

February 2015



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

February 10th Program

Movin' On Up to Market Sales?

During the past few years, we've seen many wonderful Farmers Markets spring up in the Central Peninsula area as more and more growers reached a level of abundance that warranted taking the next step. Of course there are many ways to sell produce and we've seen those efforts

increase too: Subscription sales, sales to restaurants, U-pick, work-produce trade, individual roadside stands, and value added items such jam/jelly/syrup or Alaska Berries wonderful new winery. With that big step comes detailed planning, marketing, food safety, local markets and efficient management. That's what the February 10th Garden Club and the February 11th Round Table presentations (see flyer on page 2) are about, presented by the very experienced Arthur Keyes who has really been-there, done-that with his own Glacier Valley Farm and starting the South Anchorage Farmer's Market some years ago. Along with Arthur, Amy Petit from the Alaska Division of Ag will fill us in on the various Ag programs available to help people make the move into sales and management. They are both a wealth of information, excellent presenters and very personable folks. Don't miss these two worthwhile events!



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Tuesday, February 10th - Garden Club Program

Time: 7pm --- Free and open to the public.

Location: Cook Inlet Aquaculture Bldg., Mile 16.5 K-Beach Road.
Refreshments & door prizes.

Wednesday February 11th - **"Farmers Market Roundtable"**

Time: 9am-4pm -- Free.

Lunch sponsored by the CPGC with special thanks to Velma Bittick.

Location: Cook Inlet Aquaculture Bldg., Mile 16.5 K-Beach Road.

***Sponsors: Kenai Solid & Water Conservation District, Alaska Grown, USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program and CPGC*

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Will's Rambling**A Tale of Two Tunnels —by Will Hightower**

Warning: The following Ramble was written by me, a fellow that allowed another guy to break his big toe and then paid the guy thousands of dollars to put the toe back together. View any information presented here with my intelligence in mind.

Congratulations, you have been approved for a high tunnel through the USDA's tunnel program.

So, what do you do now? Well, actually nothing at this point. You still have to wait until you're funded – that is through another government agency. Don't sign a purchase order until you are notified that the money is reserved for your project.

When you know that the money is reserved, then it is time to spring into action. Now you might want to know what we did from this point on. You might not want to know our experiences, OK, won't go there much. If you keep reading, you are going to learn about our trips and falls, a fair number.

Monti and I moved to our current home in early winter 1990. The next spring we started gardening. Over the years we cleared spots, built terraces, planted trees and berries and acquired animals. Some years we did well, some years the weeds won. With advancing age, raised box gardening came along. Composting developed. Home built greenhouses were built. And, the animal cemetery on the hill expanded. Through it all, "learning" always proved to be the best crop of the season.

One Sunday evening about two years ago, while thinking about what needed to be done next in the garden, I said, "We should apply for a high tunnel". Monti's only reaction was "YES!"

Well, where do you place a large structure? The only clear, flat area of the size needed was the side yard, right in front of the picture window, looking out towards the lake. It was finally decided that the best place was where the garden already existed. This area was not flat, contained three, fruit bearing, apple trees, three home built greenhouses, assorted berry bushes, and twenty eight raised boxes 2'X2'X4' full of dirt. Also there was no water or power to the site. Oh, yes, there was also a garden fence of 3" steel pipes cemented into the ground and strung with three different kinds of wire.

Apple trees, what a shame to lose them. We needed to build a new orchard, but where. How about out away from the picture window - you can look through tree branches easier than plastic. The berry bushes could be moved to the "new orchard" also. This would require building a new orchard fence. Those bad words "cost and time". There was also the problem of moving "large" plants. We are waiting for spring to see the survival rate. Not being very positive of results we did buy one apple tree from Ron this last season.

I forgot about the nearly 2 ft. diameter Birch that we had topped out years ago. This "stump" was 20 ft. tall and had been the happy home of many woodpeckers through the years. We hired a pro to drop the stump. This required ripping out part



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of the fence at the time of dropping the stump. This old fat boy can still move when needed! Even then the "log" had to come down across a corner of the rhubarb terrace and required much clean up. What to do with the "short stump?" Clean-up is clean-up, we've all been there. Turned out when I rented a Bobcat for plot leveling, the old stump was so rotten that I could just shove it out.

It should be easy to level a garden spot. Well, think again. When I went to raised box gardening, I scraped up much of the soil and placed the soil in the boxes. What was left on the ground was gravel with large rocks. The garden area is next to the native forest, mainly birch. Birch tree roots go in search of water and nutrients.



