



February/March
2010

Volume 10, Issue 1

Helpful Websites:

Thurston County Extension:
<http://Thurston.wsu.edu>

Master Gardener Foundation of
Thurston County website:
www.mgftc.org

Compost Bin Sales:
www.compostbinthurstoncounty.com

Master Gardener State
Program:
<http://mastergardener.wsu.edu>

WSU Publications:
<http://pubs.wsu.edu>

The Common Sense Gardener

Cori's Corner by Cori Carlton, Program Manager

Well, it's official... I've been here one year! A year ago I didn't know what it meant to be a Master Gardener or a Master Composter. I do now, even though I still have so much more to learn. Thank you for helping me transition into this wonderful group.



In this newsletter you will find our first attempt at creating a year long calendar. This was a suggestion given by many MG's in last year's survey. We tried to incorporate as many dates as we knew with hopes of getting these important events on your calendars ahead of time. We did not include all demo garden kick-off dates or workshop/presentation dates as they are still being worked on. Watch your Friday Flash for updates as to when those are available. Please let Cori know if you would like to add something to the calendar as it will eventually be located on our websites.

As we all know, the training we received to become a Master Gardener or Master Composter was different from year to year. For some of you its been awhile since you went through training and you may not be familiar with the new resources being taught to our interns. Another one of our goals for this year was to have an update or refresher training for already certified MG's and MC's. Master Gardeners will be updated on the latest WSU resources/references, review of new orientations for the demo gardens and clinics, learning how to report your volunteer hours on-line plus much more. If you have a question you

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From the Foundation President by Nancy Mills



Here we are, moving into another new decade. Can you believe it? I can't. We, the board, have been very busy in January already with reviewing the past year financially, determining some goals and much more.

Of note is the fact that the Foundation budget ended the year in the BLACK by about \$700. The Compost Bin Sales also did better than expected, and we ended up, for all MGFTC

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Cori's Corner, cont.

(Continued from page 1)

want answered please let Cori know and she can incorporate that into the training.

ALL Master Gardeners are asked to attend **one** of the three Master Gardener update/refresher meetings in April. Please mark your calendar.

April 13th from 6:30pm to 8:30pm-Thurston County Fairgrounds

April 19th from 10am to Noon-Thurston County Fairgrounds

April 24th from 10am to Noon-Extension Office

If you are **NOT** able to attend any of the above listed meetings please let Cori know.

ALL Master Composters will have their refresher training at the Composting Kick Off on March 19th.

These refresher meetings will help everyone become better Master Gardeners and Master Composters because we will know what new resources are available to us.

It's going to be a great year and I hope you are excited about it too! Anything I can do to help let me know-otherwise enjoy every moment! ~Cori

AmeriCorps Lauren - Class Update

Cori and I have been working hard the last few weeks in preparation for the 2010 Master Gardener class which will begin the first week in February. Finally, after all of Cori's hard work, the schedule has been hammered out and the speakers are nailed into place. I must say that I'm really excited to take this course!



Lauren Langley
AmeriCorps Member

Our wonderful volunteer mentors came in on January 7th for a short orientation where we got to answer questions and talk about expectations, scheduling, and communication styles. We've paired all of our interns with both a traditional mentor and a computer mentor, who will help with the online training and technology aspect of the class. I'm sure that they will be valuable additions to the interns' experience.

As other counties have encountered hiccups in the online training, we've been able to watch and learn, gathering up the new "how-to" booklets and discovering the best ways to use the system smoothly.

Like an elf at the North Pole, I've been anxiously preparing: creating spreadsheets for attendance, putting name labels on our "mailboxes", doing background checks, and contemplating how we can incorporate stickers when all the tests and quizzes will be online. We have a few more loose ends to tie up, but it looks like we're well on our way to a successful and enjoyable 2010 Master Gardener Class. I look forward to seeing you around the gardens and clinics while I put in my hours learning, and at the intern graduation in May!

