

April 2014

Central Peninsula Garden Club



PO Box 767 · Kenai, Alaska 99611 · www.cenpengardenclub.org

APRIL 8TH PROGRAM, 7 PM

Aphids, Root Maggots, Cut Worms and More!! Bad Bugs—by Bruce King



Our April 8th program presenter on garden pests is our very own cool, dry humored entomologist, Bruce King. Many of you have heard Bruce's past humorous program contributions regarding compost, vermaculture and more bugs. This time, we'll catch up on our least favorite pests as Bruce says he'll cover lots of them, plus what to do about these destructive critters.

Bruce sez: "Identifying and researching garden pests in Alaska is not a particularly complex job. All of the pests that we generally see are cosmopolitan (found broadly throughout north America). *Preventing or eliminating them is a different story.* We can however occasionally see a hitchhiker on purchased garden plants, or even a *black widow spider in a bag of grapes at a local box store....* But that is another story...."

A bit more from Bruce:

After obtaining a BS in biology from Colorado State University, I worked as an entomologist for a consulting firm while in grad school. I was the only entomology grad student not working on agricultural pest control, a decision I found out later meant limited job opportunities. After 7 years I moved to Alaska where I found out that the prospects for jobs that focused on bugs were even more limited. After a year, and one job offer to work on mosquito research, I took a job working for ADFG as a fish research biologist. I retired from ADF&G after 26 years of sonar development and juvenile salmon and rainbow trout assessment. My entomological work with the department was limited to identification of occasional insects and spiders brought in by the public—there were no agency entomologists in South Central Alaska until recently.

Bruce has also coached many local, youth volley ball teams. We appreciate Bruce sharing his considerable knowledge with us on the 8th.

Board Members

President & Program Chair & Newsletter— Marion Nelson

Vice president—Renae Wall

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Plant sale co-chair, Director & Historian & Plant Sale Chair—Cathy Haas

Director & Hospitality Chair—Juanita Owens

Director & Tech & Sea Ag Committee Chair—Don St. John

Director & Publicity—Velma Bittick

Director & Special Events Chair—Cindy Barnes

Director, Special Events—Don Thompson

Director, Special Events—Lee Bowman

Location: Cook Inlet Aquaculture Bldg.,
K-Beach Road

Free & Open to the public. Refreshments & sometimes door prizes.

Coming Right Up!

Home Show Booth, April 12-13

Look for our annual green and glowing booth at the Kenai Peninsula Builders Association annual Home Show at the Sports Arena. It's a great opportunity for our booth staff to answer lots and lots of gardening questions, tell people about the club (It always amazes us to learn some people don't know there is a garden club in the area), register people for May Workshop Weekends, take SeaAg fertilizer orders, sell some tomato starts (thanks to several board members and others), encourage kids to get involved in gardening, and have fun chatting about gardening.

We also present two seminars each day, one on high tunnels with help from Rupert Scribner of Kenai Feed, and the second one on grow boxes, raised beds and general gardening with help from Tom Gotcher, Velma Bittick, Don St. John, Don Thompson and more. Board member Cindy Barnes is scheduling the booth staffing for both days, including set up on Friday.

Got some spiffy ideas for booth decorating? Call Marion 283-4632.

2014 Workshop Weekends: May 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31

The schedule for our popular May Workshop Weekend event is almost set. The final schedule and registration information will be emailed to members as soon as we firm up remaining details.

Even though the Home Show is two weeks earlier this year, we will be able to take registrations during that weekend.

Cost \$5 per person per workshop for general expenses, payable on workshop day.

Please bring correct amount and give to the workshop host.

Workshop locations are generally at the presenter's location plus a couple other indoor venues. Instructions are given out a few days prior to the workshop and only to the people registered for the workshop.

