

Homer Garden Club

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October 2024

The next HGC meeting will be **October 20** at 2:00 at the Aspen hotel

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October 20 Meeting to Showcase Using Native Plants in Your Garden



Please join us for the first Homer Garden Club meeting of the new season at 2 pm on Sunday, October 20, at the Aspen Suites Hotel!

Megan Stoll and Casey Greenstein of the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District will give a presentation on "Using Alaska Native Plants in Your Garden." They will discuss the importance of using native plants; how to incorporate native plants into your landscape for function and impact; dispelling misconceptions about natives; the native plant supply chain; responsible seed collection and salvage; and ways native plant enthusiasts can help by creating demand. Bring your questions, curiosity, friends and enthusiasm!





Homer Garden Club Treasurer's Report for September 2024

Income

Membership	\$ 345.00
Merchandise sales	\$ 364.50
Newsletter ad	\$ 120.00

Total Income **\$829.50**

Expenses

Aspen Hotel Venue	\$ 200.00
State Farm	\$ 400.00
Garden tour	\$ 12.50
Chamber fee	\$ 40.00
Computer security	\$ 79.99

Total Expenses **\$732.49**

Checking Beginning Balance 09/01/2024	\$ 7,753.65
Income	\$829.50
Expenses	\$732.49
CD dividend	\$ 36.39
Interest	<u>\$ 0.32</u>
Ending Balance 08/30/2024	\$ 7,887.37
Money Market Beginning Balance 09/01/2024	\$ 11,226.99
Transfer to CD	\$ 5,000.00
Interest	<u>\$ 2.26</u>
Money Market Ending Balance 09/30/2024	\$ 6,229.25
CD Beginning Balance 9/01/2024	\$ 10,000.00
12 month term (maturity 2/19/25)	\$ 10,000.00
Interest (transferred to checking)	\$ -
18 month term (maturity 3/30/2026)	\$ 5,000.00
interest (transferred to checking)	<u>\$ -</u>
CD Ending Balance 9/30/2024	\$ 15,000.00
Total Ending Balance 9/30/2024	\$ 29,116.62

REFRESHMENTS for October 20 meeting:

The refreshment volunteers are: Roni Overway, Peggy Pittman. and Kim Dickinson.



Directions for October Zoom Meeting

by Kathy Dube', President

The October Meeting will be in person at the Aspen Hotel and also via Zoom

The link for the zoom meeting is:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82630684309?pwd=cbg97vod5jctRbacjhaXjGz6VA1YGa.1>

To call in: (one tap mobile) +12532158782,,82630684309#,,,,*119085#
Meeting ID: 826 3068 4309
Passcode: 119085

We Need You!

by Kathy Dube', President

If You Enjoy Garden Club Meetings We Need You!

We **really** need someone to volunteer to help with co-vice president duties in order to continue to have speakers at our monthly meetings. The vice president(s) help invite and coordinate speakers for the monthly meeting and (ideally) set up the AV equipment at the meetings. This is not a huge job since it is shared and Fran has already gotten several speakers lined up. If you are scared of the electronics side, Kathy has been doing this for several years and is there to help and has an easy checklist to follow (it's just hard for Kathy to try to get it all set up AND run the meeting).

PLEASE SOMEONE VOLUNTEER SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO HAVE SPEAKERS.



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"Your father never hugged you. That's no reason to go around scaring small children."



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Homer Garden Club Meeting – 9/22/24 Minutes

Francie Roberts opened the meeting at 2:20 after allowing time for membership renewal and the numerous tasty appetizers provided by members. She welcomed members, new members and visitors.

Secretary's Report – *Tina reminded members that minutes from the last meeting can be found in the emailed newsletter and on the Garden Club website.*

Treasurer's Report – *Louise ('income' co-treasurer) took membership renewals in person at the meeting and noted that the form is in the newsletter and people can mail in checks. She also showed off Garden Club aprons which are available in green or maroon and cost \$25. The Garden Club books are full of local gardening information and also cost \$25. There are 3 t-shirts left (size small/med) with artwork by Toby Tyler - \$5 each!*

Kendall ('expense' co-treasurer) noted the financial report is printed in each newsletter. Our \$5,000 CD matured and was placed in a money market account last month. At the last board meeting it was decided to get it back into a CD where it can earn more interest. Kendall will ask Global to match a higher Wells Fargo rate.

Social Committee – *Michael thanked everyone for bringing appetizers. He explained that we have 3 volunteers sign up for each meeting to bring finger foods. He promised to remind those who sign up before their meeting. A sign-up sheet was passed around.*

Historian report – *Elaine put together a slide show from past meetings, presentations, plant sales and garden tours that we enjoyed during the meeting.*

Speakers Committee – *We are looking for a Vice President to arrange for and introduce speakers (that Fran has already mostly arranged for this year!) and help with setting up for zoom meetings. Fran is in the process of moving and just doesn't have time to do more.*

Fran was unable to attend but sent in a report:

October - Soil and Water Conservation District on using Native Plants

November - (Tentative) Conservation Stewardship / Extending your growing season

December – no meeting

January -

February - Gayle Forest and Michelle Melchert on worm farming

March - Marion Owen on tips for capturing beautiful stills and movies of your garden using your phone.

