

September 2021



# NEWSLETTER

The Central Peninsula Garden Club

Greetings Central Peninsula Gardeners.

***HEAR YE HEAR YE***

Don't forget the next program meeting will be on Sep 14, 2021, 7 PM, at our ***NEW LOCATION***, **College Heights Baptist Church located at 44440 Kalifornsky Beach Rd, Soldotna, AK**. College Heights is about 1/3 of a mile down K-Beach from Peninsula Grace back toward Soldotna, right across the street from the door and window company. Our club banners will be at the church entrance on the night of the meeting to help you find your way.



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH**

**44440 KALIFORNSKY BEACH ROAD**

**SOLDOTNA, AK 99669**

**ENTER THROUGH DOORS UNDER THE STEEPLE**

*When gardeners garden, it's not just plants that grow, but the gardeners themselves.*

Howdy do gardening friends,

I hate to say this, but we are coming to the end of yet another gardening season. It seems like it was just yesterday we were starting seeds and direct sowing in our gardens and greenhouses. It sure seemed like a short season this year and I think it was due to the cooler wetter weather we all experienced. Certain plants had trouble, like my squash, but others flourished. We harvested more peas this year than any other year while growing the same number of plants in roughly the same area. My squash came on strong after I dug them up from outside and moved them to a plastic covered bed.

The garden club had a great season of tours this year and most everyone learned something new from all the hosts. More to come on the tours later in the newsletter.

Harvesting is in full swing now and I sure hope some of you will send me some pictures of your harvests as I would love to put them in the newsletter. Send to [cpgcnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:cpgcnewsletter@gmail.com). Thanks, Larry Opperman

## **CPGC MINI-GRANTS PROMOTE LOCAL AGRICULTURE!!!**

The Central Peninsula Garden Club Mini-Grant Committee is now accepting applications for mini-grant projects in 2022.

**[Grant Applications are currently being accepted for 2022](#)**

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.

**Please e-mail Terrell Brewer at [ltbrewer2@yahoo.com](mailto:ltbrewer2@yahoo.com) for more info.**

### **CPGC Board of Directors**

Cleta Elefritz – President	Terrell Brewer - Treasurer	Cathy Haas - Director
Mitzie Long – Vice President	Cindy Roque - Secretary	Dirk Tanner- Director
David Rigall – Director	Charlene McLean - Director	Larry Opperman – Director
Rebecca Notmeyer – Director	Beverly Romanin - director	

## CENTRAL PENINSULA GARDEN CLUB MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

**Don't forget it's time to renew your individual or family membership to the club. Membership runs from September 1 to August 31. You can easily sign up on the club website or print out a membership form on our website and send to the club address with your dues.**

**Membership fees are \$20 for an individual and \$30 for a family membership**

**Please go to our website to become a new member or renew your membership.**

<https://www.cenpengardenclub.org/membership.html>

*Your first job is to prepare the soil. The best tool for this is your neighbor's motorized garden tiller. If your neighbor does not own a garden tiller, suggest that he buy one!*

## WHY SHOULD YOU BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL PENINSULA GARDEN CLUB?

There is something **new** in store for paid members of the garden club! We have worked with local greenhouses, feed stores, farms, and vendors to provide a discount to club members who display the new membership card we will be issuing this year. We are still working to finalize the list of vendors offering us a club discount and this information will be forwarded to all paid-up members as soon as it is complete.

5%-10% may not seem like a lot, but as gardeners, you know it's easy to rack up some buys and this program can easily help pay for your annual membership in full or at least partially.

**BUT! You must be a paid-up member with your membership card to receive the discount!**

And besides this new perk of membership, we still have the other benefits of being a club member. Priority registration for workshops (which we hope to start again next year), garden tours, and the comradery of getting together with fellow gardeners to talk our craft. And of course, the continued publication of our newsletter.

**We would love to have you as a new member and/or your continuing membership in our club!**

*Membership cards will be soon available to all paid up members for the 2021-2022 year.*

## 2021 Garden Tours

The 2021 garden tours were a great success this summer. Phyllis Boskofsky did an outstanding job setting up and writing reports on all the tours. Her expertise made the tours informative and fun events for those who attended. Remember, you must be a paid-up club member to be invited to the garden tours. No matter how experienced a gardener you are, there's always something to learn from other peninsula growers.

