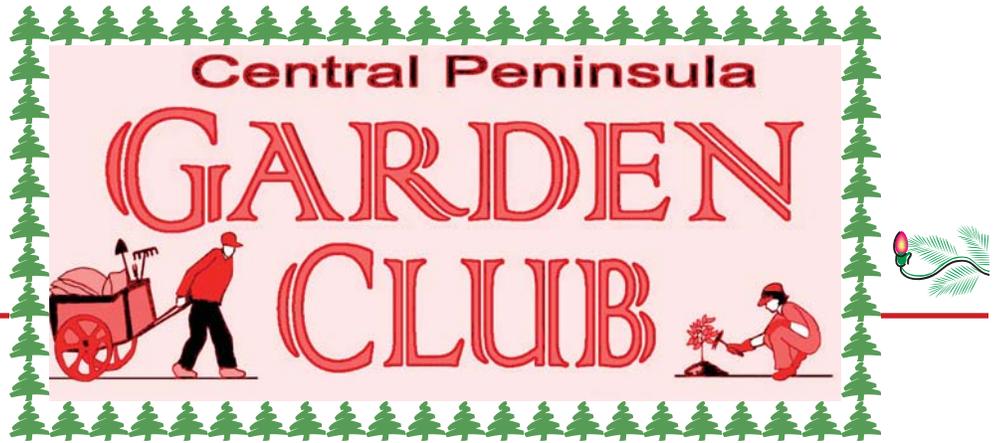


December 2012

Central Peninsula Garden Club



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



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Rock Garden Construction and Hardy Alpine Plants—

December 11th Program Presented by Jaime Rodriguez, Alpine Garden Nursery in Palmer

Jaime (High-may) is one of the most dynamic and energetic speakers we've ever had. On the 11th we'll learn how to construct and create a rock garden from the bottom up and how to plant it with super hardy alpine plants. Jaime is loaded with information and a handout will be available— plus the list can be emailed. Rock gardens are a great place to plant a variety of herbs along with other plant choices.

Jaime Rodriguez is amateur botanist, plant collector, and owner of The Alpine Garden Nursery in Palmer, Alaska. He worked as the gardener for The Mat-Su Agriculture Showcase Garden at the Palmer Visitors Center from 1998 through 2003. He was the superintendent of the cut flower exhibit at the Alaska State Fair from 1999 through 2007. His work with the Alaska Rock Garden Society is most noted for the seed collecting expedition to China in September and October of 2000 and the chapter he wrote on rock gardening in Alaska for the book "Rock Garden Construction", which was produced by the North American Rock Garden Society and published by Timber Press in 2003.

Jaime has a B.A. in Theatre from the University of Alaska, Anchorage. He graduated Magna Cum Laude with leadership honors and is a member of the academic fraternity Phi Kappa Phi. He is 12 credits short of a second B.A. in Cultural Anthropology. Jaime also has extensive media and broadcasting experience. Currently, Jaime works full-time as a Project Administrator for Alcan Electrical & Engineering, Inc, handling material requisition and project documentation for many large construction projects around Alaska, in addition to running his nursery in the summer.

Jaime is a wealth of information on so many Alaskan plants, their origins, propagation and lots more. Don't miss this information packed program.

Meeting Time: 7pm

Location: Aquaculture Bldg. on K-Beach Road between KSRM and SBS.
Free and open to the public. Refreshments and sometimes door prizes.

Membership information at www.cenpengardenclub.org

For more information, call Marion 283 4632 or mmkn@ptialaska.net

See page 6 for a list of recommended rock garden plants.

Nov 13th Meeting— Men Who Compost & The Worms That Love Them



Who knew worms could be so complex? Thanks to panelists Tom Gotcher, Bruce King, and Matt Bowser, the 80-some people in attendance left knowing a lot more about red wigglers and the worms that generally inhabit our area.

Worm action in your outdoor compost pile is generally welcome but when they migrate into our wooded areas, it isn't always the best. The worms in our area are not native to Alaska but have made the trip in various ways such as tire treads, plants or shipped in soil.

