

Garden Club

By Clare Winslow

At the October 11 meeting of the Pine Knoll Shores Garden Club, members traveled to the Underground Farm & Learning Center in Beaufort, a family-owned business dedicated to sustainable farming and growing techniques. They were welcomed by Catherine Elkins who informed members that the Underground Farm was created in Marshallburg eight years ago. A number of local farms have joined the effort in growing vegetables and producing local seafood, even Russian sturgeon.

The Underground Farm became the demonstration garden for the Carteret Local Food Network by producing safe organic vegetables like radishes and parsley, using practices that omitted pesticides. Ms. Elkins showed club members trays of micro greens, designer vegetables, like arugula, kale, lettuce, cabbage and beets, whose miniature size appeals to local restaurants that purchase them to use as appetizers and garnishes. Ms. Elkins took the group on a tour of the Underground Farm where we saw row upon row of sprouting vegetables like Brussels sprouts and spinach, the newest varieties planted by the Farm. She emphasized that the purpose of the Underground Farm is to make local, seasonable food available without the use of chemicals. She noted that collards, strawberries, sweet potatoes, cabbage and melons are their best sellers.

Underground Farm has contracts with three major organizations to which they ship their fresh vegetables on a regular basis. For the average citizen, they offer their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. For a set price, a small package of freshly picked greens will be organized every month or so for the CSA member to enjoy the Farm's freshly picked tasty organic vegetables. Their vegetables can also be purchased at the Curb Market or the Friendly Market in Morehead City.

At the brief business meeting prior to the trip, President Susan King welcomed back member Barbara Miner after an absence caused by a serious illness. Arleen Graczewski invited members to a wine and cheese party to be held at town hall following the lighting ceremony for the Blue Star Memorial on November 9 at 5 p.m., with a rain date of November 10. JoAnn Shallcross reminded attendees that the Garden Club of North Carolina granted the club two awards last year, and that two entries will be submitted this year for two different projects—our Arbor Day program and Litter Control program. Jean McDanal brought orange vests to the meeting to be worn by members as a safety precaution whenever they work in the town gardens. Gini Stambaugh showed an oyster plant that she brought to the meeting, whose leaves were maroon on the outside and bright green on the inside. She grew it outside, out of the wind and in partial sun. As a new fundraiser the club will be selling Atlas Garden Gloves, which are a light Nylon blend with a Nitrile coating.

Garden Club meetings are held at town hall every second Wednesday of the month at 9:30 a.m. for refreshments, followed at 10 o'clock by the program. Visitors and guests are always

welcome to attend our meetings. For additional information, please email pksgardenclub@gmail.com.



Catherine Elkins (pointing) speaks to Garden Club members who visited the Underground Farm and Learning Center in Beaufort.—Photo by Clare Winslow

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