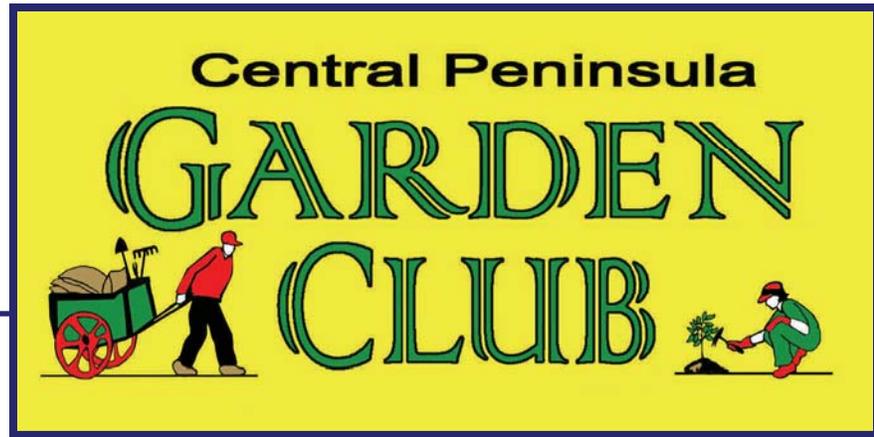


July 2013

Central Peninsula Garden Club



PO Box 767 · Kenai, Alaska 99611 · [www.cenpengardenclub.org](http://www.cenpengardenclub.org)

## Coming Soon! New CPGC Facebook Page

Watch for the new CPGC Facebook page. It will be an “open” page which means anyone can access it (as with most Facebook pages). The committee hopes this will become a useful tool for information, exchanges of all sorts, sharing ideas and more.

Thank you to CPGC committee members, Renae Wall, Janet Jones, Liz Leduc, and to Lisa Beranek of the Kenai Watershed Forum for training.

### *From Facebook Committee member Renae Wall:*

We recognize the desire members have to ask questions and share information with each other. Our Facebook page can provide a way for members to do that, as well as being yet another way the club can post information and reminders about upcoming events. The Homer High Tunnel Growers Facebook page is a great example of what we envision. If you have not visited their page, please take a look: <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/205303872824772/?fref=ts> (This has to be accessed from a face book page.)



The site will be open. We will have two primary administrators monitoring the site for appropriateness. This will help ensure continuous coverage. We will have a disclaimer on the site, reminding visitors that the club is not endorsing any advice or product. We will not allow businesses to post advertisements, although members may certainly share freely about what they like (or not). The subcommittee feels that misuse issues can be addressed as they arise, but we expect that our members will be appropriate and, to an extent, self-monitoring. For example, if someone posts advice that is questionable, another member might post a response that points out the problems with the advice given.

With regards to privacy, we feel that people who choose to use Facebook are responsible for their privacy settings. This Facebook page is simply an additional social forum that the club is providing. Certainly people can choose not to use it. If some members are not comfortable participating on the Facebook page for privacy reasons or whatever, they will not be disadvantaged, because all of the official garden club information will still be available on the website, the club newsletter, and Marion's e-mails.

We hope it will give people an additional way to meet others, benefit from what the garden club has to offer, and feel more ties to the club community. It may also attract new members to the club!

### Board Members

- Marion Nelson - *President, program chair*—  
(907) 283-4632, (907) 398-8669 (cell)
- Liz Leduc - *Vice president, web site coordinator, hospitality*
- Kay Gardner - *Secretary, special events*
- Peggy Morris - *Treasurer, plant sale*
- Chris Cook - *Hospitality chair*
- Cathy Haas - *Plant sale co-chair, historian chair*
- Don St. John - *Tech chair, Sea Ag sales chair, special events*
- Renae Wall - *Publicity chair, nominating committee*
- Don Thompson - *Special events, plant sale*
- Velma Bittick - *Hospitality*
- Lee Bowman - *Sea Ag committee, special events*

## Plant ID Walk with Verna Pratt by Donna Endresen



Above: Verna Pratt on the Keen Eye Trail during our Plant ID Walk from the National Wild Life Refuge Headquarters.