Worm castings are a form of black gold and a powerful fertilizer, too strong to be used full strength in most applications. Tom and Bruce brought casting samples for all to see, smell and touch. Indoor worm farm pictures were explained and shown, including the typical commercial tiered worm farm as well as Tom's (and Velma's) converted chest freezer. See their article in this newsletter.

Thank you again, Tom, Bruce and Matt.

Top left: Experience composter, Tom Gotcher, with a jar of worm castings from his "worm farm". Castings are nutrient rich fertilizer and can too hot for some plants if used exclusively.

Left: Bruce King, biologist (and volley ball coach) with a bucket of dried worm castings from his home vermiculture set up.

Right: Matt Bowser, Wildlife Refuge Entomologist, talking to Velma Bittick about vermiculture details.



A Thank You from the Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District..

The Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District says a big "THANK YOU" to the Central Peninsula Garden Club for co-sponsoring the 2012 Conservation Poster Contest on the theme, "Soil to Spoon." Proud first place winners Kyle Rice, age 9 of Soldotna, and Jaedyn Gale, age 13 of Soldotna, received their prizes at the Nov. 13 club meeting. Winner Jeanelee Stock, age 15, of Nikiski was unable to attend. Thanks again to the CPGC for donating cash prizes and hosting the award ceremony.

~Heidi Chay, District Manager

...and an Invitation



Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District invites you to a
Holiday Open House

When: December 11, 3 - 6 pm

Where: 110 Trading Bay, Suite 160 (across from the Kenai Courthouse)

- * Help celebrate our progress in 2012!
- * See our new space, learn about District projects, and
- * Browse our new Sustainable Ag library of books, magazines and videos.

Lots of homemade holiday treats to enjoy!

www.kenaisoilandwater.org



Ag Producers Needed for Bear Project

A small Oregon company, BirdGard LLC, is working with the AK Dept of Fish & Game under a grant from USDA-NRCS on repelling bears from ag operations. The project is a short-term field trial of a device used for repelling geese and deer that has been re-engineered with the intent to repel bears. A variety of USDA-eligible ag producers are needed, including small flock, herd, or bee keepers. Please contact Karen Dearlove with NRCS for more information: 907-283-8732 x114 or karen.dearlove@ak.usda.gov.

Tom & Velma's "Worm Farm" Container

A recycled chest style freezer houses our "worm farm." We removed the compressor, cord and drain plug from the freezer box, and then placed a small piece of synthetic (so worms can't eat it) fabric over the drain hole so they can't crawl out. A hole saw was used to make a 2 1/2 inch air vent hole through the lid for ventilation, through which we ran a cord and hung a 15 watt light bulb inside the container, to help with temperature control.

The converted freezer is kept in the garage where the temperature is about 40 degrees in winter, and the light from the light-bulb keeps the worms down in the bedding material where they hide in the dark. The warmth keeps them actively eating and when we want to slow the population down, we lower the temp by turning off the light part of the time, and yes you do need a good seal, but they need air too.

We layered about one inch of soil on the bottom for a good bacterial foundation and grit. To that, we added about two inches of partially decomposed material from under an alder patch to give the worms some "fast food" and then added one pound of red wiggler composting worms. We topped it off with about 15 gallons of shredded dry leaves that we remoistened and then covered with a layer of cardboard to keep the leaves moist and let the worms do their thing.

~ Tom & Velma



Answers To Common Worm Questions—From "Uncle Jim's Worm Farm"

You might be surprised at some of the answers!

Do Worms Have Eyes? Worms do not have eyes, however, they do have receptor cells that let them know when it is light or dark. They use similar receptor cells to find their way around by detecting vibrations in the ground.

Do Worms Have Mouths? Worms do have mouths. They use their mouths to ingest dirt and food particles found in the soil they are tunneling through. These food particles turn into valuable compost that fertilizes the ground they dwell in.

