

# THE DIRT

Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County

## Helping Gardeners Grow!

SUMMER 2006

Volume 1, Issue 2

### A Plant-erella Tale

Once upon a time there was a village filled with beautiful gardens that overflowed with marvelous flowers, shrubs, vines, and trees. Grasses and berries flourished. Out of this bounty, sprouts and plantlets were told of a happy future where they would go to live in nearby kingdoms that needed brightening. Their roots would hold the soil in place, their blooms would perfume the air, their branches would provide habitat for birds and insects! Children and adults alike would be delighted by their presence! Sadly, this involved leaving their happy gardens and suddenly the plants found themselves aligned like soldiers, marching across a wide field, depending on the kindness of strangers for protection from sun, frost, and thirst. Tales of the Great Day, when many might be chosen, kept them going and they looked for a Fairy GODPERSON to prepare them in their finest array. Their Prince Is Coming! Who will Help them, they wondered? Who will get them ready while they waited?

**You** are needed to enable the last line: "And they lived happily ever after".

## The Fall Plant Sale Needs Your Help!

 **How can YOU help?**

 **Get the word out** to neighbors, friends, garden clubs, plant-lovers, and family members.


 **Volunteer on Sale Day:** contact Lynda Bauer 455-9236 or [bauerjblb@peoplepc.com](mailto:bauerjblb@peoplepc.com)

If you can do the same job you did at the Spring sale, Lynda needs to hear from you.

If you can't do the same job you did at the Spring sale **please** find someone who will and let Lynda know.

 **Help label and price tag** our summer-acquired plants

Saturday, Sept 2nd, 10am at Dirt Works

 **Tuesday mornings** come on out and help groom plants. Your willingness will make a huge difference to the success of our sale. We want a quality product to promote the Master Gardener / Master Composter Program; that takes workers devoting time to individual plant care.

**There are only 2 Tuesdays left!**

 The Week of September 11-15 please **take one day** to help with set-up.

## Featured Plant Sale Plants

\* **Peony Preview:** tree peonies grown from seed will produce magical but unknown flowers. We have a limited number available at Introductory Prices. These plants are for the adventurous who want to be delighted and surprised. These beautiful plants are 3 years old, two per pot and full of promise. We will have more available for sale in 2007 after they bloom. Of course, it will be one per pot and the price will have gone up! ;>)

\* **Cymbidium Orchids:** A number of pots of these popular house plants/greenhouse specimens will be available, with more offered in the Spring.

\* **Hardy Fuchsias:** a donation of several varieties of hardy fuchsias are on offer, with the grower on site to provide information on how to plant and care for these beautiful additions to any garden.

\* **Great Plant Picks:** All suitable for fall planting. Paperbark Maple, Tulip, Golden Rain and Katsura Trees; Diablo Ninebark, Evergreen Huckleberry and Doublefile Viburnum shrubs.



**Purchases over \$25 qualify you to choose a free plant from a select group**

### Win the Garden Lady!!

Call Frankie Rasmussen 753-3850 or email at [ray-frankie@comcast.net](mailto:ray-frankie@comcast.net) for advance raffle ticket sales. Members may also get some tickets to sell to neighbors and friends. (Please!)

**Raffle tickets will be available throughout the day of the Plant Sale. Drawing is at 2pm!**

**Other Raffle Prizes:** Williams Sonoma Buffet Guy Salad Plates with Spreaders, Serving Tray and Coffee Mugs, An Encyclopedia of Shade Perennials, A Custom beaded Necklace and earring set. Tickets are 5 for \$5 or \$1 each.

## Plant Sale Happenings

**Native Plant Salvage Project** will offer Native Plants and Non-Native Drought Tolerant Plants for sale.

**Native Plant Salvage Project Workshops:** "Gardening for Wildlife" and "Right Plant, Right Place" will focus on creating great-looking, drought-tolerant combinations for different landscaping conditions. Each workshop will be offered in the morning and again in the afternoon.

**Master Composters** will be demonstrating yard composting and worm bin composting and will be offering bins for sale.

**Both Master Gardeners and Native Plant Salvage Project** will be on hand to answer questions and help customers make sound plant choices for their gardens.



Custom Made by Port Townsend Artist  
12 x 21 inches Value \$185.00

# August Membership Meeting

**The Member Meeting held on August 25th was a huge success.**

Laughter & chatter abounded. As usual, the food and desserts were scrumptious.



base, the Foundation, are about what they are doing. He feels the presentations need to be integrated into the new Master Gardener course in Spring 2007 to energize the new members.