Volunteer Snapshot-February/March

Master Gardeners and Master Composters have many talents to share with the public and with each other. One of those talents is photography! Whether it's a hobby or a profession, you all have fabulous garden photos to share. If you would like to have one of your photo's highlighted in one of the upcoming newsletters please send a print or file to the office or by email at carltoc@co.thurston.wa.us. If you want submit a short caption with your photo to describe the image. If you submit a print please make sure you have your name on back of the photo and state if you would like it returned or not. Thanks!

Pink Cactus by Linda Talen



From the Foundation President, cont.

(Continued from page 1)

activities, in the black by ~\$7500. We owe a lot of thanks to Bill Longnecker and all the folks who help him take care of the bin sales, as well as Terri Thomas and Thurston County Public Works, for subsidizing the sales. Without the dedication of both these groups, we wouldn't have a functioning bin sales program!

Board goals for this coming year are:

- Update our Foundation brochure so we can get information out to the public.
- Implement our new Board job descriptions. We've spread the work load out more appropriately, so everyone needs a year to adjust to their new responsibilities.
- Define responsibilities and institute new committees in cooperation with Cori. The committees we're starting with this year are:
 - Publicity, with a main function to oversee the needs of the committees and program, and effectively promote all events with consistency.
 - Website, with a main function to maintain both the Foundation and Program Websites with current information.
 - Workshops/Speakers Bureau, with a main function of gathering and updating a list of a) folks who are willing and able to present information to the public, and b) organizing some of those workshops for each year. In addition, we will know who to go to if an outside organization calls and asks for a speaker on pruning or composting, seed starting, etc!

Along with the new Garden Tour (the new name is South Sound Garden Tour), the Plant Sale, Compost Bin Sales, Activities and Events and Retail Sales groups are gearing up for another successful year. As always, your continuing participation is crucial and highly valued! THANK YOU!

The Garden Tour committee is still looking for suggestions of gardens to evaluate for selection. Please send those suggestions to Pat@mgftc.org.

2010 Master Composting Training Information

Applications for the 2010 Master Composter training will be available mid-February. Watch the Friday Flash for an announcement. The cost of the training is \$50 which includes your text book. Below is the training schedule. If you have any questions please let Cori know.

| Date | Event | Time | Location |
|----------------|--|------------------|------------------------|
| March 19, 2010 | Kick-Off & Potluck For veteran Master Composters & Master Gardeners | 6pm to 8:30pm | Location:TBA |
| March 31, 2010 | Composting Class Orientation | 6:30pm to 8:30pm | WSU Extension Office |
| April 7, 2010 | Class One | 6:30pm to 8:30pm | WSU Extension Office |
| April 14, 2010 | Class Two | 6:30pm to 8:30pm | WSU Extension Office |
| April 21, 2010 | Class Three | 6:30pm to 8:30pm | WSU Extension Office |
| May 1, 2010 | Class Four | 10am to Noon | Dirt Works Garden |
| May 8, 2010 | Class Five | 10am to Noon | Closed Loop Park |
| May 15, 2010 | Plant Sale/ Composting Workshops | Times TBA | Dirt Works Garden |
| May 19, 2010 | Class Six & Graduation Potluck | 6:30pm to 8:30pm | Olympia Farmers Market |



MGFTC Membership Meetings for 2010

Dates have been chosen for the membership meetings this year. Be sure to put them on your calendar so you don't miss any!

Thursday March 18th @ 6:00pm will be our first meeting and potluck. The meeting will be held at Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Dept. (directions to follow at www.mgftc.org).

We are very pleased to have as our guest speaker Lorene Edwards Forkner. Lorene is a freelance writer, visiting lecturer and garden designer. Some of her speaking engagements have included, NW Flower and Garden Show, Bainbridge in Bloom, and Portland Yard, Garden and Patio Show. Lorene has written several books which will be available for sale the night of the 18th. Her books are: "Hortus Miscellaneous" A Gardener's Hodgepodge of Information and Instruction, "Growing Your Own Vegetables", and "Canning and Preserving Your Own Harvest" An Encyclopedia of Country Living Guide. Lorene's Topic for our meeting will focus on "Getting the Most From Your Edible Garden". Mark your calendars for a great evening of Friends, Food, and a Fun and interesting Speaker!