April –

May –

We really need someone to help out with this!

Elections - Slate of officers:

President – Kathy Dube'

Co-VP – Fran Durner

Co-VP –

Secretary – Tina Seaton

Co-Treasurer – Kendall DellaSperanza

Co-Treasurer – Louise Ashmun

Social Committee chair – Michael Murray

Newsletter Editor—Paula Riley

Publicity chair –

Karen Howorth moved to accept the slate of officers; Ronnie Overway seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Door Prizes – Shirley Forquer sent 3 bunches of carrots for three lucky door prize winners.

The meeting ended with an open discussion on things that plagued gardeners this summer: aphids, sawflies and orange hawkweed. Some suggestions for controlling aphids were yellow stickies or a yellow cup with Vaseline smeared on it to catch them, or a spray of 1 tsp Dawn dishsoap and 1 Tb. Vegetable oil to a quart of water. This should be sprayed on the top and undersides of the leaves every few days. Panama Reds carries an underleaf spray bottle!

Next meeting: October 20 – Native Plants, 2-4 pm at Aspen Hotel meeting room

In every gardener there is a child who believes in the Seed Fairy.

Robert Brault

To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.

Audrey Hepburn

Weeding is like trying to swat a fly with a sledgehammer.

Unknown

An August email from a friend, Bjorn Olsen, presented my husband and I with an interesting challenge. Would we join others in eating locally for the month of September? The general concept was easy enough, as Hal and I have a big garden and red salmon in the freezer. Eating locally is something we already embrace. But we had a ten-day road trip planned. Could we eat locally by packing what we had on hand, and supplement with locally sourced food en route? As it turns out, we could.

We had purchased a tiny teardrop trailer earlier in the summer. The size of a queen-sized bed on the inside and equipped with a tiny but very functional kitchen in the “trunk”, we figured our little camper would be perfect for a fall trip. So, in mid-September, we headed for Skagway with our adventurous hounds. The fall colors were at their peak. Dazzling landscapes unfolded mile after winding mile along the Matanuska River, up the Tok Cutoff, and across the Alaska-Canadian border on the frost-heaved Alcan highway. Golden aspens, amber cottonwoods, and red highbush cranberry saturated our senses as the ever-changing backdrop of rugged mountains and glaciers appeared and disappeared amid the clouds. Blue-green lakes and sinuous rivers completed the wilderness tapestry. We enjoyed daytime temperatures in the upper 50s. The occasional rain generally held off until we’d nestled in for the night.

Ahead of the trip, I packed what we had on hand. Jars of homemade chutney, pickles, and green beans made for easy condiments. The canning jars, rinsed and stored once empty, greatly reduced the plastic and paper food containers we would otherwise have disposed of. I harvested as much squash, lettuce, pea pods, tomatoes, broccoli, and onions as our plug-in cooler would hold. Other items, like golden beets, boiled eggs, and potatoes, I precooked for ease in preparation on the road. All the way to Skagway, we enjoyed locally raised pork tacos, egg salad, cauliflower soup, and an abundance of vegetables.

After descending the infamous White Pass (shrouded in mist), we rolled into Skagway, population 1,222, and parked our teardrop in the Garden City campground. Spruce-covered slopes swept up on either side of the narrow valley, which is bisected by the Skagway River and the White Pass and Yukon Railroad. The historic downtown, with 21 restored buildings owned by the National Park Service, resembled a movie set. We arrived late in the day after the crush of passengers, who come in on three or four

massive cruise ships per day, had returned to their berths and steamed away. This late in the season, there were few independent travelers, and we had a selection of five or six restaurants to ourselves. By chance, we found ourselves eating locally grown salad and perfectly prepared red salmon at the Skagway Brewing Company, but more on that later.



Photo by Jessica Shepherd

The next morning, we headed to the airstrip to rendezvous with Juneau friend Ginger Hudson. Despite a buffeting south wind, the little six-seater made a smooth landing while I gave a silent thank you to skillful Alaskan pilots. Ginger, bag in hand, was as excited as we were to explore Skagway, and, through her contacts as the director of the Jensen-Olson Arboretum, she had leads on local food producers!

In the early 1900s, Skagway became Alaska’s self-described Garden City, thanks to fertile soil, light-filled days from March until October, and a rain shadow that keeps precipitation to an average of 26 inches per year – the same as Homer. The 3,000 or so inhabitants embraced their good fortune and planted vegetable gardens, fruit trees, and flowers. Even now, the city boasts a tidy community garden, while numerous yards and businesses maintain container gardens, backyard greenhouses, and apple and crabapple trees. The trees were, fortuitously, loaded with fruit ripe for the picking. I figured foraging and eating local were one and the same, and happily sampled a few.