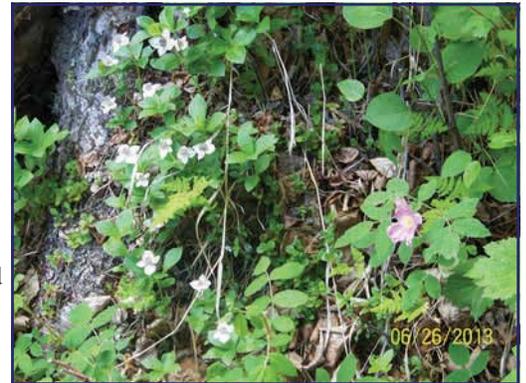
On the evening of Tuesday, June 25th, a few fortunate souls were able to meet with the distinguished Alaskan botanist and author, Verna E. Pratt, for her book signing and a plant identification walk at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

Verna is a wealth of information on Alaskan plants, whether they be trees, wildflowers or berries. And - don't let her age fool you - she can keep up with the best of us! Our walk was no ordinary walk in the park, either. Verna started teaching us almost as soon as we started on the trail with identifying High Bush Cranberries and how to tell them from Red Currants (opposite vs alternate leaves, plus currants have more oblong leaves at the top of the stem). She taught us the difference between our beautiful prickly rose and the Nutka Rose (prickly hairs on the stem vs true thorns), and then on to the difference between the dwarf dogwood and the Canadian dwarf cornel.

We made our way to the viewing platform at the end of the Keen Eye trail, and here we saw many other plants that relish living where it is wetter, such as Alaskan cotton, bog blueberries, and what was the name of that little red flowered beauty? My how soon we forget when we don't have pen and paper in hand!

Some of the many other delights we saw were star flowers, sweet scented bedstraw (how many know how it got the name bedstraw?), the dainty pink twinflower, cloudberry, and watermelon berry (some of these names make me hungry for fresh juicy fruit). We saw many ferns, and how I love lingonberries (low bush cranberries). Two I shall not forget very soon are the mouse ear chickweed (how can such a pretty little flower be a chickweed?) and the single delight/shy maiden - whose small whitish/greenish dainty flower nods downward like a shy little girl. This is one Lee Bowman and myself were both on the ground trying to get a good picture of the flower, and Lee won out.

The walk ended all too soon for me and I am sure for many others. I would love to be able to spend many hours on other trails learning about our beautiful native Alaskan plants from such a learned individual as Verna. We are fortunate to have been able to be able to spend an evening in nature with her!



Top: Cornel and rose.

Above: Trientalis.



Verna was hosted by CPGC, the National Wildlife Refuge, and Alaska Geographic at the pre-walk reception and book signing at the Refuge Headquarters. Thanks to Candace Ward for arranging the reception. She was also hosted to talk about her books at River City Books on Wednesday evening. Verna has many fans! Thanks to Amanda Painter and her mother Penny Bauer for Verna Pratt's lodging during her visit.

Left: Book signing reception at the National Wildlife Refuge Center on Ski Hill Road, before the plant walk. Amanda Painter was thrilled to meet Verna as she has used her books for years. Marion Nelson is shown taking a keepsake picture of, and for, both of them.

# First Garden Tour of Summer 2013 Homer High Tunnel Tour, 6/30/2013

Thanks to Kyra and Neil Wagner’s efforts, a group from CPGC visited five Homer high tunnel growers: Robin McAllister, Neil and Kyra Wagner, Bob Decino and Rita Jo Shoultz.

Our first stop was at Robin’s. Her high tunnel growing is in it’s second year and contains several fruit trees with mixed flowers and vegetables. Asked why she would grow rhubarb in her high tunnel, well... she had rhubarb pie in April! She generally plants the end of May.

Next stop was Neil and Kyra Wagner’s. We saw many things, including chickens, ducks, outdoor raised beds, terraced beds, and a full high tunnel of Neil’s plantings and Kyra’s tunnel full of plants that are raised to go to seed at the appropriate time. It was a contrast between orderly, raised beds for vegetables (his) and mix of all plants left to go to seed at the end of each season (hers). She described obtaining food items in her tunnel as more of a hunt than a harvest. Among items discussed with the Wagners, was the use of earth buckets, merits of north/south vs east/west orientation of greenhouses, and leaving cut off lettuce plants in the ground in the greenhouse all winter so they can grow again in the spring.