The other dates are June 17 - General Membership Meeting, August 22 - Appreciation Picnic for all MG's, MC's and Foundation members, and October 21 - Annual Membership Meeting. Speakers and other details are forthcoming, and will be posted on the website as well as announced by e-mail.



Birthdays for February and March

By filling out your Recommitment form we now have the pleasure of wishing our fellow Master Gardeners and Master Composters a Happy Birthday. If your birthday is in February or March and you don't see your name on the list, or the date is incorrect, please contact Cori so we can update our files.

Wishing you a year full of health, happiness, and gardening bliss!

February

- 2 - Paula Finch
Nancy Mills
- 4 - Lisa Anderson
- 6 - Roberta Nott
- 7 - Loren Stern
Deborah Welt
- 9 - Jeannine Pia-new intern
- 13 - Kathryn Baker
- 18 - Shanna Winters
- 19 - Kathy Peterson
- 20 - Jennifer Ferguson
Allyson Ruppenthal
Diane Stranger
- 21 - Kari Ann Holcomb
- 23 - Joan Stiggelbout
- 24 - Catherine Eddington
Catherine Dawdy-new intern
- 28 - Susan Doolittle



March

- 1 - Diane Claussen
Mae Owada
Barbara Robles-new intern

- 4 - Charlie Keck
Joan McKnight
Gail Garrard-new intern
- 6 - Terrence Schulte-new intern
- 7 - Susan Woods-new intern
- 9 - Charlotte Hartwig
- 10 - Winona Ferguson
- 11 - Debra Plante
- 15 - Christine Virgadamo
- 16 - Jean Croisant
- 19 - Kathy McDowell
- 22 - Nancy Piper
- 23 - Kirk Rose-new intern
- 25 - Jackie White
- 26 - Barbara Giminez
Nancy Poultney
Judy Smith
Linda Talen
- 31 - Nancy Yarbrough

February/March Spotlight Volunteer: Cathy Strum, Class of 2009



Master Gardener
Cathy Strum

Where did you grow up? Sunny, beautiful downtown Lisbon, Ohio, population 4,000 and yes, that does include cats and dogs. Add in the livestock and we'd be more populous than Cleveland.

How long have you lived in Thurston County? Since June of 1995

Family or Pets? 2 cats- 16 year old Jasper and 8 month old Finnegan

Hobbies Other Than Gardening: Hiking, camping and reading

My favorite part of being a Master Gardener? Learning. I love to learn and there is so much information available to us and knowledgeable folks to learn from.

2010 Master Calendar Dates

This list is a first draft. Additional dates will be added as they are determined. Please be sure to use the Calendar that will be on the website www.mgftc.org since it will contain the most up to date information. Important meetings are in bold.

February

- 5th-Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 10th-MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30 am
- 12th-Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 18th- MGFTC Board Retreat 9am to Noon
- 26th-Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 27th OFM Kickoff/clean up with an option of March 6th if weather is bad.**

March

- 10th-MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
- 12th-Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 18th- MGFTC General Membership Meeting Potluck & Speaker 6pm-9pm**
- 19th-Newsletter deadline for April-May Edition
- 19th Master Composter Kick Off & Potluck Event 6:00pm-8:30pm**
- 26th-Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 31st Master Composter New Class Orientation 6:30pm-8:30pm

April

- 7th Master Composter Training Class One 6:30pm-8:30pm
- 9th-Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 13th Master Gardener Update/Refresher Meeting Option One 6:30pm to 8:30pm**
- 14th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
- 14th Master Composter Training Class Two 6:30pm-8:30pm
- 19th Master Gardener Update/Refresher Meeting Option Two 10am to Noon**
- 21st Master Composter Training Class Three 6:30pm-8:30pm
- 23rd-Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 24th Master Gardener Update/Refresher Meeting Option Three 10am to Noon**

May

- 1st Master Composter Training Class Four 10:00am-Noon
- 7th Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 8th Master Composter Training Class Five 10:00am-Noon
- 12th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
- 14th Plant Sale Evening Preview (For those who help work on the sale)**
- 15th MGFTC Plant Sale**
- 19th Master Composter Graduation Potluck 6:30pm to 8:30pm
- 21st Master Gardener Training Class 9am to 4:30pm
- 21st-Newsletter deadline for June-July Edition
- 28th Master Gardener Training Class & Graduation 9am to 4:30pm