We visited 10 gardens/farms this summer at the homes of Brandy & Ryan Nelson, Haifei & Dirk Tanner, Cheryl & Steve Beeson, Richard & Ludy Link, Wayne & Patti Floyd, Lee Bowman, Larry & Marti Opperman, Eliza Eller at Ionia, Cleta & Tom Elefritz, and Terrell & Lee Brewer. Here are a few pictures from our summer adventures.



## CPGC Summer Garden Tour Report: 2021

#	Location	Date	Time	# Registered	# Canceled	# No show	# Participants
1	Brandy Nelson	June 24	6 PM	23	5	3	15
2	Dirk Tanner	July 5	6 PM	22	5	0	17
3	Cheryl Beeson	July 14	6 PM	21	2	4	15
4	Ludy & Richard Link	July 22	6 PM	19	4	1	14
5	Larry Opperman	July 27	6 PM	25	5	1	19
6	Lee Bowman	Aug 5	6 PM	18	7	2	9
7	Wayne & Patti Floyd- Cool Cache	Aug 9	6 PM	19	6	1	12
8	Eliza Eller- Ionia	Aug 18	6 PM	18	2	2	14
9	Cleta Elifritz	Aug 21	2 PM	17	3	1	13
10	Terrell & Lee Brewer	Aug 26	6 PM	17	3	1	13
<b>Totals</b>				199	42	16	141
<b>Average/tour</b>				20	4.2	1.6	14

**Notes:** Last years Covid experience and limiting group sizes showed us that in most instances groups of 15 work better. People can hear the host better, the group doesn't get as spread out and there are not as many side line conversations impacting others hearing what the host is saying. We found it was better to ask the host/hostess if they would be willing to do a second tour and keep the tour group size around 15. This of course is not a hard fast rule, if there is only 1 or 2 extra and the space in the gardens will allow, we would try to include them in the tour.

This year we were able to accommodate folks in one tour at each location—the larger tour groups were at areas where folks could spread out and the host/hostess approved the larger group.

Everyone seemed to enjoy this years tours and we already have a few promises for tours for next year.

Questionnaires are being sent to both the host/hostesses and the tour participants to do an evaluation of this years tours. A later report will include those results.

## WHEN AND HOW TO HARVEST YOUR CROPS

The best quality vegetables are harvested at exactly the right time. There are a few tips and tricks to use, depending on what you are planting. Here's how to get the best flavor possible out of your harvest!

### Roots



The first step is to check shoulder growth with any root variety (beets, radishes, carrots, etc.). Once the shoulders get to a size you know is normal for each variety, they are good to harvest. Be aware that beets left in the hot weather for too long will become woody in texture. Carrots, parsnips, and rutabagas will sweeten the longer they are left in the ground! Parsnips are best if left in the ground all winter long, depending on the severity of your winter! Remember to mulch any varieties you choose to leave that long.

## Cucurbits



Vining vegetables are notorious for maturing extremely quickly. Once you spot cucumbers and zucchini growing on the vine, check on them daily until they get to the size they should be. Harvesting early when the fruits are small will result in tender fruits with the perfect texture and flavor. Leaving cucurbits on the vine for too long will result in tough skin, large seeds, and a stringy texture. With melons, their colors will change when they are ready to harvest. Muskmelons will turn from green to a cream color and start to smell sweet. Watermelons will have their white spots on the bottom turn deep yellow once ripened.

## Brassicas



There are multiple varieties of Brassicas. Between broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts; keep an eye on their bud development. Don't expect your broccoli heads to grow as big as store-bought ones. Harvest these before flowers form to prevent bolting. With leafy brassicas like kale and mustard, young leaves will be more tender than older ones. However, if you want the leaves to grow bigger for any reason, massage them with oil to make them tender again before eating. Brassicas tend to mature best in the cooler growing seasons, so if they are maturing in the fall, for example, leaving them longer will make for a sweeter harvest.

