

Good morning! This is Marylou Burton. You're listening to "Reading Between the Lines," brought to you by the Friends of the Homer Public Library.

Type the word "gardening" into the library's search engine and up pop 199 titles. Subjects include gardening with children, greenhouses, organic vegetables, and – my personal favorite – compost. The fact that our local library maintains such an extensive collection should come as no surprise. Homer – in spite of its cool temperatures, cloudy skies and long winters – is a gardening town. Homer Garden Club meetings routinely attract standing room only attendance. To a gardener, the next best thing to gardening itself is to trade ideas and information about gardening.

The Homer Garden Club, as it happens, has published its own book entitled Kachemak Cultivating from Seaside to Summit – A Guide to Successful Gardening on Alaska's Southern Kenai Peninsula. Without a doubt, if you are wanna-be gardener and are new to the area, this is the place to start. As my neighbor, who recently moved to Homer from Georgia, found out, you can't just stick a tomato plant in a pot out on your deck and expect it to produce tomatoes – especially up on the ridge and with a north-facing deck! Kachemak Cultivating distills the knowledge of long-time local and experienced gardeners into a well-written, well-organized, and overall attractive manual. Check it out from the library or buy it from the Homer Garden Club or our local book stores.

Another excellent guide to gardening in our latitudes is Alaska Gardening Guide, Volume 1 – Alaska Vegetables for Northern Climates, by Ann Roberts. This encyclopedic book, which is also available at the library, covers just about everything you need to know for growing in the Alaska Interior. When I lived in Fairbanks it was my gardening bible. It's full of pictures, tables, building designs and lots of useful information for cold climate gardening. Not all of that information is transferable to Homer – our summers are cooler and wetter than the Interior. But it's still a great source.

The last resource I want to mention is not a book, but an agency – and unfortunately a threatened one. The Cooperative Extension Service has done extensive research and published many, many papers on subjects of specific interest to Alaska gardeners, farmers and builders. Both the Homer Garden Club and Roberts books make reference to various aspects of this research, and many local gardeners have benefited from the Extension Service’s Master Gardener’s program. The library carries quite a few of the more popular research bulletins, and the rest are available on-line either free or for a nominal charge. Whether you’re building a greenhouse or a log cabin, setting up a compost system or concerned about invasive plants, you will find information at the Cooperative Extension Service.

Speaking of compost! Join us at the library next Thursday at 6PM, when Kyra Wagner will talk about the do’s and don’ts of composting, followed by a short field trip to a nearby compost pile. It doesn’t get much more exciting than that.

Library hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m, and Tuesday and Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Tune in next Sunday morning at this same time for “Reading Between the Lines,” right here on KBBI 890, Homer!