June

- 9th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
- 17th MGFTC General Membership Meeting Potluck & Speaker 6pm-9pm**
- 29th Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon

July

- 6th Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon
- 10th MGFTC Garden Tour 10am-5pm**
- 13th Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon
- 14th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
- 20th Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon
- 23rd-Newsletter deadline for August-September Edition
- 27th Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon

August

- 3rd Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon
- 10th Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon
- 11th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
- 17th Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon
- 22nd Appreciation Day Picnic 12:30pm-3pm**
- 24th Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon
- 31st Children's Program @ Dirt Works 9:30am to Noon

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2010 Master Calendar Dates, cont.

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September

8th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
 17th-newsletter deadline for October-November Edition
 23rd-25th WSU Master Gardener State
 Conference-Vancouver, Washington

October

1st 2011 Intern Applications are now available
 13th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
21st MGFTC Annual Membership Meeting, Potluck, Elections & Speaker 6pm to 9pm

November

1st MGFTC Board Retreat 9am to Noon
6th Garden Committee Planning Retreat 10am to 3pm
 10th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am
16th Annual Awards Potluck Noon to 2:30pm
 19th-newsletter deadline for December-January Edition

December

4th Holiday Party Potluck 11am to 2pm
 8th MGFTC Board Meeting 9:30am

Answers to the Winter Trivia Quiz

Thank you to everyone who entered the winter trivia quiz that was in the December/January issue of our newsletter. The winner of the winter trivia quiz is.....Wanda Cross. Wanda will receive a \$20 gift card to Bark & Garden Center. Here are the answers:

1) At which of the following temperatures does water spontaneously freeze?

D -40 degrees F (Due to a typo I threw this question out when figuring out the winner.) Ice always melts at 32 degrees F, but water does not always freeze at 32 degrees F. It must freeze onto something. However, at -40 degrees F, water spontaneously freezes. If you poured a cup of water out a window with the air temperature outside at -40 degrees F, the water would freeze before it struck the ground.

2) On average, one inch of rain is equivalent to how many inches of snow?

A. 10 inches

Ten inches of snow melts down to about an inch of liquid rain.

3) Where is it the warmest, at the top or bottom of a snow bank?

The bottom of a snow bank will be warmer than at the top. Falling snowflakes trap air between them as they settle. Air is a poor heat conductor. A blanket of snow acts as an insulator against cold wind. The ground also loses heat more slowly than air or water. So the heat, which continues to escape from the soil all winter, is held in by the layer of snow.

4) What do you call the "fear or dislike of snow"?

Chionophobia

5) What factor(s) affect(s) the shape of a snow crystal?

D-All of the Above

The size of a soil particle, the speed at which it falls and the temperature at which it is formed all play a part in the shaping of snow crystals.

Hope you had fun and learned something too!

Scholarships Available!

Apply for a \$250 scholarship with Thurston County Master Gardeners and automatically have a chance to win a \$1,000 scholarship with Washington State Master Gardeners!

The Washington State Master Gardener Foundation offers two scholarships every year to a High School senior who is accepted by a recognized accredited college/university and planning a course of study in horticultural, botanical, or strongly related fields. Students apply to their county Master Gardeners and one representative from each county is recommended for the statewide scholarship. This year, the Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County (MGFTC) is offering their own \$250 scholarship as incentive for application. The winner of this scholarship will be the automatic recommendation from Thurston County for the statewide scholarship.

The deadline for the submission of applications to the Thurston County Scholarship Committee is March 19, 2010. Applications and further information can be downloaded from www.mgftc.org



Compost Bin Sales

For the past three years, the MGFTC's Compost Bin Sales program has been providing an affordable way for people to turn yard waste and kitchen scraps into food for their gardens, thus reducing the amount of material going into our landfills, while at the same time making the world a more beautiful place. Despite the budget cuts necessitated by our current economic crisis, the efforts of people such as Terri Thomas of Thurston County Solid Waste have secured the continuation of the grant that provides a subsidy allowing Thurston County residents to purchase compost bins from the Foundation at an affordable rate. To date, over 1,500 residents of Thurston County have taken advantage of the subsidized compost bin program.