Do Worms Bite? Since worms do not have teeth, they cannot bite you. Most people find that holding a worm is fun and ticklish. You should not be afraid to hold a worm.

Do Worms Lay Eggs? Worms form cocoons that look like lemon-shaped incubators where tiny embryonic worms develop. These tiny worms later emerge from the cocoon as fully formed worms. Worms do not give birth to live baby worms.

Do Worms Have Brains? This is a debated topic that has no real authoritative answer, but the general consensus is yes. Worms do have brains, although they are very small and simple. It is believed by many that the sole function of the worm's brain is to direct its body movement in response to light and that if the brain of a worm were removed, there would be hardly any noticeable changes in the worm's behavior.

Do Worms Sleep? This is a tough question that bewilders even scientists. It really depends on the definitions of sleep. If sleep is defined as a period of inactivity, then worms indeed sleep. If sleep is defined as a loss of consciousness, typical brain wave patterns consistent with "sleep" and closed eyes, then worms do not sleep.

Do Worms Breathe? Worms breathe through their skin, which helps explain why worms are slimy. Moist skin helps worms breathe more easily. This is why it is common to see worms surface after a rain storm. They love moisture. If worms dry out, they will die.

Do Worms Feel Pain? While there are varying definitions of the word pain, and while worms do not suffer the same way as we vertebrates suffer, worms do feel negative stimuli. Perception of pain is important to the survival of any animal. So in short, yes, worms feel pain.

Encourage Your Worms to Multiply—From "Uncle Jim's Worm Farm" product sales email

Red wigglers are simple invertebrates. There are no Harlequin Romance® novels featuring worms, however, worm reproduction is interesting because:

*The more worms you have, the more vegetation they will eat, therefore, you will get more worm castings or "black gold" to fertilize your garden, faster.

*Worms are hermaphrodites, meaning they can function as both genders. But a single worm cannot reproduce on its own: it takes at least 2 worms to tango. Adult worms use part of one end of their bodies for reproduction.

*When worms mate, a "clitellum" appears, which is a ring round the worm. The worm wriggles out of the ring, depositing a fertilized cocoon. It takes around two or three weeks for the cocoon to mature, then the eggs hatch and baby worms are born.

*Happy worms reproduce more. Keep your vermicomposting bin healthy by providing proper drainage, moisture, cover and temperature; enough food and an ample amount of space, so the worms can move around and breed. Give the worms what they need, and they will breed almost as fast as rabbits!

*If you have too many worms, you can give them to friends...

*[Vermicomposting](http://unclejimswormfarm.com) is a fun activity that reduces kitchen and garden waste, and produces superb fertilizer for the garden. (unclejimswormfarm.com)

.....
This is not an endorsement, just passing on information and one source of composting worms.

~Marion Nelson

Gardening in the Classroom

By Kat and Cloe in Mrs. Werner's 6th grade class, Tustumena Elementary

Gardening in the classroom is a worthwhile activity. Watching plants grow is an amazing thing to do. In our classroom we use hydroponics. Hydroponics is an easy way to enjoy gardening in the winter time. It doesn't take much to set up and the benefits can be exponential. The way it works is a basin is filled with water and nutrients and it is pumped throughout the system. Plants roots drink up the water and nutrients allowing it to grow much faster than in soil. In soil, it takes longer because not everything is right where the plant needs it. In the hydroponics system it is easier for the plant to access what it needs because the roots are in the solution and the plant can grow at a faster rate.

We had problems getting our hydroponics working to begin with but Mrs. Werner found out a tube had become disconnected. Once it was reconnected, the water began circulating. We have transplanted pepper plants in it and have planted a variety of seeds. The transplants are doing great and it will be interesting to see whose seeds germinate first.