Here's our **tentative** workshop line up:

- May 3:** Composting, greenhouse management (2), flower & shrub combination planting
- May 10:** Hanging flower baskets, hypertufa trough building, herbs & local plant formulas for plant disease & insect control, *seed starting, soil testing & cover crops.*
- May 17:** Fruit & berries, composting, growing a rural organic vegetable garden, organic greenhouse & gardening, Birding Festival Speaker, Nancy Casey on Rain Gardens.
- May 24:** Photographing plants & flowers, cement block raised beds almost anyone can construct, building a budget greenhouse plus tall raised beds, raising chickens
- May 31:** *Note: All workshops this Saturday will be in the greater Sterling area:* Irrigation management for gardens & high tunnels, ergonomics for gardeners, growing corn & other veggies in a hoop house or tunnel, bee keeping, raised beds on legs!

 <p>KENAI FEED & SUPPLY www.kenaifeed.com MILE 14.5 K-Beach Rd. 907-283-1929</p>	<p>HIGH TUNNELS ORGANIC FERTILIZER PEAT • SEEDS FENCING LIVESTOCK & PET FEED/SUPPLIES PRODUCE</p>	
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Will's Ramblings—by Will Hightower

It is March and I am sitting at Colony High School in the “Valley.” Each time I come to the Valley I become melancholy, even more so as spring approaches. The Valley was once the bread basket of Alaska. Today it is the picture of human blight, rows of crops replaced by rows of carpports.

This morning I stopped at a coffee hut in front of the MTA (Matanuska Telephone Assn) office on the Palmer/Wasilla Highway. In talking with the attendant I learned that the MTA office was once a large nursery that had closed. There were several large greenhouses on the property at the time of closing. Most of the units were auctioned off and removed. Three greenhouses were attached to the office area and it was determined that these units could not be removed for structural reasons. Some day MTA might enclose the greenhouses, until then the units stand unused. I wonder if MTA has considered allowing the greenhouses to be used to grow food? Most likely not, as there would be little or nothing in it for them.



When looking at the Valley, an agricultural area in decline, you see much the same thing as you would see in many parts of America. Unless it is big business agriculture, the farm system is in decay. But looking deeper, what I am really seeing in Alaska is a cycle of seasons. Yes, it is easy to see the “old crop.” The discarded equipment and crop land turning into fields of houses. However, look closely, the new spring is showing. Look in the yards of the tract houses--there are greenhouses, raised beds for food planting, chickens and bees. Some of these are bigger than “Asian farms” and just as intense.



Even “Big Government” is aiding in the change. There is little talk of large agricultural projects like “Delta barley” or “Point Mackenzie dairy farms.” Instead, the buzz words are high tunnel, mini-loans, beginning farmers, and small acreage. USDA will talk to farmers with less than an acre of land!

In speaking with Keith Griswold, of the Wasilla USDA-NRCS office, I learned that since 2010 there have been more than 600 contracts for high tunnels in Alaska. These tunnels will cover about 30 acres, not much area under the “old agriculture” model. Think in terms of the amount and variety of food under intense agriculture that the high tunnels allow. Then add in the Alaskan do-it-yourselfers. There are far more of them than “high tunnelers.” Notice greenhouses of all sizes and shapes, raised beds, containers and alternative growing systems. You are looking at waves of new age farmers.



When was the last time the Garden Club talked about a “Flower Show”? The meetings deal with “farm stuff,” like vegetable seeds, chicken tractors, high tunnels and compost. Welcome to the new agriculture spring.

On another note, I was in Palmer when our new high tunnel arrived. Once again I was away when something big happened. Velma, Tom, and Monti really enjoyed unloading the greenhouse’s heavy pipe frame. Maybe, I’ll give them a break and be home to pick up the strawberry plants at the Post Office! Whatta guy, don’tcha think?

ERGONOMICS for Gardeners.....What is this about?

Ergonomics is the science of the interaction between a worker, the work and the work tools. For gardeners this means understanding the way your body interacts with the tools and the motions used to accomplish the tasks required to make our gardens beautiful and productive.

For you who have strained this or that working in the garden, pay attention!