After lunch they spoke about volunteer hours, mentoring, outreach, separation and integration of Program and Foundation, forming an advisory committee for the Program Manager, and the MG training program with its benefits and limitations. There was great feedback and discussion. There was no resolution, but that wasn't the purpose of the review, it did, however, put forth a direction in which to work.

Paul said that four things became very apparent during the Review:

1. All Thurston County MG/MC programs and elements are meeting the purposes as well as the emerging expectations of the County, our funding partner.
2. The Master Composter Program does not have the volunteer hours needed to work the program. All stated that the labor pool was deficient or barely adequate. The same volunteers are the ones putting in the majority of hours.
3. It was clear that, as a group, we would like to do, or we see the need, to do more for the people in Thurston County, such as the work the Gleaners do. This includes Demo garden development, enabling gardens, school garden and composting as well as increased partnerships w/ organizations such as GRuB, etc. We would also like to see a food production component added to the MG/MC program to educate membership in vegetable production.

(Continued on Page 4)

◆ We had a very meaningful presentation from **"The Gleaners Coalition"** who work very hard collecting excess and less than perfect produce from individuals, farms, CSAs, and other sources. They then donate this food to hungry people and food banks. They will collect and deliver about 20,000 pounds of fresh produce to the hungry this year. If you have excess vegetables call: 360-705-2375. They can even make arrangements to pick them up!

◆ **Our new Program Director**, Paul Feenan, then spoke with us and gave some of his background. He started in the position June 8, 2006. He taught horticulture to at-risk youth in Shelton prior to that. He is happy to be here and is passionate about the Master Gardener & Master Composter Programs.

He spoke to the membership about the Program Review that occurred yesterday. About 16 people participated in the meeting. The morning session included 20 min presentations by the Foundation, clinics, composting, gardens, and the history of Garden Rhapsodies. They discussed the work being done, how it relates to the MG purpose and mission, the costs in dollars and volunteer hours, and the existing partnerships. Paul described the presentations as *awesome* and that they confirmed how proud the MG/MC and their

4. There is a need to address a program structure that decreases competition for volunteer efforts and has more diverse opportunities. Advisory sub groups need to be formed. Clear and comprehensive job descriptions are needed for all garden leads and other positions. Changes to the training program need to be made that are designed for member retention as well as training. The idea would be to make volunteers part of a community they want to stay in and feel good about.

It was also clear, he continued, that while proud of the work accomplished, we have a problem that needs to be fixed. **We need more active volunteers.** We need to re-organize tasks to find more volunteers. From now through January 1st, members need to help find more volunteers. This will take time away from other volunteer efforts in order to accomplish and it will be hard to do, but it must be done.

### How do we do it?

#### First step: Form Four Committees

##### Recruitment and Outreach Committee:

These members will contact MGs and former MGs to determine why they are no longer active in the program. Then we can fix or tweak the program so it works for more.

**Mentoring committee:** These members will take care of veteran and intern volunteers. Paul asked they be ready to be involved in the training program and develop the interns as they train.

**Volunteer Coordination Committee.** These members will coordinate the volunteer effort to concentrate it where it is needed most. If one garden or activity has a huge undertaking, volunteer hours could be shifted from another emphasis to meet the need.

**Volunteer Hours Committee.** There are some issues about how hours are reported and what hours to report. We need to work on this as a group. This Committee will be a short term committee. Once the hours are detailed, the committee would be dissolved. First step is to determine what it is that we need to do. Next step is to require hours based on the need.

Paul said he would like see these committees organized and active by December. He remarked how awesome it will be for the new MG class to see these committees organized and working to help them succeed. **(Please contact Paul if you can join any of these committees!)**

Foundation President, Mary Moore, then described the Program Review's discussion about the separation of the Foundation and Program. She recapped how the WSU Attorney General's review found that Membership in the Foundation could not be automatic when one is a Master Gardener or Composter. The Program Review highlighted that the Program and Foundation should be separate when it is advantageous for organizations to be so but joint when that is advantageous. A Memorandum of Agreement between the Program and the Foundation exists and details the support and resources each entity supplies to the other.

The Meeting then turned to business and the Membership approved the Minutes from Membership Meeting of June 23, 2005 as well as the changes to the By-Laws that were mailed to each member.

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## The Member Pins are in!!



