



# CENTRAL PENINSULA GARDEN CLUB

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[www.cenpengardenclub.org](http://www.cenpengardenclub.org)

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**From The Editor**

It is February and love is in the air! I love that the ground hog weather predictor, Punxsutawney Phil, who was even famous enough to be featured in a Super Bowl commercial this year, did not see his shadow. Hello early spring!

Everyone must be feeling the spring vibes lately. Everywhere you look there are fun, garden centered activities happening around the peninsula this month. We have most of them listed in the following pages, but don't forget to check the Central Peninsula Garden Club Facebook page for anything that might have been missed.

Keep an eye out for our upcoming workshop weekends beginning in March and for our next monthly meeting February 11<sup>th</sup> @ 7 P.M. for a presentation on high tunnels with the Cooperative Extension's Casey Matney!

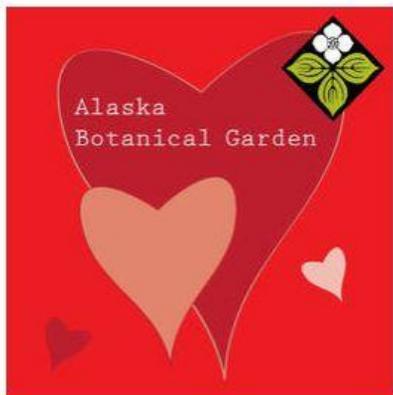
Mallory Millay

**Approved CPGC 2020 Budget**

Expenses	Proposed 2020 Budget Expenses
Plant Sale	\$ 200.00
Sea-Ag	\$ 4000.00
Newsletter	\$ 00
Workshops	\$ 750.00
Programs	\$ 3000.00
Annual Business	\$ 3300.00
Printing	\$ 1000.00
Historian	\$ 200.00
Facility Beds	\$ 100.00
Hospitality	\$ 250.00
Tech/Equip	\$ 400.00
Special Events	\$ 1000.00
Mini Grants	\$ 2200.00
Merchandise	\$ 100.00
Misc./Office Supplies	\$ 200.00
	\$16,700.00

Income	Proposed 2020 Budget Income
Dues	\$ 3200
Plant Sale	\$ 2800
Sea-Ag	\$ 5800
Newsletter	\$ 300
Workshops	\$ 500
Programs	\$ 100
Merchandise	\$ 700
Misc./Office Supplies (Donations)	\$ 50
Totals	\$13,450

## Events in the Garden



Friday, February 14  
6:00-8:00pm

### Valentine's at the Garden, February 14th 6:00-8:00pm

Grab your sweetie, your best friend, or the whole family and come and celebrate Valentine's Day in the Garden. ABG has a special evening planned to kick off your night! We will once again light up the whole garden, but this time there will be Valentine-themed additions to guide you along the path. Hors d'oeuvres from Fromagio's, drinks, hot cocoa, live music and tasty desserts await you in the Greenhouse. We will also have a bonfire with s'mores and plenty of photo ops for that perfect Valentine's selfie!

Ticket Price / \$35 non-member, \$25 member  
\$12 Child (includes craft), free to 6 + under

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Reservations are required in advance with limited tickets sold at the door. Tickets are non-refundable.



Save the date for this year's  
Spring Garden Conference  
2/22/2020

### Spring Garden Conference 2020, February 22nd

There is no better time than in Winter to begin thinking about your Spring garden and to begin planning your landscape designs for shaping your home and neighborhood spaces for the coming year. This year's annual Spring Garden Conference: Seeing More in the Garden in 2020, will offer dynamic and innovative speakers and hands-on workshops to help guide you through your creative gardening endeavors.

Conference Ticket includes boxed lunch, coffee and tea and entrance to the Reception held at ABG.