The third tunnel was Bob DeCino’s large production high tunnel which has been in full production for at least a month. It’s a double wall without heat. Bob has been selling virtually all his available produce to local restaurants for a month. He started direct sowing in mid-April but stressed that the key to the right planting time is monitoring soil temperature and starting when that soil temp reaches 45 degrees. Bob has corn in tassel, pole beans to the ceiling ready to spread further, big beautiful vegetables, herb beds, some experimental plants and so on. It was a very impressive garden, made all the more so knowing that Bob commutes daily to his work in Soldotna.

The final stop was at Rita Jo Shoultz’s new high tunnel at Alaska Perfect Peony, the former Fritz Creek Gardens location. She is an experienced ornamental plant producer who is now growing vegetables in her new tunnel which is all raised beds defined by board

*Continued on next page*



*Robin McAllister showing us her varied plantings in her tunnel. Fruit trees, vegetables, and early rhubarb for early pie!*



*Far left: Neil and Kyra Wagner, our generous High Tunnel Tour hosts in Homer. They have two tunnels, outdoor gardens, ducks, chickens, berries etc.*

*Left: Neil Wagner's tunnel growing. Note the nice looking raised beds and more than knee high corn.*

*All photos by Cathy Haas*

<p><b>KENAI FEED &amp; SUPPLY</b> www.kenafeed.com MILE 14.5 K-Beach Rd. <b>907-283-1929</b></p> 	<p>HIGH TUNNELS ORGANIC FERTILIZER PEAT • SEEDS FENCING LIVETOCK &amp; PET FEED/SUPPLIES PRODUCE</p>	
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# Homer High Tunnel Tour

*Continued from page 3*



*Above: Rita Jo Shoultz's (green scarf) orderly tunnel with well supported raised beds. She has a variety of vegetables, some trees, and just a few flowers.*

*Below: Bob Decino's high tunnel production garden. Bob is showing some of his record keeping information. He plants as early as the soil temp allows and replants as he sells his produce. Note the beans climbing to the sky on the left. Photos by Cathy Haas*



wall support. This raised the discussion of the merits of beds that are defined by side boards etc., vs. sowing directly in the ground. In a large space, defined/ contained raised beds mean everything must be done by hand. Do you agree? Rita Jo also has an open ended tunnel to protect certain of her peonies that she is now growing for commercial harvest across the road from her home and gardens. She now has 15,000 roots in the ground making her the largest peony grower (today) in the state.

The group appreciated the Homer growers for taking time out of their Sunday to allow our visit.

~Bruce King & Marion Nelson



*Above: Beautiful lettuces and kale in Bob Decino's high tunnel production garden. Photos by Gina Kuntzman*

## SeaAg Fertilizer Fundraiser

Thanks to everyone who bought Sea-Ag fertilizer products and helped with the sale and distribution the year. We made \$1633.90 for the club treasury. Without your hard work and dedication to accuracy on the orders this would not have been possible or as successful. A special thank you to Snug Harbor Seafoods for transporting our order from Palmer and providing a place for distribution.

Reminder- With the increased bear activity on the Kenai Peninsula please store your fishy smelling fertilizer in a bear proof storage container or building until mixed with your soil.

~Don St. John, SeaAg Committee Chair

(Thanks to Don for his work on this annual fundraiser.)

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**Country Liquor**  
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Downtown Kenai  
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# Advantages & Disadvantages of High Tunnels Workshop— June 13th



*Far left: Velma Bittick and Tom Gotcher explain some of the finer points of their high tunnel and it's operation. Photo by George Dickson*

*Left: The high tunnel, almost all planted for this growing season. Photo by Bob Malvin*

## Plant Sale 2013 by Cathy Haas

The 2013 CPGC Plant Sale on June 8th, was a great success with higher quality plants and more of them donated this year! We sincerely appreciate all of the great plant donations. Everything that was brought in found a home and the few unsold items were given to the Food Bank. The Committee is looking forward to another great sale next June 2014. It gets a little bigger and better every year.

Thank you to all the volunteers: Velma Bittick, John Coon, Kay Gardner, Dorothy Gray, Deanna Huntley, Peg & Terry Melander, Jauanita Owens, Sandy Sandoval, Don St. John, Lark Ticen, Dennis Spindler, Helen Groeneveld, plus the plant committee of Cathy Haas, Pat Udelhoven, Peggy Morris, Linda Barclay, Judy Platz, and Marion Nelson.

Total income, \$2048, minus \$205 expenses = \$1843 net income.