Due to cutbacks in free & affordable advertising avenues, it must be a priority of Master Gardeners and Master Composters to get the word out about the program. Besides the financial gain that the Foundation gets from the bin sales, promoting healthier yards & gardens through the use of compost should be a mission for every member. Informing your friends and family about this opportunity for Thurston County residents will not only improve their gardening experience, but also will help to fund the various programs supported by our Foundation. New brochures will be available soon at the Extension office for you to take and distribute.

Through the efforts of the Foundation Board, we have been able to maintain our low prices for compost bins through 2010. The Biostack remains at the price of \$60 per bin, while the Earth Machine continues to be available for \$40 per bin.

These prices include the cost of tax and home delivery. In addition, Kitchen Collectors are available along with other accessories to promote the ease of composting.

Compost bins and accessories can be ordered online at www.compostbinTC.com

2010 Plant Sale News

With all the fair weather associated with El Nino, we have continued to take in, pot, and otherwise nurture plants for the May plant sale. Our dedicated plant sale crew continues to appear at Dirt Works on Tuesdays from 10am to 1pm and would welcome others to join in - just show up. There is always something to do: repair equipment, prune and groom plants, labeling, winter weeding, etc. Pam Thayer has organized an effort among several MGs to increase our edible plant offerings this spring. We will soon get our bare root native plants and fruit trees.

Our deadline for intake and potting, being six weeks before sale day, is Saturday, April 3 - which is just about two months from now. So if you have been lured out into your garden, keep us in mind as you dig and divide your perennials. Contact Bob Findlay bob@mgfc.org to arrange for delivery of your donations to the sale.

**Please bring your empty pots (#1 and larger) to the sale site
(size 2 is urgently needed at the moment)**

Activities & Events Spring Schedule

The name “Activities and Events” is replacing “Travel and Learn” so be sure to take a close look at these offerings and get the dates in your calendars and your reservations in. Complete details are available (or will be soon) on www.mgfc.org

MARCH 13, Saturday 9-6:00—RAINTREE NURSERY, Growing fruit in your home garden. Select from a variety of classes covering growing fruits, nuts and berries, and then tour the nursery for hands-on workshops on pruning and grafting.

MARCH 19, Friday 9-5:30—LET US FARM GREENHOUSES, ESTRELLA FAMILY CREAMERY, AND LAEL’S MOON GARDEN. Greenhouse gardening class at an Oakville organic mixed-vegetable farm; Montesano family-operated cheese making and “cave aging” tour; topped off with a visit to Lael’s Moon Garden.

APRIL 10, Saturday 10-12—GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN. JoAnn Mahaffy will discuss soil and soil tests, along with growing for the most abundant harvests by multi-cropping, succession planting, green manure, crop rotation and cover crops.

APRIL 21, Wednesday, 9-5—RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION AND BOTANICAL GARDEN, PLUS NURSERIES TOUR. See this incredible garden during its peak blooming time. Tour will include the alpine and pond gardens, hardy fern collection, and stumpery; with time to visit the gift shop and Plant Sales Pavilion. Catch several popular nurseries on return trip to Olympia.

Photos to break up your reading!



Grays Harbor Master Composters toured composting facilities at all three of our demonstration gardens. Thank you to Diane Stanger, Mary Boston, and Karen Walters for touring them around each site and answering questions. What a fun day sharing with other Master Composters and Gardeners.

Mary Boston receiving her “Great Advisor” Award at the Awards Banquet in October 2009.



Foundation President, Nancy Mills recognizing Sandy Atkinson for outstanding Service Award at the Awards Banquet in October 2009. She couldn't believe it!

“Who, ME???”

Name That Flower Trivia Quiz

Give your best guess to the following questions and send them by Friday, March 12th to:

Email: carltoc@co.thurston.wa.us

or

Mail: WSU Extension Office
Attn: Master Gardener Trivia
4131 Mud Bay Road
Olympia, WA 98502

Please include your name with your answers. Of those who answered them correctly one winner will receive a gift card to Bark & Garden Nursery. Happy Guessing!