**These Beautiful Pins are available for \$5 at the Plant Sale, at Member Meetings, and anywhere you find Lynden Baum!**

# Sterilized Pruning Tools: Nuisance or Necessity?

Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center

<http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/~Linda%20Chalker-Scott/>

Anyone who has made an investment in top-quality pruning tools probably cleans and maintains them on a regular basis. But would you clean them every day - maybe several times? While most of us would agree that such a cleaning regime would not be cost effective, there is evidence that such measures can help reduce the transmission of certain plant diseases to healthy plants.

In spite of the ongoing debate regarding tool sterilization, there is surprisingly little information in the scientific literature that addresses this issue. Most of the research has focused on agriculturally important crops: citrus, stone fruits, and vegetable crops. We can extrapolate these results to woody ornamentals, however, and draw some rational conclusions.

**The focus of this article will be on when, why, and how to sterilize pruning tools. First, the good news.** It is probably not necessary to sterilize pruning tools to prevent transmission of soil- or air-borne pathogens. These diseases, generally bacterial or fungal in nature, are more likely to be transferred by your hands and clothing than by your pruning tools. Obviously you should avoid being a direct vector in disease transmission, but you will probably have better success in controlling these diseases through preventative landscape management practices (e.g. pruning diseased parts, disposal of contaminated leaf litter, and use of disease-free compost and mulch).

In contrast, diseases that invade the vascular system or form oozing cankers are much more likely to be transmitted by contaminated pruning tools. As early as 1906, Waite & Smith linked fire blight (*Erwinia amylovora* Burrill) infections in nurseries to contaminated pruning tools. Others have confirmed this more recently (Beer 1979; Goodman & Hattingh 1988; Kleinhempel et al. 1987; Lecomte 1990; van der Zwet & Keil 1979), and Lecomte (1990) noted that transmission did not occur during plant dormancy - only during the growing season. Fire blight bacteria

do not overwinter in the vascular system, which may explain why transmission does not occur during this time. In contrast, Goodman and Hattingh (1988) found a 66% infection rate during cool, wet conditions in trees pruned with shears treated with bacterial spot (*Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *pruni* Smith). The infection rate dropped to only 7% when trees were pruned with infected shears under hot, dry conditions. The authors speculate that the cankers are less infectious when dry; under wet conditions they become gummy and the inoculum adheres more tightly to pruner surfaces.

**Seasonal differences** in infection rates were also seen with the fungal pathogen *Leucostoma cincta* (Barakat & Johnson 1997). Also called perennial canker, Cytophora canker, and Valsa canker, this disease can be transmitted either directly onto pruning cuts or from contaminated pruning shears. The authors found that pruning in the late spring was worse than dormant pruning. Although the wound-healing rate was slower in winter-pruned trees, the availability of inoculum, the percentage of infection, and the expansion of cankers was less than in trees pruned in the late spring.

**Viruses and viroids** are the final group of plant pathogens that can be transmitted by contaminated pruning tools. Although Berg (1964) reported that infected pruning tools did not transmit poplar mosaic virus, the preponderance of the published literature indicates otherwise. Citrus exocortis and other citrus viroids can be transmitted with contaminated tools (Kyriakou 1992; Roistacher et al. 1969). Hadidi et al. (1997) were successful (50-70% infection rate) in transferring peach latent mosaic viroid to both lignified and green shoots of peach plants using contaminated shears. Likewise, tomato mosaic virus was transferred to healthy plants 70% of the time when contaminated pruners were used (Pategas et al. 1989).

**It seems clear** that if pruning tools are contaminated with vascular pathogens or active, oozing cankers, then there is an excellent chance that the disease will be spread to other plants if the tools are not disinfected. Several researchers have studied different disinfecting solutions with sometimes ambiguous results. In general it seems that any disinfectant will remove virus or viroids from tools (Broadbent 1963, Broadbent, 1965, Brock, 1952; Demski, 1981, Gooding, 1975). This makes sense as both viruses and viroids are relatively unprotected and can be killed by direct contact with disinfectants.

**Successful removal** of other pathogens, especially canker bacteria, is less certain. Plant pathogenic bacteria do not form spores and therefore they are not as resistant as fungi to harsh environmental conditions. However, bacteria associated with active cankers are embedded in a sticky mass, which is often difficult to remove from pruner surfaces. In fact, one study (Kleinhempel et al. 1987) argues that disinfectant solutions would not remove bacterial slime from the surface of cutting tools. Their research indicated that the pruning blades were covered with microscopic pits from which bacterial slime could not be removed. Only when they pre-coated their tools with plastic could pruners be successfully sterilized.

