



Growing Gardeners Since 2011 – The ABC Garden Group

by *Marrion Newsam Banks*

The **Athol-Bayview-Careywood or ABC Garden Group** got its start one snowy December afternoon in 2010 when I complained to Sue Wagner, the Athol librarian, that it was a pity that local gardeners didn't have a way to just get together and talk about gardening especially in the winter months. Sue was a generous soul who was always looking for more ways for the library to reach out to the community. She immediately offered the **Athol Library** meeting room as a venue for gardeners to gather if I agreed to organize. The plan was put into action and our first get together was held on January 6, 2011.

From the beginning, the ABC Garden Group has never been a "club" per se. We don't have officers, dues, or bylaws. Anyone with an interest in any type of gardening is welcome to the monthly meetings on the first Thursday of each month. The only requirements are an interest in gardening and respect for your fellow gardeners.



Group communications are handled via email through a Google Groups email list. This not only makes sure that everyone sees important announcements, but it also allows folks to post questions to the group and get answers from local experts, the other members of the group! We have expanded to a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/abcgarden>) in recent years which is also an excellent way to share information and updates. We have 375 members on our Facebook page and 111 members on our Google Groups email list, so interest in gardening is alive and well in our area!

Toward the end of each year, we survey garden group members about topics they want to discuss in the coming year and then, as the group coordinator, I try to find speakers willing to come and talk to the group about each topic. Over the past 14 years, we have learned about growing orchids, saving seeds, vermiculture, the poisonous perennials we love and everything in between.

We began this year with the topics: the secret life of soil and why it matters, followed by planning and planting your home orchard.

CON'T

As I said earlier, we meet on the first Thursday of each month at the Athol Community Center from 3:30 – 5:00 p.m. except in July and September when we meet on the second Thursday to avoid holidays. During the warm weather months (May-September), we try to tour a member's garden. There's nothing like seeing what other gardeners are doing to inspire you to greater achievements in your own garden!

Our group supported our original host, the **Athol Library**, by participating in the **Bayview Community Memorial Day Garage Sale** where we sold plant starts and garden-related rummage. All proceeds from this sale were donated to the library for gardening related books or other projects as needed. In addition, we worked on a landscaping project by the doors of the **Athol Community Center** contributing labor and plant material to the project.



I started gardening at my father's knee more years ago than I'm prepared to admit in this article, and I'm interested in most types of gardening. I am a self-professed "soil nerd" with a large vegetable garden, fruit trees and berries, and

perennial borders to keep me busy during the growing season.

The great thing about gardening is that there is always something new, and I've learned so much from the last 14 years of interaction with my fellow "plant-a-holics."

Whether it's using newspaper or cardboard under mulch to block sunlight and decrease weeds or learning to grow my own mushrooms, I owe a debt to each person who has joined the ABC Garden Group and shared their expertise and passion.

If you're interested in joining us, please contact me at waterfowlfarm@gmail.com, and I'll put you on the email list. You can also join us by liking our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/abcgarden>.

Our next meeting is on Thursday, April 3rd when we'll be discussing designing and maintaining containers and hanging baskets.

Mark Your Calendar: Council sponsoring two speakers, April 21, Monday, 5:30 p.m., Bayview Community Center, along with coffee and treats prior.

New Ownership *by Sheryl Puckett*

Meet the new owners of **Iron Pizza** in Athol:

- **Sydni Leman**, who will take on the role of owner/operator, will oversee day-to-day operations and ensure everything runs smoothly at Iron Pizza.
- **Toshi McCarter** will bring his expertise as the entertainment and events coordinator, keeping the community engaged with a variety of fun activities.
- **Chris Ankney** will continue to manage operations, ensuring the business runs efficiently.
- **Ashli Thompson** will focus on marketing and promotions, helping to grow Iron Pizza's presence in the community.
- **Lars Hall**, who remains the owner/operator at Connie's Café & Lounge, will support the Iron Pizza team as needed.

Chris and Lars, are current the owners of Connie's Café & Lounge in Sandpoint. Toshi McCarter is a seasoned hospitality professional who has spent the majority of his career in the restaurant and entertainment industries. Sydni Lehman has experience in serving and bartending, becoming a bar manager at Connie's. With a diverse set of skills and a shared passion for hospitality, the new team is committed to maintaining the restaurant's popular reputation.

"We're excited to take Iron Pizza to the next level, building on what the previous owner, Matt Johnson, established," said Chris Ankney. "Iron Pizza has fantastic food and we love the local vibe. Our goal is to strengthen this community hub and bring people together through great food and fun events."

The new ownership team plans to keep the menu largely unchanged. However, they are introducing a host of fun, engaging events to bring energy and excitement to the restaurant.

March 24, they started **Live Trivia** with Toshi every Monday at 6 p.m. Participants can enjoy Toshi's unique trivia questions and even take advantage of a dine-in pizza special: Buy one pie, get the second 50% off on opening night.

Starting April 1, the new weekly schedule will include:

Monday – Live Trivia with Toshi (\$5 per person, 6 p.m.)
Tuesday – Taco Tuesday with specials on chipotle & hillbilly tacos, Iron nachos, and the Grand Theft Taco pizza
Friday – Live Music from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Once a month, Topsy Brush Painting with Cookie will add a creative twist to the fun.

Additionally, the team is launching the **Eat - Play - Give program** to help local organizations fundraise. Groups can apply to host a fundraiser at Iron Pizza, with a portion of restaurant proceeds and income from games donated to the cause. **CON'T**

"We are focused on creating a space where locals can gather, have fun, and support each other," said Ashli Thompson. "We want Iron Pizza to be a place where everyone feels welcome and part of the community."

The team is exploring new events, such as cribbage and pool tournaments, karaoke, bingo, corn hole tournaments, and more. They are also eager to hear ideas from the local community.

As part of their plans for the future, they aim to hire additional cooks and servers, streamline the kitchen, and make updates to the restaurant's dining and entertainment spaces. Matt Johnson is staying on prepping and cooking.

Delivery available Tuesday through Sunday within a 10 mile range. No Monday delivery.

Hours of operation are: Tuesday to Thursday: 2 to 8 p.m.
Friday and Saturday: Noon to 9 p.m. Sunday: Noon to 8 pm
Monday: 2 to 8 p.m. Phone: (208) 561-5211

The Health Benefits of Walking

by Dr. Cecilia Fry

Hippocrates said, "Walking is man's best medicine." Now, approximately 2400 years later, modern medicine has still not come up with a medicine or supplement that can match all of the health benefits of walking.

Here is the list of some of the benefits:

- Improved metabolic health including reduced weight, reduced cravings for sweets, lower blood glucose and reduced risk for developing type II diabetes
- Improves heart health including lower blood pressure, improved endurance, lower risk for stroke and lower risk of myocardial infarction (heart attack)
- Improved mental health including improved mood, improved stress management, and improved cognition
- Improved sleep
- Improved musculoskeletal health including decreased varicose veins, improved bone density, improved muscle strength and endurance, and less joint pain
- Decreased risk for developing some cancers including breast, colon and kidney cancer
- Stimulates the digestive system for improved gut health
- Boosts the immune system

With warmer weather just around the corner, I hope that knowing these many health benefits of walking will encourage you to take advantage of the many walking trails in our area. Walking is generally safe, low impact, inexpensive and convenient. A reasonable "dose" to aim for is 30 minutes 5 times a week. Hope to see you on the trails.



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