Because February also houses Valentine's Day:

During Victorian times, specific flowers were often given because they referenced certain meanings. Entire dictionaries were created to explain what different flowers meant. For some species, even the colors given denoted a special meaning!

Sending bouquets or small satchels of flowers with hidden meanings - to be decoded by the recipient - became a popular pastime for friends and romantics of the era. How good are your flower-decoding skills?



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) Although we often think of this as a weed, it was used to indicate faithfulness and happiness: | 4) If one of these is given, and it has stripes, it expresses a rejection or refusal of a romantic offer: |
| A. Buttercup | A. Carnation |
| B. Dandelion | B. Fern |
| C. Ivy | C. Iris |
| D. Scotch broom | D. Mirabilis |
| E. Thistle | E. Rhododendron Bloom |
| 2) The edible part of this plant is a symbol of charity: | 5) This herb is for remembrance: |
| A. Pear | A. Chamomile |
| B. Garlic | B. Dill |
| C. Ginger | C. Mint |
| D. Rhubarb | D. Rosemary |
| E. Turnip | E. Sage |
| 3) These blossoms were meant to manifest sweet dreams: | |
| A. Heather | |
| B. Lavender | |
| C. Pansy | |
| D. Phlox | |
| E. Violet | |

Did you know? Iris is Greek for "rainbow".



What to Do in Your Garden in February and March

Visit <http://gardening.wsu.edu> for more helpful tips.

FEBRUARY

Garden essentials:

- Early February often brings deep cold. Don't uncover roses, prune or plant when temperatures drop below freezing.
- On mild days, plant bare-root roses and fruit trees.
- Mid-month, pull mulch partly away from emerging bulbs and perennials; hunt hidden slugs.

Bring pots of hardy bulbs into warmth and light for early bloom.

Veggies year-round:

- Start broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower indoors under a fluorescent shop light.

At month's end, move starts into a cold frame or sheltered outdoor location to toughen.

Lawn care:

- Starlings pecking at turf help remove soil pests such as crane fly larvae.

Check lawn for standing puddles. Correct drainage, or replace lawn with better adapted ground covers.

MARCH

Garden essentials:

- Plants need nutrients now during their growth spurt. Fertilize the garden.
- Prune and feed roses.
- Divide perennials that bloom after mid-June.

Share extra plants with neighbors or a school.

Veggies year-round:

- Dig garden beds deeply. Add fertilizer and compost.
- Transplant February cabbage-family seedlings outdoors.
- Start tomatoes, peppers and eggplant under lights.

Sow beets, chard, lettuce, onions, peas, potatoes, radishes, spinach and turnips outdoors.

Lawn care:

- Renovate.
- Dethatch if old roots and stems at crown level exceed one-half inch.
- Aerate.
- Dig out or spot treat perennial weeds.
- Rake and overseed bare spots with seed mix such as perennial ryegrass and turf-type fescues.
- Install new lawns.
- Grasses need at least 6 inches of well drained soil with 2 inches of compost tilled in.

The Intensive Gardening Technique

Holly Kennell, Community Horticulture Agent for Snohomish County

Seed catalogs arrive in my mailbox almost daily and seed racks have popped up in stores, so it must be time to start thinking about planning my vegetable garden. For some of you, the question will be whether to grow a food garden. Homegrown produce tastes wonderful, but we have so many demands on our time.

If you had trouble keeping up with the work of a big garden last year, I have some suggestions for you. Often gardeners can grow just as many vegetables in half the usual space by using intensive techniques. Once the soil preparation is done, half the space means half the amount of time for watering, weeding, etc.

Divide the space you want to plant vegetables into beds about 4 feet wide bounded by paths about 2 feet wide. Dig the planting beds deeply to loosen the soil. Do all the rest of your work from the paths, so the soil stays fluffy. Fork in a generous layer of compost and adequate fertilizer.

Then plant the beds as a block, not in rows. If the vegetable needs 10 inches between plants in a row, plant it 10 inches from any other plant in the bed. Think of it like putting cookie dough on a cookie-baking sheet; get as many into the space as you can without crowding them.