**More Alaska Botanical Garden event information available at:  
<https://www.alaskabg.org/workshops.html>**

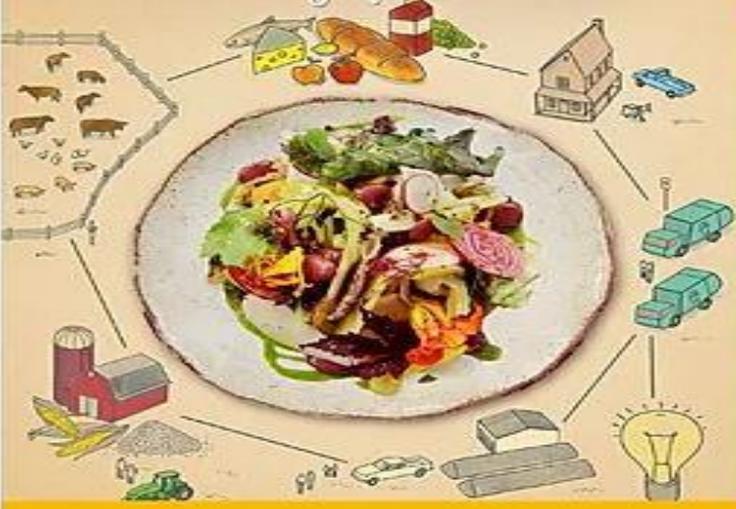
A poster for a Gardening 101 workshop. The title "Gardening 101" is in large, black, serif font. Below it is a decorative horizontal line with a central arrow-like symbol. The date and time "Saturday • February 29 • 3:30pm" are written in a black, serif font. Another decorative horizontal line with a central arrow-like symbol is below the date. The text "No green thumb? No problem! Casey Matney from the Cooperative Extension returns to teach the basics of gardening in Alaska. Learn how to have a hearty vegetable garden or a flourishing flower bed inside, outdoors, or in a greenhouse! Casey helps make gardening easy on a large or small scale." is in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom left is the logo for Soldotna Public Library, which includes a stylized 'S' and the text "SOLDOTNA PUBLIC LIBRARY". The background of the poster is a photograph of a garden bed with various green plants.

# CPGC WORKSHOPS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

- **March 21, 2020: Birch Syrup** with Sharon Gherman. 10 a.m. - 12p.m.
- **March 21, 2020: Pruning & Grafting** with O'Brien Nursery. 1p.m. - 3 p.m.

KPC Showcase and Community Partners present

FROM EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ANTHONY BOURDAIN  
**WASTED!**  
*The Story of Food Waste*



film screening followed by panel discussion on **Food Waste and Composting Initiatives in Kenai/Soldotna!**

6 - 8:30 pm  
**Thursday, Feb. 6, 2020**

McLane Commons at Kenai River Campus  
 Kenai Peninsula College

RE-GROUP  
 KENAI LOCAL FOOD CONNECTION  
 SOIL WATER  
 INLETKEEPER

The KPC Showcase is funded in part by a generous grant from:  
 the Anna Fosset Goodrich Humanities Program  
 of the Damon Memorial Fund

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KENAI LOCAL FOOD CONNECTION PRESENTS

**FAMILY-FRIENDLY FREE EVENT!**

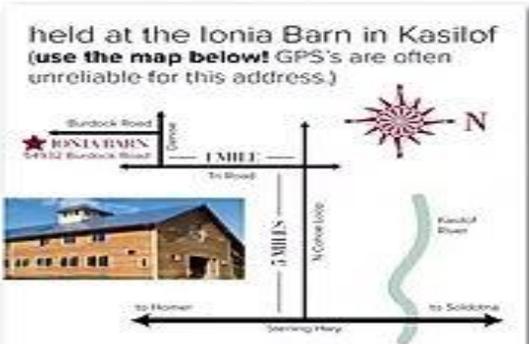
FIRST ANNUAL SPRING  
**FARMERS DAY & BARN DANCE**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2020**

A day for farmers, prospective farmers, and farm-supporting organizations to **make connections & build community.**

2-5 pm	learn & connect farm services, supplies, programs, grants, & buyers
5-6 pm	food & drink farmer appreciation dinner!
6-8 pm	music & dancing and farm-themed spelling bee!

held at the Ionia Barn in Kasilof (use the map below! GPS's are often unreliable for this address.)



learn more... [f](https://www.facebook.com/KenaiLocalFoodConnection) KenaiLocalFoodConnection | [kenailocalfood.org](http://kenailocalfood.org)



**\*\*A note from Heidi Chay with the Kenai Local Food Connection on the Harvest Moon Festival, a recipient of a CPGC Mini-Grant!\*\***

Dear CPGC Board Members,

Kenai Local Food Connection's 2019 Harvest Moon Local Food Festival was another record-breaking success thanks in part to the generous sponsorship of the Central Peninsula Garden Club. Here are some indicators of that success:

