



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



### 2015

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### **Will's Ramblings**

#### Old Pallets to Raised Garden Beds—by Will Hightower

Well the frosty nights seem to be over; the plastic is raised over the high tunnel metal frame; and Lee just called that the onion set order is in. I just have one small problem; I have no raised garden beds for planting.

It is not that the raised beds have not been amended or tilled. The beds, raised or not raised do not exist; there is only ¾ minus gravel at the bed locations.

The dirt for the garden rows has not been mixed. We always "build" our soil and the components (peat, compost, sand, etc.) are in piles, none of the piles are in the garden area.

The master plan is to build row boxes, about 16 boxes are planned. The boxes are then to be filled with manufactured soil and planted. There is no "plan B".

I've worked out a box building design using recycled pallets. Great design, making use of the material's original size. Now all I have to do is build them, PANIC TIME.

We have all viewed wooden pallets stacked around. Alaska is the end of the pallet line, many ending up in school bonfires. There is some great wood to be had from these pallets - if there was just some way to get the pallet apart without destroying everything in the process.

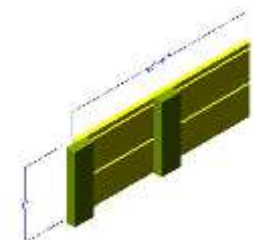
I found that a reciprocating saw is my answer to making boards out of pallets. Slide the blade between the boards and cut the nails. The object is to get the boards apart without destroying the wood. The nail parts, most of the time, are not a problem. If the nail parts are in the way, they can be removed or the wood piece used in a different way.



One problem I found is the variety of fasteners used in building pallets. People building pallets have a special container of hardened nails and slip one in now and then. If you are unlucky to find one of these hard nails, goodbye saw blade. Fortunately it doesn't happen often.

The boxes I am building are 1 foot high and 2 ½ feet wide. Each panel is 32 inches long, allowing the boxes to be as long as needed. The 32 inch size makes the best use of the pallet slats.

When the box is assembled and located, there will be an outward bow to the box. The bow becomes more pronounced as the box becomes longer. I solved this bow by pushing the box in and driving a rebar in at the joints (where the 32 inch sections join).



(continued next page)

**Will's Rambling—Old Pallets to Raised Garden Beds continued**

I line the inside of the bed with plastic to slow the rotting of the wood. No plastic on the bottom. The life of my former raised bed boxes were more than doubled with the use of any plastic (thin, thick, black or clear).

Fill the bed with your best soil mix and add plants.

At this writing I have three raised beds completed and 13 beds to build. I'll be building all summer. If anyone wants to view the actual building of one of these beds give a call and maybe we can set up a get together.

Right now, I'm off to get another load of pallets. That is if the firewood people haven't beaten me to them, they think they want to stay warm next winter. Raise food, not smoke.



CPGC Awarded 2014 Organization of the Year by Kenai Chamber

Kenai Chamber of Commerce president Jeff Warton, hands the award to CPGC president Marion Nelson, during the annual Chamber awards luncheon on June 24 at the Kenai Visitor Center.

The club was recognized as the "Go-to" source for local gardening information and for the many volunteer projects and events.



## Farmers Markets

### Central Kenai Peninsula Farmers Market

Saturdays, 10am -2pm,  
Soldotna, Spur Hwy & E. Corral St.  
Parking lot area.

Contact: Clayton Hillhouse, 252-6177

### Kenai Saturday Market

Saturdays, 10am – 5pm,  
Kenai Visitor Center, 11471 Kenai Spur Hwy  
Contact: Louanne, 283 1991  
Applications at Kenai Visitor Center

### Farmers Fresh Market

Tuesday, 3-6pm, starts June 2  
Kenai Peninsula Food Bank  
Contact: Dan Funk, 260-5295 – 382 – 0210

### Soldotna Wednesday Market

Wednesdays, 11am – 5pm, starts June 3  
Soldotna Creek Park  
Contact: Annette Villa, 252-7264  
Applications at Soldotna Chamber



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

Healthy habitats for healthy salmon.