Plants are important to all life for several reasons. Not only are they fun to watch grow, they also provide oxygen and food. If we didn't have plants, we would die. From the minute a seed sprouts its first leaf, the process of photosynthesis has begun. Photosynthesis occurs in plants and helps keep all of us alive. Not only does it make food for the plant but it also creates oxygen for us to breathe. The chloroplasts in a plant use the sun's rays as energy and along with water and carbon dioxide in photosynthesis. Most people don't think about how much work it takes just so we can breathe but plants are important to us and without them we could never survive.

Some things we plan on doing this year with gardening, is continue with our hydroponics, build a low tunnel with Carrots for the Kenai and host a Farmer's Market in the summer.

Will Hightower's Compost Ramblings

A Compost Pile that went wrong (many times)...

Years ago I started gathering materials for composting: a little grass, some leaves and garden waste, rabbit droppings, and kitchen scraps. I stacked this material on the ground- the first mistake. The weeds would grow through the pile, that is if the pile didn't get scattered before the weeds took over. Healthy weeds made the pile hard to work with.

Stage two - an attempt to keep the compost pile in one location. Old pallets were placed on edge to form a bin which defined the compost pile size and location. This does nothing for weeds or pile turning.

Stage three - a worm farm for kitchen scraps. These farms work great for small quantities. Take my word that an out of the way location is needed, the flies and smell are not tolerated by the other household member.

Stage four - add the by products of three alpacas. This is real volume shock!

Stage five - get out of the rocks and weeds. The whole operation moved onto a concrete pad with four slatted bins. Sure got rid of the weeds but didn't speed up the composting.

Stage six - cover the bins in a plastic house. The compost bins heated up and the piles visually shrank, until they dried out. More work with artificial watering.

Stage seven - edges of the piles do not compost, even with water and heat. The piles need to be turned. Did you ever try to keep up with turning 256 cubic feet of compost at age 72 and have time for a life?

Stage eight - do not include raw seeds in the worm farm or compost pile. The operations just do not get hot enough throughout to kill all the seeds. I get all kinds of unidentified volunteer plants in the garden beds where I've applied compost. This includes the largest nasturtium plant I've ever seen! I did have a good potato crop from one of the compost bins where I threw the previous year's junk spuds.

Stage nine - a wind storm dropped a large cottonwood tree right through the middle of the compost operation, wiping out the plastic cover and two of the bins.

Stage ten - I've got worms, lots of earth worms in all the compost piles. And, the center of the older piles is a black muck. Never empty a finished worm farm tray into your compost pile. Worms invade that pile and the piles close by.

Stage eleven - USDA suggests building solid bins so a forklift can be used to turn the piles. More work and expense. Still need to hand throw the spillage back in and not a real good method of turning.

Conclusion: clean the Alpaca pen daily, never turn the piles, let the worms do their thing, use the center of the piles on the garden, throw the edges of the pile back into another bin for recycling, and go have a beer.

One last note: Never use straight compost in a patch adjacent to your rhubarb, more on this problem in a future rambling.



Holiday recipes from Garden Club Members

CRANBERRY SALAD

The era of this recipe is the 50's when Jell-O became the rage. Five generations have loved it. I like the pieces big enough to identify and have some texture. It is SUPURB on turkey sandwiches and we have used this in muffin batter and as a topping on ice cream and warm cake.

** Grind 2 cups raw cranberries and 6 cups raw unpeeled apples.

**Add 1 cup sugar, mix, refrigerate mixture overnight.

**Add 3/4 cup chopped celery and 3/4 cup chopped walnuts.

**Mix in 2 small pkgs (6oz) raspberry Jell-O.

**Chill at least 4 hours.

TRANSPARENT CUSTARD

This recipe has been in our family since the mid 1800's. It was saved for special occasions as it was very, very expensive to make. Vanilla and sugar were luxuries. Three cups of sugar were enough to keep many families in "sweetenins" for months. If shortening or margarine is substituted for butter it becomes lactose free.

**Beat together 1 c butter and 3 c sugar until creamy.

**Beat 6 eggs very well. Add eggs and 3 T flour to creamy mix.

**Add 2 T vinegar, 2 T water, 1 T vanilla, mix well.

**Pour into unbaked pie crusts (makes 2 pies) and bake at 450 for 10-15 min and finish at 300 about 30 min. Cool several hours. Cut into 16 wedges.