Some of the original raised garden boxes were totally choked with roots. The later boxes with road fabric on the bottoms had no invasive roots and much richer looking soil. The native ground was a mass of all sizes of roots. A root ripper needed to be the first tool used. We didn't have access to one. With the roots and the rocks in the native ground, it was hard to do any leveling. This was somewhat overcome by splitting the high tunnel into two sections, allowing for two different elevations.

And, here is a happy little thought to leave you with: The IRS considers the money the USDA reimburses you toward the cost of the high tunnel as income to you. Happy April 15th!!!

(Coming next month....Part 2 the saga continues)



FARMERS MARKET ROUNDTABLE



Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2015

9 am to 4 pm

at Cook Inlet Aquaculture Assoc.
on K-Beach Road, Kenai

No charge. Lunch provided.
To register, call 283-8732 x5

Scaling Up: Ready for the farmers market?

Are you a successful gardener thinking about marketing your produce? Or are you already in the market and want to learn more tips of the trade? This one-day event is for market farmers, farmers market managers and anyone interested in Alaska's rapidly developing farmers market scene.

Featuring Guest Speakers:

Arthur Keyes, South Anchorage Farmers Market and Glacier Valley Farm
Amy Pettit, Alaska Division of Agriculture

...and info on planning, marketing, food safety, local markets...
Everything you need to know to get started!

Sponsors:



USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program

"A garden is a thing of beauty and a job forever."
—Richard Briers



"One of the healthiest ways to gamble is with a spade and a package of garden seeds." —Dan Bennett



"Man—despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication, and his many accomplishments—owes his existence to a six inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains."

—Author Unknown



"There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments."
—Janet Kilburn Phillips



"Real gardeners buy at least ten thousand plants in the course of a lifetime without having the least idea where they'll put any of them when they get home."—Author Unknown



"Worms. I cannot come to terms with worms."
—Henry Gibson

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

Gardening in Egegik —by Nancy Veal

Tim (Veal) landed our super cub on the gravel runway on the north side of the Egegik River across from the village of Egegik. It was the first part of June and fishing season was just getting underway. He rolled into the parking spot and revved the engine to get the plane in place for tie down. After he got out, I handed him the Tiny Tim tomato plant we had carefully packed. It was about a foot high and already had tomatoes. We loaded the four wheeler trailer with last minute things we had stuffed into the plane and I rode behind Tim, carefully carrying the Tiny Tim tomato plant and some lettuce starts. What a person won't do to experience the joy of fresh salad!



Productive and treasured Tiny Tim tomato plant amidst the storage items.

Gardening is challenging in a place where average temperatures are in the mid forties, the soil is poor and the growing season about six weeks, depending on the fish buyer's willingness to keep us in business. Add to that: the wind. We have a love-hate relationship with the wind! At 15 knots average and many times much greater than that, it is almost constant. But when there's no wind, those nasty black flies, mosquitoes and other bugs buzz about our heads, at the worst choking, blinding and biting us; at the least, annoying us.

Most of the food we eat during fishing season arrives on a barge. That shipment includes some potting soil we use to amend the Egegik soil. We only fly out a limited amount of fresh food, so any produce that can be grown is treasured. Crops such as arugula, radishes, and leaf lettuce are plants that have been successfully raised (and eaten) in Egegik. Nothing like a meal of fresh red salmon and green salad to fill up a fisherman!



Cold Framed Kale and greens in windy Egegik.

Finding a gardening container is part of the fun. Almost nothing gets tossed out there—you might need it for something—thus, old fish totes or bathtubs with holes are up for grabs. Our soil was tested and found wanting (pH 4.3, nitrogen 54, phosphorus 14, and potassium 83). Huge amounts of lime and some 6-32-16 fertilizer were recommended, plus good quality compost. The compost pile is under way...it has to be covered tightly or the arctic ground squirrels have a hay day! As a matter of fact, all growing things have to be covered with plastic sheeting or

the wind blows them away and/or the squirrels eat them. People grow plants in any space that has good exposure to the sun and protection from the wind and animal pests. Our neighbors built a shower out of corrugated

Lexan on the corner of their house. They hang containers of plants in there. It's a perfect greenhouse. I assume they remove the plants when they shower. We give them the courtesy of never stumbling through the alders for a look.

Some of our friends have constructed small greenhouses that produce well. Besides the regular crops of lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard and mustard greens, one friend has grown cucumbers, tomatoes, hot peppers and even corn. Even though her family stays longer than we do, she is often faced



Corn growing greenhouse faces south. Lots of sun—when it shines. Two waist high beds on either side of the aisle. My friend grows enough lettuce to supply 5-6 families. Starts lots of plants at home and hauls them to Egegik. Adjacent sauna provides some heat a few times a week.

(.....continued next page)

SHEEP When someone tells you they raise sheep for fiber and meat, you think to yourself, "that is cool...."

