

GALLATIN GRUBBER

September-October 2024

Oct. 7 Meeting

Our first meeting of the Fall will be Monday, Oct. 7 at the Hope Lutheran Church on South 19th Ave. beginning at 7 p.m. The program will be presented by each of us as this meeting is the highlight of our gardening year when everyone comes to tell us "What worked and what didn't work in our gardens in 2024". Believe me, there is much to talk about the 2024 gardening season with challenges of cold, heat, wind and hail. Come with examples of the highlights of each of your gardens, as well as the problems you encountered and how you dealt with them. If you have plant samples to illustrate things, bring them along. Specific variety names are also most appreciated if you know them. We are asking that each of you who want to present something, to limit it to 2-3 minutes so that everyone has a chance to speak.

Don Mathre 1938-2024

Beloved club member Don Mathre, 86, passed away at the height of the growing season on Saturday, July 27, 2024, with his wife and daughters by his side.

Being the son of a school teacher and a county



extension agent, Don was surrounded by good grammar and a love of agriculture. He was born on January 5, 1938 in Frankfort, Kansas, the middle of three sons. The family moved to Winterset, Iowa in 1945 where he was generally a good student but a lousy napper in kindergarten, as a self-described fussy budget. (He greatly improved his napping ability later in life). In 1953

the family moved to Ames, Iowa, where Don entered high school and tried his hand at track, football, and basketball. He enjoyed the camaraderie of the team, even if he spent most of his time as a sub. The steak dinners served to the team were memorable meals! While attending college at Iowa State University in Ames, Don first studied forestry but soon realized working with plants was his true passion. He joined the Botany Club where he met his future wife, Judy, but it would take some time before he finally caught her attention. In the meantime, he got the opportunity to do two summer internships in Yonkers, NY, learning

more about plant pathology while writing letters to Judy, hoping to maintain the fledgling relationship. She was a tough sell, but eventually warmed up to Don when he offered to drive her to Des Moines at 2 am to pick up her friend in a snowstorm. After time spent apart (and many more written letters) while Don was at UC Davis in California working on his Ph.D. and Judy was finishing her Masters at ISU, they happily married in 1961. Don finished his Ph.D. in 1964, and took a job at UCD working on cotton diseases and teaching an intro to plant pathology class. Their first daughter, Betsy, was born in 1964, followed by Susie in 1966.

A Memorial Service for Don is planned for Friday, September 27, 11 AM at the First Presbyterian Church. Parking will be available in the Dokken-Nelson parking lot.

After a sub-zero January trip to look at a job offer at Montana State University, Don took the job and moved with his family to Bozeman in 1967. There he joined the faculty at MSU in the plant pathology department, where he would remain until his retirement in 2003. During that time, he worked on wheat and barley diseases and taught many students, which he loved to do. He once wrote about his desire to have “one foot in the furrow”; combining lab work with being out in the field, which

allowed him to meet and work with growers from every corner of the state. Some career highlights were his work with Chinese plant pathologists fostering international trade of US wheat, and leadership positions in the plant path department at MSU and the American Phytopathological Society.

Don took advantage of Montana’s outdoors, enjoying skiing, hiking, fishing, and running. He took his daughters, and later his grandchildren, along on all these activities. It wasn’t summer without a hike up South Cottonwood and getting to the second bridge, and his kids and grandkids have many memories of cross country skiing with him each winter for years.

Volunteering in his Bozeman community was very important to him and he gave willingly of his time. He was a frequent contributor to Montana Ag Live, a volunteer at the historic Tinsely House, a volunteer tax preparer, and a longtime scorekeeper at MSU basketball and football games. Being a social guy, he enjoyed the people he worked with in each of those places and had regular coffees with several different groups of “old guys”. One of his other joys was working with the Gallatin Gardeners Club as the garden manager for several decades. From the minute the seed catalogs arrived, to starting onions and tomatoes in the greenhouse, to planting and weeding, gardening was in his blood. He liked nothing more than being able to pick five beans at once. He loved all aspects of trying to get the best yields in the club garden, teaching new gardeners how to pick zucchini, and selling at the Farmers Market each weekend. He especially loved that his daughter Susie was out there with him, and that the rest of us helped out when we were in town. He was a rare individual who was not afraid to admit mistakes; he was kind, selfless, and generous with his time and energy. We certainly miss him.

Don is survived by his wife, Judy; his daughters, Betsy (Bob) Quist of Anoka, MN and Susie (Paul) of Bozeman; grandchildren, Ellen and Sam Quist; his brother, Dale (Judy), and extended family. He was preceded in death by his parents, John and Anna Mae; and brother, Johnny.

A Memorial Service is planned for Friday, September 27 at 11 AM at the First Presbyterian Church. Parking will be available in the Dokken-Nelson parking lot.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Gallatin Gardeners Club (P.O. Box 6623, Bozeman, MT 59771), the First Presbyterian Church (P.O. Box 1150, Bozeman MT 59771), or the HRDC (206 East Griffin Drive, Bozeman MT 59715).

The Mathre family thanks Doctors Annie Costillo, Justin Thomas and Colette Kirchhoff for their care during his long journey dealing with a blood cancer, and also Compassus Hospice and Eden Hospice for his final care.

—written by Don's daughters, Susie Mathre and Betsy Mathre Quist