Ergonomic hazards consist of: awkward postures, extended repetition, static loading, vibration and contact stress. We, the gardener establish our work demands based on our desire to make beautiful environments and bountiful food. **We sometimes extend our bodies beyond their safe limits when we lift, carry, dig and rake harder and longer than our individual body is safely prepared to do.** What happens? We are sore, that slows us down and we lose the next day of work. In addition we risk causing either serious injury or repetitive strains that have a long term negative effects called degenerative disease.



An ergonomically safe work environment and employs pacing and break schedules to optimize our comfort and efficiency while reducing the likelihood of injury or undue physical stress.

CPGC member, Liz Dowler has been an Occupational Therapist for 42 years, earning her PhD in Ergonomics in 2000 from the University of New South Wales, Australia. “My focus has been on biomechanics of the body—how does it work on a daily basis and taking care of it is critical in the prevention of injuries.” Liz adds, “So many injuries result in loss of function and pain and they are very often preventable; in addition as we age there is wear and tear that has accumulated over the years—maybe we have had previous injuries.”

“Gardening is fun.....And doing it in a way that prevents pain and strain is doable.”

Look for her workshop on May 31st. “We will learn about biomechanics, proper body mechanics, exercises and pacing, and analyze gardening tools.”

Contributed by CPGC Member & Workshop Weekend Coordinator, Liz Dowler Ph.D., CPE, OT/L, CRC

We're probably the only garden club in the state to have a PHD Ergonomist lead a workshop on this worthwhile topic.

**Refreshing Libations
for Your Next
Garden Party!**



Country Liquor
140 S. Willow St.
Downtown Kenai
283-7651

Hear ye, Hear ye...Thoughts from a Bionic Gardener!

It is March 22nd, the second day of spring. Last fall I started to take down the home built greenhouses for the coming of the new high tunnel. I moved the smallest of the three home built units to a new location. The idea was to use it as a starter greenhouse for garden plants. That was before I learned that you can now put heat in a high tunnel.

Anyway, I did not get the little greenhouse completely move—no doors in the ends. Today, as I was installing doors, I checked the inside temperatures. Remember, no doors. The frame (wood) temperature was from 71 to 73 degrees. The gravel floor was from 43 to 46 degrees. Sure was nice.

Two years ago Monti and I gave a class on container gardening. We built a “handicapped” box with legs and a plastic hoop over the top. The planter looks somewhat like a Conestoga wagon and has been sitting in our yard for the past two seasons, with good crop results. I decided to move the Conestoga into the little greenhouse. It was too heavy to move over the snow. As I chipped out the frozen dirt, I had to work around the Evergreen onions. I planted those onions as seeds three springs ago. They have lived through two winters in 6 inches of dirt, 2 feet off the surrounding yard surface. Oh yes, they have new green growth--remember frozen dirt chipping.

But, the big news of the day is: the rhubarb is up! Yes, right there, under the left hand snow pile are three stalks of rhubarb peeking through the frozen dirt. Man, it has been a long winter!

What the above is really telling me is that it is time for me to get off my backside. Like many of you, I have had body part replacement and am slowly becoming the bionic person. The problem is that through the winter, rigor mortis sets in and I have the energy level of a wilted lettuce leaf. It's time to discontinue physical therapy, hit the ground running, and commit great body abuse by overdoing it in the garden. I wonder if I could sign up for butt reduction surgery?

Contributed by the 50% Bionic Will Hightower

Bloomin' & More Bloomin' at the Bowmans

We have about 30 pots of amaryllis. They start blooming usually in October and continue to bloom all winter long. We have had at least one blooming since then, and as you can see in the photo, one more that is about to bloom. We have three more pots in the basement with buds starting to show, and one with the flowers just starting to open. The orange colored flower in the front left corner is a heritage variety that came from Julie's Grandma Horton. They were moved to northern Michigan in the 1930's from the family home in Southern Michigan. We brought them to Alaska in the 1970's. It is possible that they are over 100 years old. They surely do brighten up a winter day, or month! The most we have had blooming at one time was 86 blooms. That was three winters ago. We have found amaryllis to be very easy to grow and a very hardy flower. They are very low maintenance. About all that is required is intermittent watering and repotting when they get big enough they split their pot. We always repot with rich soil with lots of compost, so the nutrients are all provided.