**Obviously the solution** to spreading pathogens from active cankers is to avoid cutting the cankers altogether. For other plant pathogens, several disinfectant treatments have been compared:

## Tested Disinfection Treatments of Pruning Tools

Alcohol dips (ethanol or isopropyl alcohol) Recommended: Barakat & Johnson 1997; Horticultural Abstracts 1986; Teviotdale et al. 1991. Not recommended: Pategas et al. 1989. (Con't Page 6)

**Alcohol dips + flaming** - standard procedure for tissue culture Recommended: Goodman & Hattingh 1988; Singha et al. 1987.

**Chlorine treatment** (Clorox, monochloramine) Recommended: Horticultural Abstracts, 1986; Lecomte 1990; Teviotdale et al. 1991.

**Household cleaners** (Listerine, Lysol, Pine-Sol) Recommended: HortIdeas 1987; Teviotdale et al. 1991.

**Trisodium phosphate** (Na<sub>3</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>; 10% solution) Recommended: Pategas et al. 1989.

*A final consideration to choosing a disinfectant treatment is how damaging it may be to your tools.* Teviotdale et al. (1991), who performed the most comprehensive study, found Lysol to be least corrosive and Clorox to be the most harmful to pruning tools.

## To disinfect your tools or not - what's the bottom line?

To make an informed decision, you need to know your pathogen and its life history, and use common sense:

- ◆ if it's a virus or viroid, disinfect your tools.
- ◆ if it's a vascular fungus or bacteria, and/or forms oozing cankers, disinfect your tools.
- ◆ avoid cutting active, oozing cankers; wait until they dry.
- ◆ if you are pruning irreplaceable plants, disinfect your tools.
- ◆ choose a disinfectant treatment that has been shown to be effective through published research;

I would probably not use alcohol but one of the common household cleaners at full strength.

## August Member Meeting Raffle

- ★ The first ever Member Raffle was a winner!
- ★ The "Split the Pot" Member Raffle Totaled \$106.00  
and the pot split was \$53.00.
- ★ The lucky winner was: Glenda Jackson
- ★ Winner of the Lloyd Webber Book was: Carla Delducco
- ★ Winner of the garden apron was: Nancy Mills
- ★ Winner of the Lady Bug Balloon was Bill Longnecker
- ★ Winner of the Butterfly Balloon was Karan Kinch



**Maybe YOU will win at the  
October Meeting!!**

# Thank You!

A BIG THANK YOU to our faithful Volunteers who have been working all Summer (in the heat!) at the Gardens, the Clinics, and taking care of the Plant Sale plants!

**Mark your calendar for the  
Annual Member Meeting on  
Oct 27, 2006**

**Call Frankie Rasmussen for more info: 753-3850**

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 Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County  
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VISION:  
 "Helping Gardeners Grow" by supporting programs that cultivate knowledgeable gardening and promote quality of life for Thurston County.

MISSION:  
 Enhance and Promote the County's Master Gardener and Master Composter Programs in an Atmosphere of Camaraderie and Teamwork.

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**Needed:**

Does anyone have a Flat-bed Trailer That can be used for the Plant Sale on Fri and Sat?? We need one to haul and hold plants. If you have one and can loan it for those 2 days Contact Lynda Bauer

455-9236  
[bauerjblb@peoplepc.com](mailto:bauerjblb@peoplepc.com)

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"The Dirt" is a publication of the Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County and is published Quarterly. Please submit articles, comments, or advertisements to:

**The-Dirt@comcast.net.**

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We're Volunteering at the Fall Plant Sale!  
 See you there!



# Helping Gardeners Grow



Master Gardener Foundation  
of Thurston County  
P.O. Box 5791  
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HELPING GARDENERS GROW BY SUPPORTING PROGRAMS  
THAT CULTIVATE KNOWLEDGEABLE GARDENING  
AND PROMOTE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THURSTON COUNTY.

## Foundation Board Members

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Vice President: Sandy Atkinson  
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Member-at-large: Connie Roth  
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### Directors

Marketing: Deborah Welt  
Membership: Lynden Baum  
Plant Sales: Lynda Bauer  
Policy & Procedures: Paula Nelson



Come to the Fall Plant Sale  
September 16th 9am—4pm