*Above: John Coon, ready to help with plant delivery service for Plant Sale shoppers.*



*Left: Plant sale shoppers.*

**CIAA**  
 Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association  
 40610 Kalifornsky Beach Road  
 Kenai, Alaska 99611  
 283-5761 + [www.ciaa.net.org](http://www.ciaa.net.org)

**Healthy habitats for healthy salmon.**

## Sweet Potato “Wonderings” by Will Hightower

It always surprises me that we learn new things about gardening going down circuitous paths. But first, the history...

During one of her grocery shopping trips when the snow was deep, Monti looked over the sweet potatoes and yams. Beside them was a burgundy colored sweet potato which she just had to try. Dark and smooth skinned, it was too pretty to cook so it sat on the counter for her to admire. Despite the commercial processes of gassing, waxing, coating, or otherwise abusing the potato, it showed a hint of a sprout. After thorough scrubbing and rinsing, both a common yam and the new prize potato were placed in water in hopes that they would sprout. Small roots appeared on one but the burgundy specimen languished and eventually began to decompose long after its friend had been placed in soil. During the interval of “one more week or it’s the worm bucket for you,” it produced a few small root buds. The odor was becoming quite noticeable when I put it in the soil and forgot about it. History ended.

Last week I noted some green leaves poking through the soil where I had buried the remains of the “too pretty to eat” purple sweet potato. Today I looked at what had become a large clump of sweet potato leaves in that spot. I decided that there were way too many leafy stems coming from one location, so I dug it up. To my surprise there were fourteen plantlets on a very firm sweet potato! I have now cut from one sweet potato, fourteen, purple skinned, white fleshed sweet potato starts and planted them in the “potato tunnel”. They join the eighteen orange skinned, orange fleshed commercially grown sweet potatoes on one side of the tunnel. The other side of the tunnel has twenty five buckets of “regular” potatoes, if you can call potatoes of many hues and shapes “regular” potatoes.

I had ordered sweet potato starts from Johnny’s Seeds and pondered how they produced their plants. There before my eyes was an education in how the commercial firms might possibly culture sweet potato starts.

I wonder...



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 \* VEGETABLE SUBSCRIPTIONS  
 \* HIGH TUNNEL VEGETABLES  
 \* BEDDING PLANTS  
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STRAWBERRY ROAD,  
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## Could Amaranth be Grown Successfully in AK High Tunnels?

Amaranth and corn powered the Aztec empire. But when the Spaniards came in and conquered what became Mexico, they banned amaranth because of its connection with Aztec human sacrifice ceremonies. But, it turns out, amaranth is both healthy and hardy -- and it's making a comeback.



Above: *Amaranthus caudatus*

Read or listen to this interesting article on PRI at:  
<http://www.pri.org/stories/science/environment/mexicans-pushing-for-return-of-ancient-grain-amaranth-to-agriculture-14176.html>

## New Soldotna United Methodist Church Garden

There is a beautiful new garden behind the Soldotna United Methodist Church! Last September the Soldotna Food Pantry opened at the church and provides food to neighbors in need each Wednesday. Quality produce for our client families is hard to come by, so we thought a garden would be a good use of the property behind and around the church building.

With the help of advice from some CPGC folks (Chris Cook, Don St. John, Steve Latz ) and others, we decided on lasagna layering in raised beds, concentrating on things that were pretty likely to be successful, like potatoes, peas, radishes, cabbage, carrots, spinach, lettuce, zucchini and broccoli for the first year. Steve directed a group of men from the church who built the raised beds - 32' x 3' each. EIGHT of them! Several days later they completed a 6' (hopefully moose-proof) fence around the whole thing. We have planted only the first four beds for this year.

This past week, a volunteer from North Carolina designed and installed a drip irrigation system like the one we learned about at Garden Club! It is WONDERFUL! We have three lengths of drip tape in each bed. Each bed has its own shut off valve so we can customize the watering.

Our vegetables amaze us every day as they seem to be flourishing in the full-sun location and all the nice warm weather.

Pull into the church parking lot and drive around to the back for a peek when you have a minute. It is the church just beyond Safeway on Binkley.

P.S. We will gladly receive and distribute any excess produce you may have to our clients on Wednesdays.

~Troy Castimore



Above: New fenced garden of raised beds behind Soldotna United Methodist Church put in by church volunteers. Photo by Jack Castimore.