- Attendance at this year's festival was way up from our first year holding the festival at Soldotna Creek Park. We estimated 3000 visitors, up from 2000 in 2018.
- There were an amazing 48 booths this year, up from 35 last year. They included 18 farms, two seafood vendors, 15 prepared food/beverage vendors, four personal care product vendors and nine organizations connected to local food or farming, including the Central Peninsula Garden Club.
- Cooking demonstrations, free kids' activities, the Fermentation Station and the first ever Harvest Moon Pie Baking Contest were very popular. Special thanks again to Velma Bittick for sharing her encyclopedic knowledge of food preservation techniques in the demonstration tent!
- Planned improvements for 2019 included an additional tent for speakers/demonstrations (check!), more food trucks and shorter lines (check!), better recycling/composting system (check!) and more seating for the elderly and infirm (check! And we'll keep expanding in this area.
- The Peninsula Clarion published a wonderful collection of photos from the festival, which you can find here: <http://www.peninsulaclarion.com/news/pies-produce-and-pickling/>

Kenai Local Food Connection and Central Peninsula Garden Club share the goal of nurturing a healthier and more self-sufficient community where knowledge of gardening and food preservation are widespread. Thank you so much for supporting Harvest Moon Food Festival for six years running. Mark your calendars for Sept. 12, 2020! We would be honored to have you as a sponsor in year seven.

Sincerely,

Heidi Chay  
Kenai Local Food Connection

## CPGC MINI GRANTS!

The Central Peninsula Garden Club mini-grant committee is now accepting applications for a mini-grant project for this year. The grants are set up to support other organizations' efforts that directly promote local agriculture. The mini-grant request form may be found on the CPGC website.

Last year's grants were awarded to: The Kenai Local Food Connection, Kenai Peninsula Fair, Soldotna Montessori Charter School and K-Beach Elementary School.

Please e-mail [cenpengardenclub@gmail.com](mailto:cenpengardenclub@gmail.com) if you have any questions.

**"A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows." - Doug Larson**

# **HERE'S WHY A SOIL THERMOMETER IS A MUST FOR YOUR ALASKA GARDEN THIS YEAR.**

By Jeff Lowenfels <https://www.adn.com/alaska-life/gardening/2020/01/24/heres-why-a-soil-thermometer-is-a-must-for-your-alaska-garden-this-year/>

The traditions that govern how we garden are losing their rationale. Despite the severe winter temps of late, our springs and summers really are warming too fast to ignore. In fact, they are warming here two and even three times faster than in Lower 48 gardens.

So, this week I am encouraging all Alaska gardeners to really re-examine how we garden. Things are getting warmer, fast, and we need to quickly adjust when and even how to do things in the Alaska garden.

One area that we all should concentrate on is soil temperature. While germination temperatures have not changed, the dates when our soils warm up have. If you don't have a soil thermometer, your favorite search engine will help you locate one if there aren't any left at local nurseries. They go for as low as six bucks.

Why do we care? Well, lettuce, onion, parsnip and spinach can germinate when soil temperatures reach 35 degrees. (That's why they don't need starting indoors.) We are now seeing this temperature in our soils by early April and even late March in some micro-climes. The new norm should be to buy enough seeds of these for at least two additional plantings. We can easily plant successive crops into late August and even early September.

Next, when the soil warms to 40 degrees Fahrenheit, things like beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, kale, collards, kohlrabi, leeks, parsley, peas, radish, rutabaga, Swiss chard, celery and turnips will germinate outdoors. Soil temperatures of 40 degrees were the main reason Memorial Day weekend worked as the time we used to traditionally plant outdoors. With all this warming, we need to establish a new date.

Then there are tomatoes, green beans, dry beans, cucumbers, squash, corn, pumpkin, eggplant, melons, cantaloupe, okra and peppers — all vegetables or fruits that require soil temperatures to be 50 degrees before they will germinate. This is the main reason why soil warming techniques such as cold frames or clear plastic mulch and greenhouses were traditionally mandated for growing them here. Do your soils heat up enough, early enough to now sustain these crops in your Alaska garden? Probably, for many of them. I know several gardeners who now grow pumpkins and squash without help. I mentioned a pot-grown okra last month. Which of the listed 50-degree plants should be added to the "these grow here planted directly in the soil without help" list?

*Continued page 6...*

**Floriography** is the term people use to describe Victorian flower language (if you need something to compare it to in the modern world, you can think of their use of flowers to be similar to the way we use emojis). Overtime floriography became so popular and widespread thanks to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife of the English ambassador to Turkey, and between the years 1827 and 1923, you could find *at least* 98 different flower dictionaries across the United States. <https://www.1800flowers.com/blog/flower-facts/meaning-of-victorian-flower-messages/>



*'Soil thermometer' continued...*

Of course, successfully growing more than one harvest of crops is also influenced by air temperature. Tomatoes need above 55 degrees to set fruit. We are now achieving this in many areas of Alaska.

