendall reported we had \$215. In new memberships last month, \$319.88 in expenses and a total balance of \$25,614.11. She will be renewing \$10,000. In a 12 month CD and \$5,000. In a 6 month CD to have it available if necessary for the Garden Tour. She said the CD had earned \$516. In interest in the last year.

Co-treasurer Louise noted that CD's make much better interest. She said we had more than 30 new and renewing members pay for their membership last month. She also has t-shirts, aprons and books for sale.

Vice President Jan reported (from Hawaii) that Emily Macdonald from Homer Soil and Water would be presenting today on Soil health.

March – Ellie Vande Visse on garden pests

April – Tina Garay on perennials

May - Brenda Adams on garden design

Jan noted that she will be retiring after May so we will need a new VP to arrange speakers starting next fall. Jan said she will help mentor the next VP. Please let Jan or another board member know if you would be interested in serving the club in this way.

Social Committee – Michael noted that next month's meeting will be on March 10, the second Sunday rather than the usual 3rd Sunday, because of a scheduling conflict. He was looking for substitute snack pro-

viders because of that change and 2 people volunteered.

Garden Tour – Annie reported that there are 5 gardens scheduled for the garden tour. Francie has added the Garden tour page to the website. Members can sign up to help starting next month.

Louise provided a database report. We have 109 members right now. You can check with Louise to renew or sign up. You can also sign up on the website: homergardenclub.org Scroll down to find Membership Application button for form.

Plant Sale – Sally will head this up and will have sign-up lists next month for volunteers. This is our club's biggest fundraiser. This year we will be dividing some of the plants in the Baycrest garden for the sale so that will need to be done before the sale. No date set yet for the plant sale.

Next meeting is March 10.

Jan introduced Emily Macdonald from Homer Soil & Water service. Emily also works for NRCS, Natural Resources Conservation Services and USDA. Emily said no matter what you are growing, flowers, vegetables, or crops for sale, soil health is important for all plant growth.

The way to healthy soil requires: minimizing soil disturbance; maximizing biodiversity; maximizing soil cover; and maximizing living roots.

To minimize soil disturbance you can just pile mulch on top and avoid or reduce tilling.

To maximize biodiversity you want a range of living things in the soil. They eat soil and create 'bug poop' that fertilizes plants.

To maximize soil cover mulch bare soil or grow cover crops. Mulch and green cover crops allow water to seep in rather than run off.

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Maximize living roots – Roots pull carbon into the soil and creates food for bugs and living critters. All this leads to soil aggregate which equals healthy soil.

Emily shared a Cropland In-Field Soil Health Assessment worksheet she uses to determine the soil health of gardens and farms she visits. It starts with soil cover and structure; ponding, infiltration and penetration resistance of water; water stable aggregates; soil structure and color; plant roots, and biodiversity. She demonstrated a slake test to show how new soil with very little organic matter quickly dissolves in water. Soil aggregate with lots of organics does not disintegrate and may actually float in water. She encouraged people to bring in soil samples from your garden to look at and she can make suggestions for improving your soil. Her office is in the Frontier building, next to Laser Print.

Tilling: Emily said avoiding tilling is healthier for the soil, but tilling as needed may help you get your garden planted quicker. If you till too much the soil becomes too fine and turns into dusty grains. You should avoid aggressive tilling.

Emily suggested having your soil tested at Homer Soil & Water. This report comes with suggestions to improve any deficiencies.

Emily said cover crops include barley, rye, oats, clover, peas & buckwheat, most of which are grasses and will grow dense fibrous root systems. Cover crops need 6 weeks of growth so should be planted by labor day in Alaska (or earlier if your winter arrives earlier). You want to use annual plants so they don't cause future problems. Cover crops will feed the soil and suppress weeds but you don't want them to form seed heads. She said white Dutch clover is good to use in a perennial bed, though it can attract slugs. Do not use sweet clover as it is a perennial. Red clover is an annual but can be toxic to livestock. Emily said her favorites are oats and peas.