Our first stop was the Lazy Daisy Farm, run by the Skagway Traditional Council. There, we met Deb, a chatty, white-haired volunteer, who filled us in on the garden’s evolution. The Traditional Council took over the operation two years ago, and after dispatching with an overgrowth of weeds, the fertile soil once again provides an abundance of produce. On the sunny day we visited, well-tended rows were awash in kale, squash, lettuce, and herbs, while under a shed roof, coolers and refrigerators were full of turnips, lemon cucumbers, radishes, and kale for sale. We happily stocked up.

After exploring Skagway’s shops and history museum, it was time for dinner. We found ourselves down on the harbor at the Salty Siren enjoying grilled salmon, batter-fried Pacific Greenling, and more fresh greens. The source of the local greens would soon be revealed.

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After a windy night, the next day dawned bright and blessedly calm. We drove to the old townsite of Dyea and hiked the first mile or so of the famous Chilkoot Trail. Even this short hike was enough to give us a taste of what it must have been like for Klondike gold-seekers 125 years earlier, as they ferried a mandated 2000 pounds of gear the 33 miles between Skagway and Bennett Lake in British Columbia. Originally a Tlingit trade route, the rocky trail steps up steeply through dark spruce and hemlocks before giving way to the tundra. We could only imagine climbing in the winter when many of the 30,000 gold seekers perished or turned back. Most of those who eventually made it to the Klondike found the good claims had already been staked, and their Herculean effort was nothing more than a fool's errand.



Aeroponics growing room atop the Skagway Brewery.
Photo by Jessica Sheherd

Back in Skagway with time to kill before dinner, Ginger followed up on a lead, and we got ourselves invited on a private tour at the Skagway Brewery. We were met by floor manager Jay and whisked by elevator to the third floor, where, at last, we discovered the source of the wonderful salad greens we'd been eating. Jay led us to a glass wall, beyond which lay a state-of-the-art aeroponics operation. A latticework of lettuce, basil, and even turnips grew in vertical towers, like bookshelves in a library. Some plants were ready for harvest, while others were just beginning to fill out. Jay explained that the operation produced enough to meet the needs of this restaurant and the Salty Siren, their sister restaurant, where we'd eaten the night before. They'd begun production in 2022 and, through trial and error, this year they'd become marginally profitable. But, Jay added with conviction, they would do this even if they didn't make a profit because it was the right thing to do.

The walls totaled 2,500 square feet and produced 250 pounds of lettuce a week. Raised in this manner, the lettuce is clean and doesn't need washing, saving water and resulting in very little waste. The process entails exposed roots which are misted every five minutes with water containing fertilizer. This mildly stresses the plants and causes them to mature in one month – faster than through conventional methods. And, of course, the grow walls can produce year-round.

Warming to his subject, he asked if we were aware that Alaska imports 95% of our food. We were. But tell us more! He speculated that hydroponics could help address food deserts in Alaska and beyond, that is, those places where fresh produce is difficult to procure. He envisioned abandoned malls repurposed to grow a huge amount of food while creating jobs without subjecting more land to agriculture. Schools could dedicate classrooms to on-site production while teaching students how to grow and prepare fresh, wholesome food.

Ginger and I were an eager audience and peppered him with questions about the grow operation. It turns out, the Brewery uses spent barley to boost carbon dioxide levels, accelerating the growth rate. By the time we left, the seeds of a Homer-based hydroponic garden had been planted firmly in my mind. We'll see what germinates in the months ahead. Of course, we had dinner at the Brewery, and once again, I ordered red salmon and salad with a savory sesame dressing. I doubt I could ever tire of such a perfect meal.

The following day, after seeing Ginger off at the airport, it was time to turn toward home. Our return trip was every bit as glorious as our drive down. Forest walks with the dogs on paths strewn with golden aspen leaves were rich with the funk of highbush cranberry and falling leaves. Swans graced small lakes along the route, while Dall sheep clustered in white dots on impossibly steep slopes, and each morning brought a bit more snow to the highest peaks of the Wrangell Mountains. At a rest area near the border, we heard, then saw far above, a long V of Sandhill cranes. These harbingers of equinox were soon followed by streamers of Canada geese, one after another after another. Even as I lay reaching for sleep in our teardrop that night, I heard the faint call of geese, flying through the darkness.

Along the way, we replenished our supply of local foods. At a health food store in Whitehorse, we purchased free-range eggs, juicy ripe pears, and just-picked cherry tomatoes. On the final leg of our trip, we hit the Anchorage Farmer's Market and stocked up on squash, green beans, heirloom tomatoes, and cauliflower. As it turns out, centering our meals around fresh, local food was an easy and delightful way to explore Alaska and Canada during September's bounty.

You may be interested in Jessica's blog at: shepherdalaska.com

THE HOMER GARDEN CLUB MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME _____ **PHONE** _____

Email Address

(Please print clearly to make sure you receive all club newsletters and messages)

Membership Type: _____ **Basic (\$10)** _____ **Supporting (\$15)** _____ **Business (\$25)**

Suggestions for future meeting topics or speakers:

**Homer Garden Club Membership year is Oct 1st to Sept 30th
This membership will expire on September 30th**

Please make your check payable to "Homer Garden Club" and mail it along with this form to:
Homer Garden Club, PO Box 2833, Homer AK 99603

HGC is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization (EIN92-0133642)