~from Velma Bittick

FRUIT CAKE

This recipe was given to my mother by her best friend, Barbara Bolan, in 1955. She made it every year about 6 weeks before Christmas and would spoon more brandy over the cakes a few more times until she handed them out to the family on Christmas morning. Some friends of my grandfather would give her the walnuts and when we got older my sister and I were in charge of cracking and shelling them. Having a Kitchenaid mixer (which she didn't) makes stirring the fruit into the batter much easier. It is very moist and keeps well in the refrigerator and can also be frozen. Most people who hated fruitcake loved this one.

1 CUP FAT OR SHORTENING

2 CUPS SUGAR

2 EGGS

2-1/2 CUPS HOT APPLESAUCE (2.5 OZ JAR)

2 TEASPOONS SODA

4 CUPS FLOUR

1/2 TEASPOON SALT

2 TEASPOONS CINNAMON

1 TEASPOON ALLSPICE

1 TEASPOON CLOVES

CREAM FAT AND SUGAR, ADD EGGS ONE AT A TIME, THEN APPLESAUCE WITH 1 TSP SODA DISSOLVED IN IT. MIX IN DRY INGREDIENTS. SPRINKLE THE FOLLOWING WITH PART OF FLOUR SO IT DOESN'T STICK TOGETHER AND THEN ADD TO BATTER.

2 POUNDS RAISINS

1-1/2 POUNDS CANDIED FRUIT

1 POUND SLICED DATES

1 POUND WALNUTS MEATS (4 CUPS)

LINE SIX SMALL LOAF PANS AND ONE REGULAR LOAF PAN WITH BROWN PAPER, GREASE WELL, POUR IN BATTER. BAKE IN 275° OVEN 1 HOUR FOR SMALL PANS AND 1-1/2 HOURS FOR REGULAR PAN OR UNTIL DONE. AFTER COOLING, REMOVE BROWN PAPER, POUR BRANDY OVER TOP, COOL COMPLETELY. WRAP AND STORE IN COOL PLACE.

~from Sheryl Miller

THE STONER FAMILY EGGNOG: John Stoner via Fanny Farmer, 1950 or so

Blend together 1 quart whipping cream, 1 quart milk, 1 quart Bourbon and 1 cup rum. Set aside.

Beat 1 dozen egg yolks with 1 cup of sugar and ¼ teaspoon of salt until fluffy, nice and light. (Take the time to do it, it's worth it).

Beat 1 dozen egg whites until stiff, then add ½ cup of sugar.

Combine whites with yolks, and then blend well.

Combine egg mixture with cream and liquor mixture.

Ladle the mixture into a glass container: gallon jar or quart jars or whatever you have. Let sit a week (if you can) in the frig. Shake/stir until mixed then pour into glasses or mugs. Top with freshly ground nutmeg and serve.

~ from Mary Starrs Armstrong



<p>KENAI FEED & SUPPLY</p> <p>www.kenafeed.com</p> <p>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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Recommended Rock Garden Plants