To end her presentation Emily showed us a rainfall simulator to test how different soils react in a heavy rainfall. It consisted of a container for water that had lots of holes to simulate rainfall, another container underneath that to hold the soil, a container to catch any runoff from the soil container and a fourth container under the soil container to catch water that runs through the soil. She had two sets of these, one held new soil and one held soil with lots of organics that had had compost and mulch mixed in. The set with the high organics soil had all the water run through the soil, with no water runoff. The set with the new soil had at least half the water run off the top.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30.

Homer Garden Club Plant Sale

by Sally Coleman

Hello my gardening friends! I am sitting at my kitchen island, looking out at the beautiful blue sky and thinking about the upcoming gardening season. I am sure I am not alone in these thoughts and so I decided I would reach out to you to begin our conversation around the annual Homer Garden Club Plant Sale.

While I have been involved with the plant sale in prior years, I have not acted as the coordinator. I will be taking on this role this year and because I am a bit of an organizational freak, I want to start the planning process. I know that this has been an extremely successful fund-raising activity for our club and in past years there has been a tremendous turn out of garden club mem-

bers who have helped to set up, take down and contribute plants for the sale. Because of this, I want to keep this trend going and have another successful sale!

We do not have a date set for the sale yet. It will likely be the first part of June.



... talking with Brenda Adams, who

coordinates the Baycrest Clean-up Event, she has indicated that in addition to the general activities that we normally do at this location, we will also remove a few plants this year. Apparently, the Baycrest Garden has grown so well through the years that it is time to dig up a few volunteers and divide perennials. Therefore, we will have the Baycrest Clean up Event one weekend and then the Plant Sale another weekend shortly thereafter.

In addition to the plants from Baycrest, I know many of you will be digging up your extra plants and potting them on for the plant sale. Please let us know if you would like any help in digging things up and potting them. Also, please let us

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know if you need some containers or some soil for these plants. We have a budget that will allow us to buy some soil but if any of you have extra pots that you want to donate to this cause, please contact me.

I will start sending a list around at our March 10th meeting to have volunteers sign up for:

- Set up
- Clean up
- Contributing plants for the sale
- Helping to dig up and pot member plants for the sale
- Contributing containers
- Bringing snacks for the event
- Putting up posters

You do not need to be specific at this point. If you know your garden is a bit full and you think you will be contributing plants for the sale, that's all I need to know. I do not want you to feel like you have to list

varieties, numbers, etc.... This list will just give me a general idea of where we stand and where we need to focus energy and volunteers.

I already have a couple of key volunteers who have graciously offered to help with this event (thank you Karen and thank you Jan!). Karen said she would like to help make the poster that we can put up in local shops and so we will need a few people who would be willing to run around and ask our local shops to hang them up for us. That was one of the things that I did previously with Barbara Kennedy and it went pretty fast with the two of us dividing up Homer.

Anyway, the list will be going around starting at the next Garden Club Meeting (March 10th). You can sign up then if you are at the meeting or you can let us know via Chat if you are a Zoomer. You can think about



all of this and add your name at a later date.

Know that I am grateful for any help you are interested in providing! Thank you all! Let's have a super fun and successful Plant Sale!!

Sally Coleman, 805-746 -4148
and sallyjcoleman@gmail.com

What is “Damping Off” & How to Prevent It

by Natasha Foote,
“Gardener’s Path”

In my opinion, there is no greater satisfaction than planting your own seeds and watching them grow into little baby seedlings.

More than just being a magical process to watch, it can also mean you get to play around with interesting varieties you might not find in your local garden center, and learn about your plants much more intimately than you would otherwise. But then! Tragedy strikes and your seedlings come down with a serious case of “damping off.” But what is damping off, you might ask?

“Damping off” is a soil-borne fungal disease that affects seedlings, causing the rotting of stem and root tissues at and below the soil surface of the young plants.

The term is quite a general one, encompassing several disease-causing culprits, the most common of which are well-known fungal foes such as *Rhizoctonia*

spp., *Fusarium spp.* and the water mold *Pythium spp.*

This disease affects a wide variety of vegetables and flowers. Infected plants usually germinate successfully and come up fine, but start to show signs that all is not well a few days down the line.



Young leaves, roots, and stems of newly emerged seedlings are all highly susceptible to infection. This disease causes such major issues in the root system of the plant that seedlings infected by damping off rarely survive to pro-

duce a vigorous plant. Even worse, it is usually a large section, or an entire tray of seedlings that is killed.