## Winter Squash



Winter squash need to go through the curing process before being ready for storage. Once pumpkins, Hubbards, acorn, etc., have reached their desired color, and you notice their vines start to wane, check the thickness of the skin. Poke the skin with your fingernail. Winter squash varieties are ready to harvest if you cannot poke through their skin. This method ensures decorative varieties will survive the frost if left outside.

## Nightshades



Nightshades can be a surprising bunch. For example, I didn't know potatoes were related to tomatoes until gathering information for this article! While tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants are grown for their fruit, potatoes are grown for their roots, which is actually

not a true root, but a stolon! As you can imagine, harvesting these will vary depending on which ones you have in your garden.

Eggplants are probably the most finicky of the group. They have the best flavor and texture when harvested slightly immature. Remember to cut eggplants instead of pulling them to avoid harming the plant. Fresh potatoes are ready to harvest once the plant begins to flower, but for fully mature potatoes that will keep well, wait until the top of the plant is going brown and crispy. Tomatoes and peppers are slightly more intuitive. Harvest both when they are fully colored and slightly soft to the touch. Green peppers can be eaten at any point but will be sweeter if left for longer.

## Legumes



Legumes are a family of plants that are grown for eating the fresh or dry seeds of a plant. Depending on the variety or your personal goal for growing, beans and peas are harvested at different times in the season, depending on their use. For legumes with delicious fruits like string beans and snap peas, harvest the young before the seeds bulk up, and the fruit becomes chewy and unpleasant. Beans or peas that you eat fresh out of the pod should be left on the plant longer until the pods are still soft. For storage, let the beans and peas grow and dry completely in their pods before shelling and saving. These homegrown dry goods will stay keep for 2-3 years. You can cook them after 10 years, if need be, but their nutritional value may have depleted in that time slight.

## Did You Know?

The Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District is a wonderful resource for local farmers and gardeners. Check out their website for great info: <https://kenaisoilandwater.org/>



# RECIPES

Here's a few old-time recipes utilizing produce typically grown by our peninsula gardeners.

## Dilly Carrots & Beans

¾ cup water  
1 teaspoon sugar  
½ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon dill seed  
½ lb fresh snap green beans  
4 medium carrots  
¼ cup Italian dressing

Combine water, sugar, salt, & dill in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Wash and trim green beans leaving them whole and add to boiling water simmering 5 minutes.

Cut carrots into thin strips 2-3 inches long and add to saucepan. Boil until beans and carrots are tender, 5-10 more minutes. Add Italian dressing and toss to mix well.

Serve hot or chill and use in tossed vegetable salads

## Cabbage Cooked in Milk

1 quart shredded cabbage  
1 ½ cups milk  
2 tablespoons flour  
2 tablespoons melted fat  
1 teaspoon salt  
Dash of pepper

Add cabbage to milk and simmer for 2 minutes. Mix the flour and fat and add a little of the hot milk to incorporate. Stir into the cabbage and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until thickened stirring constantly. Season with salt & pepper

## Garden Relish

½ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon Tabasco  
2 teaspoons sugar  
½ cup white vinegar  
2 tablespoons water  
2 teaspoons soy sauce  
2 cups sliced radishes  
½ cup sliced scallions

Make marinade by combining salt, Tabasco, sugar, vinegar, and soy sauce in a small bowl. Add sliced radishes and scallions and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Makes 2 ½ cups.



# Garden club support of local 4H

The local 4H submitted a grant application in 2021 to the garden club. After reviewing the grant request, the CPGC board of directors voted to award the local 4H \$1,800. These funds were used to help 4H initiate the first local 4H exposition held at the Soldotna Sports Center over four days in August. The kids did fantastic and we were pleased to assist them in their endeavors. As you know, 4H is a group focusing on farm animals, crafts, art, and other activities. The CPGC is hoping to become more involved in getting some of the members as interested in gardening as they are with their animals. The club set up a booth at the expo and we enjoyed being a part of their first local expo. As a token of their appreciation, 4H presented our club with a nice plaque in thanking us for their support.



Cleta & Larry supervising the club booth at the 4H expo



Cleta displaying the plaque 4H presented to the club as a token of appreciation

## **It's canning season!**

**Don't forget to take your pressure canning gauge by the extension center on K-Beach to test for proper operation and accuracy**