Rock Garden Plant	Blooming Season	Flower Color
<i>Alyssum saxatile</i> 'Basket of Gold'	spring	yellow
<i>Antennaria</i> spp. - Pussytoes	early summer	whitish or pinkish
<i>Arabis</i> spp. - Rockcress	spring	white or pink
<i>Armeria maritima</i> - Thrift	early summer	pink or white
<i>Artemisia schmidtiana</i> 'Silver Mound'	all season (foliage)	silver foliage
<i>Aquilegia flabellata</i> - Dwarf Columbine	late spring	mostly blue
<i>Aster alpinus</i> - Alpine Aster	early summer	blue, purple, pink or white
<i>Aster dumosus</i> - Dwarf Michaelmas Daisy	early fall	pink, red, purple or lavender-blue
<i>Aubretia deltoidea</i> - Rockcress	spring/early summer	purple, magenta or lavender-blue
<i>Campanula</i> spp. - Dwarf Harebells	mid-summer	blue or white
<i>Daphne cneorum</i> - Rose Daphne	late spring	pink
<i>Dianthus</i> spp. - Pinks	mid-summer	combinations of pink and white
<i>Euphorbia myrsinites</i> - Spurge	late spring- early summer	yellow
<i>Genista pilosa</i> "Vancouver Gold"	late spring/early summer	yellow
<i>Gentiana acaulis</i> - Trumpet Gentian	late spring	deep blue
<i>Gentiana septemfida</i> - Fall Gentian	late summer-early fall	deep blue
<i>Geranium</i> spp. - Dwarf Hardy Geranium	all summer	purple, pink or blue
<i>Iris pumila</i> - Dwarf Bearded Iris	late spring	variety of colours
<i>Iberis sempervirens</i> - Evergreen Candytuft	late spring	white
<i>Leontopodium alpinum</i> - Edelweiss	early summer	white
<i>Papaver alpinum</i> - Alpine Poppy	late spring through summer	white, yellow, orange or pink
<i>Penstemon</i> spp. - Dwarf Beardtongue	early summer	pink, purple, blue or white
<i>Phlox subulata</i> - Moss or Creeping Phlox	late spring/early summer	pink, blue, red or white
<i>Potentilla</i> spp. - Dwarf Cinquefoil	late spring/early summer	yellow
<i>Primula</i> spp. - Dwarf Primrose	spring	pink, purple or white
<i>Pulsatilla vulgaris</i> - Pasque-flower	spring	purple, pink, red or white
<i>Saponaria ocymoides</i> - Soapwort	early summer	pink
<i>Saxifraga paniculata</i> - Encrusted Saxifrage	early summer	mostly white
<i>Saxifraga X arendsii</i> - Mossy Saxifrage	spring	white, pink or red
<i>Sedum</i> spp. - Stonecrop	summer	yellow, pink, red or white
<i>Sempervivum</i> spp. - Hens and Chicks	all season (foliage)	white, pink or red
<i>Thymus</i> spp. - Creeping Thyme	summer	purple, pink or white
<i>Veronica</i> spp. - Speedwell	late spring/summer	blue
<i>Viola</i> spp. - Violets	spring/early summer	blue, purple or white
<i>Primula</i> spp. - Dwarf Primrose	spring	pink, purple or white
<i>Pulsatilla vulgaris</i> - Pasque-flower	spring	purple, pink, red or white
<i>Saponaria ocymoides</i> - Soapwort	early summer	pink
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<i>Viola</i> spp. - Violets	spring/early summer	blue, purple or white

1/2 price T-Shirt sale at the Dec 11th meeting. Get your long sleeve CPGC logo T-shirt while they last.

BPA in Food Packaging—Read the Fall 2012, Mother Earth News article on BPA in food packaging/processing aka, food contact material on pages 6 & 7. Thank you—Mother!” ~ Marion Nelson

New York Greens—Here’s a story about New York gardens, and the will of some to keep them going, including Mayor Bloomberg. Post-Sandy clean up is the most recent challenge adding to their regular fall clean up. We can wish them well from afar. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/01/garden/urban-gardens-grow-everything-except-gardeners.html?page-wanted=1&r=0&src=rechp>

To place ads, submit stories or pictures, contact Marion Nelson, 283 4632 or mmkn@ptialaska.net Newsletter layout/production—Pam Voeller



Treasurer’s Report, November 2012

Beginning Balance: \$14,819.74

Expenses:

Gift cards - \$75.00
 Awards poster contest - \$50.00
 Printing - \$13.75
 - \$138.75



Income:

Redeposit donation to 4H \$500.00
 Member dues \$40.00
 \$540.00

Ending Balance: \$15,220.99

Submitted by Peggy Morris, Treasurer

**MARION'S
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