BEEES When you meet someone who raises bees and makes honey, you think to yourself, "that is so COOL!"

GARDEN When someone tells you that they have a small home garden and a stand at the farmer's market, you think, "wow, that's cool, I should do that."

CHICKENS When someone tells you they raise chickens and sell their fresh colorful eggs, you think, "wow, pretty cool!"

For more information about joining visit us on the web at: www.ALASKAFB.org

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This can be you. Join the movement. It is COOL to grow things, nurture plants and animals and SHARE with others. Support local farms and buying local. Support your local FARM BUREAU. Support agriculture - small farms, big farms. That helps us to help YOU be a healthy and happy locivore!

with leaving her harvest to the neighbors. Down by the school there are huge tires that a past resident used as planters. From time spent on the playground with the grandchildren, I know why they are now filled with weeds. The wind blows through there at hurricane force!

Hope this article has been out of the ordinary. It is by no means a treatise on gardening that the knowledgeable readers of this publication usually read. The Cooperative Extension publications from our local office (262-5824) have always been the mainstay of my gardening knowledge. Recently I ran across another good publication that will help me in Egegik in the future. "Short Season Vegetable Gardening" by Jo Ann Robbins and an article by Wm. Michael Colt (A Pacific Northwest Extension Publications #497) contains good information; accessible on-line. Also, "Make Your Own Complete Fertilizer" HGA-00131 (UAF Cooperative Extension publication) offers ideas to try next summer. I plan to look for some old walrus bones I know about; drag them in, burn them, and use the ashes for fertilizer! There is so much fish waste but I am not ready for bears reaping my garden fare and scaring me spit less.

Why do we bother to garden for the short summer? Gardening is in the blood—if there's soil, water and hope, you must garden! The amount of fresh produce harvested is probably not worth the time and effort. But the excitement of going every day to see how much the lettuce leaves have grown; picking a radish to see a red globe... Those are things that thrill the soul of a person who likes to dirty their hands in good, black soil!

Contributed by Nancy Veal of Nikiski

"Our family became involved in 4-H in 1983, and I was a volunteer leader for 18 years."



Healthy looking radishes in a wind proof cold frame.

2001-2011: 4-H/Youth Development Agent for the Kenai Peninsula through the Extension Office on K-Beach Rd.

Upcoming CPGC Events & Volunteer Opportunities!

Volunteers Needed & Appreciated! *2015 Committees Forming in January

It's your club...Help with a committee or event! Most are just once a year events.

- Newsletter:** Editor, or share pictures, articles on local gardening topics. Contact Marion mmkn@ptialaska.net
- Event booth staffing & decorating:** Home Show in April, Ninilchik Fair in August. Contact Cindy Barnes, alaskancindy@yahoo.com or 262-1395
- Workshop Weekends in May.** Arranging workshops, presenters, and venues. Contact Marion mmkn@ptialaska.net
- Program Committee:** Meets occasionally. Contact Marion, mmkn@ptialaska.net
- Publicity Volunteer:** Email publicity information to the media. Contact Marion Nelson, 283-4632.
- Hospitality Committee:** Help at the registration desk for program meetings or certain special events, greeting, taking memberships etc, room set up, refreshments, clean up. Contact Juanita Owens, samowens0969@yahoo.com or (318) 557-9876.
- Co-Videographer/photographer for programs and workshops:** Contact Linda Dunn, lindadunn78@gmail.com or 283-7857.
- Tech committee:** Power Point programs and mike set up for programs, occasional workshops. Contact Don St. John, 398-4474.
- Sea Ag Fertilizer Fundraiser:** Order & Pick-up help, March-May delivery day. Contact Della Bridenburg 776-3908.
- Summer Garden Tours committee.** Coordinate local garden tours during June, July, August. 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 area plantings are a thank you to CIAA for meeting room use throughout the year. We appreciate their valuable meeting space contribution. Contact Peggy Morris, 262-8374.
- Face book page administrator.** Approve/deny requests to join the club's group page. Contact Marion mmkn@ptialaska.net
- Occasional guest speaker lodging or local transportation:** Great opportunity for expert information. Contact Marion, 283-4632.

Programs & Events

- Workshops -TBA
- Feb 10 & 11, Arthur Keyes & Amy Petit. Farm and Farmer's Market Development.
- March 10 TBA
- March-May, Sea Ag Fertilizer Fundraiser Sales. Contact Don St. John 398-4474.
- March 21st -Saturday, "Get Ready for Spring" Round Table Event – Kenai Visitor Center
- March 28-29, Home Show Booth
- April 14, TBA
- May, Workshops
- June, July, August, Summer Garden Tours
- June Plant Sale