Some crops we traditionally grow do not do well in hot air and soil temperatures. Cabbages, spinach and chard, for example, will bolt into seed or develop a spindly stalk. If you do multiple harvests, you now need to have special areas in the shade, where the temperatures can actually be kept cooler. I guess you will need a good outdoor thermometer to accompany that soil thermometer you must get.

**Seeds to buy:** Sweet peas, celery.

**Pelagoniums:** If you have some growing indoors, now is when you should start to trim them up. Let cuttings callous over for 48 hours and then root in damp sand or soil.



## Antidepressant Microbes In Soil: How Soil Makes Your Brain Happy

Read further at: <https://realfarmacy.com/antidepressant-soil/>

*Soil microbes have been found to have similar effects on the brain as Prozac, without the negative side effects and potential for chemical dependency and withdrawal.*

It turns out getting in the garden and getting dirty is a natural antidepressant due to unique microbes in healthy organic soil. Working and playing in soil can actually make you happier and healthier.

What gardeners and farmers have talked about for millennia is now verifiable by science. Feeling like your garden or farm is your happy place is no coincidence!

The soil microbe mycobacterium vaccae has been found to mirror the effect on neurons in the brain that drugs like Prozac can provide, but without side effects.

The way it works is the “happy” microbes in soil cause cytokine levels to rise, which leads to the production of more serotonin.

This bacterium is found in healthy soil and when humans are exposed to it, the microbe stimulates serotonin production. Serotonin makes us feel relaxed and happier.

Conversely, lack of serotonin has been linked to depression, anxiety, OCD, and bipolar disorders.

Some studies on cancer patients have demonstrated better quality of life and less stress when patients were given mycobacterium vaccae.

Scientists also tested the microbe via injection and ingestion on rats and compared results to a control group. They found that cognitive ability, lower stress, and better concentration were notable benefits that lasted 3 weeks time.

Mycobacterium antidepressant microbes in soil are also being investigated for improving cognitive function, Crohn's disease, and even rheumatoid arthritis.

Farmers and gardeners come in contact with this bacterium by having topical contact with it, inhaling it, and getting it into their bloodstreams when they have small cuts or other pathways for infection.

So while the physical act of gardening may reduce stress and lift moods in and of itself, it is fascinating to know there is some science to add to the happy gardener sentiment.

With no adverse health effects caused by mycobacterium vaccae and so much to gain, you might as well grow something. As a bonus you'll produce fresh, local food, or at least something pretty to smell and look at if flowers and ornamentals are your thing. Bees and other pollinators will appreciate it too!



## **Cold snap could cut back spruce beetle infestation**

<https://www.ktva.com/story/41532255/cold-snap-could-cut-back-spruce-beetle-infestation>

The cold snap could help cut down on Alaska's spruce bark beetle infestation.

University of Alaska Fairbanks agriculture professor Steve Brown said the subzero temperatures won't eliminate the beetle population but it will help kill off a significant portion of the pests.

Brown said the longer the cold stretch, the better. He said the fewer beetles we start with in the spring means the trees have a better chance of not being a target for the bugs.

"The warm winters we've had the last few years really favor survival of the spruce bark beetle populations. It's possible the infestation in the Valley is so bad because of those warm winters," Brown said.

Foresters estimate spruce beetles have killed trees on an estimated six million acres in the Mat-Su.

Last summer, the Matanuska Electric Association crews spent weeks clearing dangerous trees from powerlines.

Alaska State Parks closed two campgrounds over concerns the high concentration of dead trees could harm people camping in the area.

## **WHAT'S BUGGING ALASKA'S FORESTS? SPRUCE BEETLE FACTS AND FIGURES**

<http://forestry.alaska.gov/insects/sprucebeetle>

- Spruce beetles are only  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long.
- Spruce beetles infest Sitka, white and Lutz spruce (white/Sitka hybrid) most often, and attack black spruce only rarely.
- Beetles live in the thin, phloem (growing) layer between the bark and the wood. Therefore the wood remains undamaged by the beetles and useable for construction for some time.
- One female beetle may lay from 10 to 150 eggs in "galleries" constructed beneath the bark in the phloem tissue.
- A large, downed spruce tree may contain more than 100 beetles per square foot of bark.
- Beetles emerge from infested tree and fly to new host trees from mid-May until mid-July (when temperatures are above 60° F).