Here are four planting practices that will guarantee an abundant harvest, even from a small garden. They are all designed to use your space efficiently. Be sure to keep your crop rotation scheme in mind as you apply them.

Intercropping Intercrops are fast-growing crops (such as leaf lettuce, green onions, spinach, mustard or radishes) that can grow between large, slower plants (like squash, tomatoes or cabbage). Both crops are planted at the same time and the intercrop is harvested before the main crop needs its full space.

Vertical gardening- Most gardeners with a small garden look for bush varieties of vining vegetables. You will get more production per square foot by using vining types, but trellising them up instead of allowing them to sprawl. Tall peas and beans grow up poles or a trellis with little work on your part. They will bear later than bush varieties, but will produce more.

Tie trailing cucumbers, squash and pumpkins to a sturdy frame or trellis. The vine will be able to support the fruit, in most cases. If you have a very heavy squash or pumpkin developing, a sling made from old pantyhose will make it extra secure.

I like to train my tomato vines up a pole or flat on a trellis too. By making the plants thin, they dry quickly after a rain and do not develop late blight disease as readily. This decreases the harvest per plant, but, since you can plant more plants per bed, you will probably harvest more, earlier and bigger fruit.

Successions- The idea behind successions is simply to keep your garden space occupied. When the early lettuce, spinach or peas are done producing, plan for a second (or even third, in some cases) crop for that same space. Don't let the left-over crop get tough or bitter or go to seed. Rip it out, turn in some compost and fertilizer and plant again.

Transplants- We think about using transplants early in the season, but to get the most from a small garden, you need to use them constantly. Sow lettuce seed, for example, and you will be harvesting after 7-8 weeks. Plant out nice-sized lettuce transplants, and it will take only 4-5 weeks. This practice could get costly and it is hard to find good broccoli transplants in July, so grow your own.

Unlike spring transplant operations, which require a spot indoors with supplemental lighting, succession transplants are easy to grow. Just pick a handy corner of your garden and designate it a nursery bed. That couple of square feet may need tended daily, but will be an economical source for just what you need, when you need it.

Ornamental Grasses

Mary Robson (Ret.) Area Extension Agent

SOS! The lawn has invaded the peonies! Send for the exterminators! No, wait. Some grasses do belong in the flower border where they add color and texture. You just have to be sure what you're planting before you take that cute little tuft of foliage out of its 4" pot. Some ornamental grasses are great choices for a smaller property and others are recipes for disaster. For example, consider the Pampas Grass, *Cortaderia selloana*, a commonly available and very showy landscape plant that grows well in our climate. Its flowers are spectacular. However, you must realize that the 4 inch plant will quickly be 6 feet in every direction (except the flowers, which will shoot up past 10 feet). In addition, Pampas Grass seeds prolifically and the State of California considers it to be a noxious weed. The Sunset Western Garden book does not recommend it for suburban gardens and asks that you rogue out all volunteer seedlings.

Happily, most ornamental grasses won't become thugs as the Pampas grass can. I grow several in my yard. Grasses can grow in wet or dry locations and in sun or shade, depending on the type. For the sunny border, I have clumps of *Carex buchananii* (the bronze form) and *Festuca glauca*, or Common Blue Fescue. The Carex makes a nice clump of bronzy-red narrow leaves that top out at 18" or so. They contrast well with Bergenia. The Blue Fescue is a neat little tuft of blue-grey grassy leaves that goes with just about everything, including Fibrous Begonia at the front of the flower bed. These both do well with some supplemental water on hot August days, but are generally very easy to grow. Another grass, *Carex morrowii expallida* (also called "variegata") has green and yellow striped variegated leaves much wider than those of the bronze Carex. In fact, it resembles the houseplant called "Spider Plant" except that it is cold hardy. This also sits nicely at the front of a flower border.