In short, this fungal infection can really decimate your seedlings, and proper care needs to be taken to prevent a tragedy from occurring. The good news is that, although mature plants can still be affected by these pathogens, from the moment your plants have mature leaves and a well-developed root system, they are much more resistant the fungus or mold that causes damping off.

There is therefore a critical period of growth between planting and maturity when special care needs to be taken to protect sensitive seedlings.

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How to Identify Damping Off

The most common way damping off will present itself is when your plant stalks become water-soaked, thin and mushy, and fall over at the base and die.

The seedlings, especially the cotyledons (the first leaves produced) may have a kind of gray-brown color, and young leaves will wilt and turn from green-gray to brown.

It is also common to see a fluffy white cobweb growth on infected plants.

When you pull your plants up, you can also see signs of the disease on their root systems. Roots on infected plants are either absent, stunted, or have grayish-brown sunken spots.

Prevention and Protection Measures

I'll give you the bad news first: Once your plants catch a case of damping off, they're done for. There is nothing we can do to cure this disease once it's taken hold, and even if there was, the tiny seedlings die so quickly that there would be very little time to help even if you could.

The good news is that, as damaging as it is, there are a few practical, actionable steps you can take to see off damping off *before* it becomes established.

There are two P's that you should keep in mind when it comes to damping off — **prevention** and **protection**.

PREVENTION TIPS

Preventative tips include:

1. Use a sterile potting mix, rather than soil from your garden. The fungi that cause this disease live in the soil, so preventing soil contact with your vulnerable seedlings is the first good place to start.

If this really isn't possible for you, or if you plan to reuse soil mix, then you can also sterilize your soil.

You can do this by baking it in the sun. But in my experience, I've found that it's quicker and easier either to use either your oven or your microwave. Personally, I prefer doing it in the microwave, as heating in the oven can generate a funky smell.

Just put your soil mix in a suitable container, cover it loosely, and heat on high for eight to 10 minutes. It will get hotter than you might think, so be aware of this when you're handling your soil mix afterwards. Heating up your soil in this way helps to kill any fungal foes lurking within.

2. Use clean pots.

Fungal spores are tiny and can reside in even the smallest amount of soil residue left in pots. It's best to sterilize your pots before using them, using a mixture of one part bleach to 10 parts water.

3. Help your seeds as much as you can.

Anything you can do to minimize your plants' struggle helps to maximize their strength.

This includes planting them at the right depth, so they don't have to work so hard to germinate, getting your soil substrate mix right, and



choosing a sunny, warm spot for them to thrive in.

4. Don't overcrowd your seedlings. This isn't because your seedlings don't like company, but because ensuring room for good air circulation is key to preventing fungal disease from gaining a foothold.

Going one step further, this could even include using a fan to help circulate air around your baby plants.

5. Water from the bottom up.

Watering from the bottom up means that the seeding itself stays dry, and is therefore more protected.

You could also add some surface sand or gravel around your seedlings to help keep them high and dry. Continuing with the irrigation theme, it's also important not to over-water plant starts.

6. Remove any suspect plants immediately.

I'm the first to become emotionally attached to my baby plants, and I am absolutely loathe to kill any of them. But it's better to be ruthless here. The moment you suspect one plant might be showing signs of damping off, it's best to get him out of there to stop him from infecting his neighbors. Better safe than sorry!

PROTECTION TIPS

In my experience, conventional fungicides aren't really worth trying. But I have had luck with a few of these homemade protective concoctions.

To be clear, they are only useful to protect against — not to cure — this disease. But they can give you that little edge that might make all the difference.

- A strong brew of chamomile or cinnamon tea isn't just a nice night-cap for us. You can also use it to water and/or mist your seedlings.
- Mix in a splash of hydrogen peroxide per quart of water and mist seedlings with it.
- Apply a light dusting of cinnamon to the soil surface. I've found this to be especially effective!

Applications of compost tea may also help, as it is full of beneficial bacteria and fungi that outcompete many bad pathogens.

Protection and prevention are the name of the game in beating damping off. By following all the tips above, you stand a fair chance of avoiding and even overcoming this disease.