## What Got Me Started Gardening ...the Continuing Story from the June newsletter.

As a young adult I spent 15 years as an Air Force wife living in different locations in the United States learning that gardening is very different depending on where you live. Southwestern Oklahoma was hot, dusty, dry and all I grew were babies. In Hawaii I learned a little about bonsai and the philodendrons grew so huge there when you drove up into the mountains their leaves were the size of dinner plates and the vines climb clear up the huge trees. I continued growing babies there and coleus. In North Dakota I had my first experience planting through plastic. Winters were long, cold, and windy, much like Barrow, but the long hot days of summer were great for gardening. Like Alaska, they have a short growing season so planting through plastic and low hoop tunnels gave them an earlier start and extended the season. I grew hollyhocks, coleus, and Shasta daisies in a little patch of dirt beside our house. One year I grew lettuce in a strip of dirt next to the garage but when we tried to eat it, it tasted like motor oil. Someone had poured their old motor oil into the soil and the lettuce picked it up.

Life in Florida was hot and humid. I tried growing some familiar plants but found they just mildewed or burned, so I learned a little about tropical plants. Coleus grew like a weed and Camellias and crotons grew beautifully. Next I moved back to Maryland and became a partner in a quilt shop. I was able to dig in the dirt again and planted spring bulbs, some perennials, and again my coleus were spectacular. I planned flower and vegetable gardens, orchards, and spaces for berry bushes of all kinds.

I became a single parent with four teenagers to raise and went back to school to finished my nursing degree. Repayment of my Indian Health Education Scholarship brought me to Alaska and more new gardening adventures. I was assigned to Barrow, and lived in hospital housing apartments that were joined directly to the hospital by a long well lit hallway with huge glass windows along one side. I grew my first indoor tomatoes there, going blossom to blossom with my Q-tip "pollinating". Plants grew huge there. I learned to group plants together and place them on trays with pebbles and water to help increase humidity because it was so dry up there. I did a lot of plant misting and often had to move them back from the windows in summer to avoid getting them burned. In winter since we had twenty-four hours of darkness for several months, I moved them out into the hallway where the lights were on twenty-four hours a day. Outside my door I had a collection of houseplants that looked like they were on "speed" including a five-foot tall coleus plant (are you catching on to a theme). But still I was not really "digging in the dirt".



After Barrow, I moved to Anchorage and faced a new challenge- heavy clay soil. After working for two years to improve it I gave up and had some good soil brought in. The third year, my last year in Anchorage I had a beautiful yard with many perennials and lots of varieties of coleus. I also tried growing roses and learned about the need to mulch heavily. I learned that Alaska is totally unpredictable from year to year, temperature zones are only suggestions, and you learn much more from talking to local gardeners than from any books you may read.

My most exciting moment was waking up to see a moose outside my bedroom window, eating my prize lilac bush. I grabbed my broom, opened the window and began to beat the moose about the head and shoulders telling it to go somewhere else. He slowly lumbered away. I guess he spread the word because I had no further trouble with moose bothering my lilac bush.

I then transferred to Kotzebue for the next ten years, living again in hospital housing where there was no opportunity to garden outside. About this time my Grandmother died and when I went home for her funeral I returned with cuttings from each of her African Violets. This was my new gardening challenge and my way of remembering the gardening influence she had on my life. I read everything I could, experimented with propagation, different types of pots, different windows in the apartment. It looked like spring in my apartment with the long blooming African violets interspersed with brightly colored coleus plants in a place where the outside temperature might be -30 to -40 with 24 hours of darkness.

But after 10 years I needed to see trees and get below the Arctic Circle, so here I am on the Kenai Peninsula. I took a Master Gardener's Course, which was a dream come true and hope to put up a high tunnel next year. Gardening for me is going to be therapy to improve health, a major goal in trying to lead a more self-sufficient and nutritionally healthy life style. I am really looking forward to learning from fellow gardeners and sharing what I have learned with other "newbies". And I will probably plant coleus because that seems to be the one plant that has always been dependable no matter where I've lived.

~ Contributed by Phyllis Boskofsky, CPGC member

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



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

## June 25th Garden Tour

We visited Bobbie & Harold Jackson's and Mary & Bob Lambe's beautiful gardens, landscape features in Kasilof. Jackson's have many growing areas, a huge greenhouse primarily for fruit trees, a high tunnel full of veggies in raised beds and many, many garden areas. A huge effort augmented by Bobbie's extensive work for food trade out program. Win, win for all.