Contributed by CPGC Board Member, Lee Bowman



The March issue of *ATTRA News* might be of interest to local producers. Although the word “urban” is used in the lead article, it could be speaking to many Alaskan growers interested in selling their produce.

Be sure to check out the partial list of publications at the end of the newsletter as well as links to other resources for gardeners & farmers.

(The National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service—ATTRA—is developed and managed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT).)

<http://www.thedatabank.com/dpg/427/pm.asp?id=34658&nav=1&aacwc=371564271123717034658108426104>

Also check out this NRCS website, *Small Scale Solutions for Your Farm*, at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/about/?cid=stelprdb1167242>

Upcoming CPGC Events & Volunteer Opportunities!

Volunteers Needed & Appreciated!

It's your club.....

-Newsletter Assistant or Editor ASAP: Gather or write articles on local gardening topics of interest to our members.

-Special event booth staffing, workshop host, few times a year: Home Show in April, Workshop Weekends -May, Ninilchik Fair - August. Contact Cindy Barnes, alaskancindylou@yahoo.com or 262-1395

-Program Committee. Meets occasionally. Contact Marion, mmkn@ptialaska.net

-Publicity Volunteer. Flyer posting!!! Contact Velma Bittick, velee@acsalaska.net or 252-7579

-Hospitality Committee. Help with registration desk, clean up, room set up, refreshments. Contact Juanita Owens, - samowens0969@yahoo.com or (318) 557-9876

-Backup Videographer/photographer for programs and workshops. Contact Linda Dunn, lindadunn78@gmail.com or 283-7857

-Tech backup. Power Point programs and mike set up for programs, occasional workshops. Contact Don St. John, 398-4474.

-Sea Ag Fertilizer Fundraiser Order pick up on Saturday, May 10th, 9 am-2 pm. Volunteers needed. Contact Don St. John, 398-4474.

-Occasional guest speaker lodging. Great opportunity for more expert information. Contact Marion, 283-4632.

-June through September – Weekly summer flower bed maintenance and clean up at the Aquaculture Bldg. Light weeding and some planting. The entrance bed plantings are a thank you to CIAA for meeting room use throughout the year. We appreciate this valuable contribution. Contact Peggy Morris, 262-8374.

Programs:

-April 12-13: Home Show booth. Contact Cindy Barnes to volunteer for booth staffing. alaskancindylou@yahoo.com or 252-2180.

-May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31: Workshop Weekends! 4-5 workshops every Saturday. Help host, schedule, present a workshop. Contact: Liz Dowler: dr.liz.dowler@gmail.com, Juanita Owens: samowens0969@yahoo.com, or Marion: 283 4632

-June 7: Annual Plant Sale!
Morning pre-sale plant drop on the 7th. Early plant drop off evening of 6th. Set some of your starts aside for the sale! Thanks in advance.

-June, July, August: Local garden tours. Open to dues-current members-a membership benefit. Ideas welcome.

-How about a tour to another part of Alaska? What gardens do you want to visit? We could rent a couple vans.

CPGC Annual Fundraiser

SeaAg Fertilizer Sale

Order Now for - May 10th Delivery

Pick up Time: 9am –2pm

Location: Snug Harbor Seafood parking lot on K-Beach Rd..... or it's donated elsewhere.

Same prices as last year!

Alaska Granular Fish:

10# Plastic Jug... \$25

Wide mouth, convenient handle

50# Bag... \$40 The best buy

Orders taken at the April 8th meeting, the Home Show booth on April 12-13 or until May 1.

E-mail akdon@acsalaska.net or call 398-4474

Pick up Day:

**Be prepared for some fishy perfume.
Lay something protective down in your vehicle.**





Get Ready For Spring, March 29, 2014 Huge Success!