### Treasurer's Report, June 2013 Submitted by Peggy Morris, Treasurer

<b>Beginning Balance</b>		<b>\$17,252.40</b>
<b>Income:</b>		
Dues	\$40.00	
Plant Sale	\$2,048.00	
Sea-Ag	\$105.00	
Newsletter Ads	\$90.00	
	<b>\$2,283.00</b>	
<b>Expenses:</b>		
Verna Pratt Travel	(\$60.00)	
Chris Chadwell event	(\$353.90)	
Hospitality	(\$36.33)	
Printing	(\$73.20)	
Plant Sale	(\$205.00)	
Workshop Week-ends travel	(\$282.00)	
Kenai Chamber Dues	(\$125.00)	
Plants for CIAC	(\$79.00)	
	<b>(\$1,214.43)</b>	
<b>Ending Balance:</b>		<b>\$18,320.97</b>



**MARION'S**  
**PLAN & PLANT**



MARION K. NELSON  
phone 907.283.4632  
cell 907.398.8669

P.O. BOX 3612 • KENAI, ALASKA 99611 • mmlkn@ptialaska.net

## Upcoming CPGC Events & Volunteer Opportunities!

### Summer CPGC Tours

July & August- Summer Garden Tours - A Membership Benefit! Advance registration required so watch your email as tours are very popular and fill up fast. Make sure your dues are current so you don't miss this educational and fun summer highlight.

Tour goers always comment on learning something on every tour.

### Volunteer Opportunities

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

**August 10 – Area Garden Tour Fundraiser**, co-sponsored by CPGC & the Soldotna Chamber of Commerce. We need 5-8 area destinations and 20-30 Greeters for 2-3 hour shifts on Tour day. Greeters direct tour goers to destination high points, sign the registration book and help people figure out how to get to the next stop if necessary. There will be a Greeter appreciation tour of all sites the evening prior to the tour to view all of them. This is a self-guided tour; \$10 per person, all ages. Maps and identifying bracelet are given out at registration. Greeters and hosts had a good time last year on this fast and fun day. Contact Marion [mmkn@ptialaska.net](mailto:mmkn@ptialaska.net).

Aug17-18 - **Ninilchik Fair CPGC info table.** Please sign up for a shift and visit the Fair! Contact Marion, 283 4632.

**Videographer backup**, for programs and workshops. Contact Linda Dunn, 262-4465.

**Tech backup person.** Help out with the Power Point program and mike set up. Contact Don St. John, 394-4474.

**Guest speaker lodging.** Needed occasionally for out of town speakers. Contact Marion, 283 4632.

**Registration HELP-** 2014 Workshop Weekends. The board is considering the "RegOnline" program. Please offer technical help to get this going. Contact Marion 283-4632.

**September 7th, Harvest Dinner.** It's the best meal of the year!

## Kenai SWCD Has Agricultural Tools for Rent

The Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District has a wide variety of agricultural equipment for rent, including manual and mechanized tools for soil preparation (Meri Crusher), tillage, re-seeding, planting, pesticide and fertilizer application and bale wrapping. Tools for gardeners and micro-farmers include a broadfork, single row seed planter, broadcast spreader, and backpack sprayers for liquid fertilizer or pesticide/herbicides.



*The Kenai SWCD's bed shaper and mulch/drip tape layer prepared the way for the vegetable/flower planter pictured here at Ridgeway Farms. The District's rental equipment is on display at Kenai Feed.*

For information, see the "Equipment Rental" page at [www.kenaisoilandwater.org](http://www.kenaisoilandwater.org) or call 283-8732 x 108.

## Local Farmer's Market Schedule and Locations

**-Central Kenai Peninsula Farmer's Market, Soldotna**  
Schedule: Saturdays until Sept. 28.

Hours: 10am-2pm

Location: Corner of Corral St. and Kenai Spur Highway, at the "bus turn-around."

For more information: 262-7502

**-Kenai's Saturday/Farmer's Market**

Schedule: Saturdays through Sept. 14.

Hours: 10am-4pm.

Location: Kenai Chamber & Visitors Center, parking lot. 11471 Kenai Spur Highway.

For more information: 283-1991

**-Farmers Fresh Market -**

Schedule: Tuesdays into Sept.

Hours: 3-6pm

Location: Community College Drive in the Food Bank Parking Lot.

For more information: 262-3111

Newsletter layout and more, Pam Voeller.

To place ads, submit stories or pictures,

contact Marion Nelson, 283-4632 or [mmkn@ptialaska.net](mailto:mmkn@ptialaska.net)