Mary Lambe showed us the attractive, new solar heat capturing design greenhouse. The whole front collects the day's heat that transfers into the 2 level structure. Huge landscape rocks near the entrance set the scene for the apple tree inside the lower level door. There are many vegetables, music playing and a variety of veggies growing in the raised growing area. Just outside the second level is the efficient little red chicken coop for the "silkie" chickens and beyond them is the large pig yard. Mary raises them most years and they are always sold out before butchering day.

Thanks to both of our hosts for allowing CPGC members to visit and view.



CPGC members touring Bobbie & Harold Jackson's high tunnel in Kasilof.



"One of the many fruit laden trees in Jackson's huge greenhouse. (No birds allowed.)"



Mary Lambe explains details of pond water management (above).

Rocks, recirculating water & plants in Mary & Bob Lambe's lovely landscape feature that slopes beside the dramatic



Jackson's compost mixing area AKA a paved basketball court.



Two of the three Sicilian donkeys at Lambe's. CPGC Secretary Kay Gardner, enjoyed their sweet nature. Donkey's names are Hazel, Rose & Rachel.



Post-tour stop... tiered gardens with guard rail at Kay Gardner's home.



## Upcoming CPGC Events & Volunteer Opportunities

### Volunteers Needed & Appreciated!

Help with a committee or event! Most are just once a year events.

-Newsletter: Write about gardening adventures, plants of interest, or construction of garden features. We like to know how the other guy/gal does it. Contact Marion marionknelson090@gmail.com.

-Event booth staffing & decorating: Ninilchik Fair in August, Home Show in spring, HEA Energy Fair in fall. Contact Cindy Barnes, alaskancindylou@yahoo.com or 262-1395.

-Saturday Seminars in May. Arranging presenters, and venues. Contact Marion marionknelson090@gmail.com.

-Program Committee: Meets occasionally. Contact Marion, marionknelson090@gmail.com.

-Publicity Volunteer: Email publicity information to the media. Contact Marion marionknelson090@gmail.com.

-Hospitality Committee: Room set up/take down, help at the registration desk for programs or other events, greeting, taking memberships. Contact Juanita Owens, 318-557-9876.

-Co-Videographer/photographer for programs and work-shops. 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: Prepaid orders March- May. Delivery in May. Contact Della Bridenburg 776- 3908.

-Summer Garden Tours. Coordinate local garden tours during June, July, August. Contact Marion marionknelson090@gmail.com.

-June through September: Weekly, or so, summer flower bed maintenance at the Aquaculture Bldg. Light weeding and some planting. The entrance area plantings are a thank you to CIAA for meeting room use. We appreciate their valuable meeting space contribution.

Contact Peggy Morris, 262-8374.

-Face book page administrator. Preview requests to join the club's group page. Contact Marion marionknelson090@gmail.com.

-Occasional guest speaker lodging or local transportation. Opportunity for more expert information. Contact Marion, 283-4632.

#### Programs & Events

-June, July, August, Summer Garden Tours to local gardens with special features. Open to dues-current members, a membership benefit.

Sept. 8th. Fall and winter monthly programs start again. Program TBA.

Oct. Date TBA –Seed Cleaning and Exchange workshop.

## Local Food Week 2015

### Focus on Fermentation

If you'd like to learn more about preserving your harvest through fermentation, mark your calendars for Harvest Moon Local Food Week, August 8-16, 2015.

The week begins with a presentation by Sandor Katz, renowned author of *Wild Fermentation* and *The Art of Fermentation*.

The schedule of events includes a series of evening fermentation workshops (including sauerkraut, kimchi and pickles; fermented berries and fish; yogurt; sourdough; tempeh; and barley miso), kid-friendly farm tours, Chef at the Market demos, a screening of the seed-saving documentary, *Seeds of Time*, restaurant specials and more.

Organizations and individuals are invited to add their local-food-themed events and activities to this week-long celebration.

Contact Heidi at [kenaiswcd@gmail.com](mailto:kenaiswcd@gmail.com) to share what you'll be doing. The full schedule will be in the August newsletter and on-line at [www.KenaiLocalFood.org](http://www.KenaiLocalFood.org). Central Peninsula Garden Club is a co-sponsor of Local Food Week, organized by Kenai Local Food Connection. ~ Submitted by Heidi Chay, Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District



Beautiful and fragrant lilacs at Laura Sievert's on Beaver Loop Rd. in Kenai.

The bush has blossomed infrequently over 20 some years and this year it's performing and perfuming wonderfully. Thanks Laura.

Got a story or photos to share?

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

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