Didn't make it Saturday? Here's a glimpse of what happened...

1) Fritz Miller (plaid shirt & hat) lead the "Compost" round table, and explained his composting methods and more.

2) Velma Bittick (far right) leads the round table on "Garden Planning" while husband, Tom Gotcher (standing background) is showing and telling about "Grow Bucket Assembly." The two of them have encyclopedic level information on all things growing.



3) Don Thompson (beard & cap) leads the round table on "Potatoes, Grow, Harvest & Store." He had several colorful varieties for his table participants to examine and learn about.

4) Pam Voeller explaining the high tunnel Cost Share program details to a participant in Saturday's event.

5) Bill and Liz Lynch's (standing, short sleeved shirt & long blond hair) round table topic was "Season Extension in High Tunnels. They showed some of the tools they use as well as many images of their fabulous produce production.



6) Cathy Haas (smiling on right) led the "Seed Starting" round table and brought in several of her containers to show how she gets plants going this time of year. It was a busy table.

Thank you to all the Round Table Leaders for our Get Ready for Spring Event. You made it the success it was for 336 visitors!!
We've received so many positive comments.



Cathy Haas, Velma Bittick, Tom Gotcher, Don Thompson, Juanita Owens, Liz Dowler, Will & Jane Madison, Fritz Miller, Abby Ala, Judy Fischer, Monica Griffin, Michelle Lavignuer, Liz & Bill Lynch, Pam Voeller NRCS, Linda Tannehill Extension Office

Also thank you to Kay Gardner, Cindy Barnes, Peggy Morris, Mark Scheffert, Pat Udelhoven and other volunteers for helping with the nuts and bolts of the day and at the tables.



Photos from Saturday's event were taken by Pat Udelhoven.

Surprise Crop Planted by Tiny Hands: Peas in Pea Gravel

Just want to share a planting fluke that my granddaughter Tabby and I discovered last summer.

It was a nice day when my granddaughter came to visit. She had helped her mom and I a few weeks earlier plant seeds and plants in our garden but on this day, she seemed a little bored as 4 year olds often do.

“Grandma, can we plant something?” I thought for a few minutes as most of the planting space I had was already taken up. But we can’t afford to turn down a willing and eager helper as we get older, so we came up with an idea to plant some peas in the pea gravel along the inside of the fence that surrounds the garden. We took a couple of packages of pea seed out of my stash (you know the one, we all have, with surplus seed



packages that never found a home) and mixed them up in a small bowl. I made the holes in the pea gravel and Tabby’s job was to put seeds into each hole. Some holes got one or two seeds and some got six or so. I wasn’t really concerned about how many seeds were in each hole, as I had no expectations for our endeavor other than to keep my granddaughter happy (and interested in gardening).

The pea gravel areas get nice and warm when the summer sun hits it and I watered the area as I watered the rest of the garden. Low and behold, they came up—I was so surprised! So occasionally I added some liquid fertilizer and continued to water our new crop. We shucked a good amount of peas and put them up in the freezer over the summer. So now I have an expanded project this summer, to see what else we can get to grow in that nice warm pea gravel. It has an added plus in that after the growing season is over, you can more easily pull the roots out for easier clean-up than from the soil! Yes, Tabby and I are planting peas in the pea gravel again this year!

Thanks for letting me share.

Contributed by Monica Griffin

Got a story or photos to share?

Contact Marion Nelson, 283-4632 or
mmkn@ptialaska.net

Advertising space available at very
 reasonable prices!

Check out the club’s Face Book page!

Newsletter layout by Becky Holloway and Pam Voeller



ONE FOR THE BIRDS

One for the rook, one for the crow,

One to die and one to grow.

Plant your seeds in a row,

One for pheasant, one for crow,

One to eat and one to grow.

—Traditional Rhymes



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2014

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LEMON, ORANGE, AND LIME TREES

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TOMATO AND CUCUMBER PLANTS

DAHLIAS PERENNIALS



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