In part shade, I have some *Hakonechloa macra*, which is sometimes called Japanese Forest Grass. This is a lovely, smaller grass with variegated leaves that grows well at the edge of my woodland garden. It's color lights up the shade quite well. I must give it some extra water on hot days, but it is otherwise easy to grow. You can divide it like Hostas to make more, although the divisions grow slowly. On the edge of a patio with less than half sun in summer I have planted a row of *Ophiopogon planiscarpus*. This is the dramatic Black Mondo Grass which is grown so well in the courtyard of the Center For Urban Horticulture in Seattle. It is also small and choice, a wonderful edge to a walkway or a clump below a rock. I love it with the small, early bulbs in Spring. Later, it makes a foil for a Hosta.

The other really colorful grass I want to grow is Japanese Blood Grass (*Imperata cylindrica* aka *Miscanthus floridulus*). I love the ruby tips of its leaves. It is a fast-growing erect clumping grass that is about 2 feet tall. I tried it once, and lost it. I think I didn't water it enough – my sandy soil drains so fast and I think this one wants a moister growing medium than I gave it. I will try it again in a pot where I can control the water situation more easily. I think a whiskey barrel with this grass at the back, some cherry red petunias, purple basil and something really, really lime green to trail in the front would be a show-stopper on the terrace.

So, check out your local nurseries or ask a fellow Master Gardener for their advice and add some invited grasses to your flower beds. The lawn, however, must stay out!

Note that all the grasses mentioned in Mary's message can be found at our Plant Sale on May 15!



More photos to break up your reading!

The Closed Loop Park Garden Committee recognized their exiting committee members, Connie Roth and Judy Wilson, with a yummy Mexican lunch send off. Oh, and it was near Halloween!



Lauren Langley admiring the huge bag of bulbs that was opened at the White Elephant Holiday Gift Exchange in December.

Sandra Gast opening up her gift at the White Elephant Holiday Gift Exchange in December



WSU & OSU Extension guide makes pruning fruit trees easier

By: [Carol Savonen](#)

CORVALLIS, Ore. – The first of the year is an ideal time to learn more about pruning, for pruning time is right around the corner.

The Washington State and Oregon State University Extension Service has a guide, online or in print, "Training and Pruning Your Home Orchard," (PNW 400) that will help home gardeners learn how to prune and train fruit trees the right way. This 16-page illustrated guide explains the basic principles of training and pruning apple, pear, sweet and sour cherries, peach, prune, plum, walnut, filbert and apricot trees.

The best time to prune fruit and nut trees is when all danger of winter freeze has passed, but before full bloom in the spring.

Training fruit and nut trees helps to develop a stronger tree that can support heavy crops without limb breakage. It can also help bring a young tree into production at an early age.

Pruning helps keep trees at a manageable size, making them easier to maintain and harvest. Pruning also can increase fruit production and quality. Home orchardists can eliminate the need for propping up fruit-laden branches by pruning properly. The structural strength and branching patterns can be improved in young trees with good pruning techniques.

WSU & OSU Extension recommends these basic guidelines when pruning fruit and nut trees:

- ✦ At planting time, prune all fruit and nut trees to balance the tops with the roots.
- ✦ Prune young trees very lightly.
- ✦ Mature trees need more heavy pruning, especially if they've shown little growth.
- ✦ The top of a fruit tree needs heavier pruning than the lower portion.
- ✦ Sweet cherry trees may be pruned in August when there's less danger of bacterial infection.
- ✦ To increase fruit size and quality, thin out more shoots toward the end of a well-pruned branch in a mature tree.
- ✦ To reduce the height in an excessively tall fruit or nut tree, cut whole limbs out of the top, making cuts flush with the bark of a lower limb.

Download a copy of this publication at: <http://pubs.wsu.edu>



First quarter time cards are due April 15th. Blank timecards can be downloaded from the WSU Thurston County Master Gardener website at <http://thurston.wsu.edu/MasterGardener/>. Hard copies are also available in the West Olympia clinic and at each demonstration garden.

WSU Advanced Education Conference-Vancouver, Washington

The 2010 Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference is September 23-25, 2010 in Vancouver, WA. Online registration for the conference begins February 15th. A complete list of workshops will also be available on February 15th. It is too your advantage to register early, because the registration fee will increase before the conference begins. The registration fee includes all classes/workshops as well as two lunches and two dinners. Lodging reservations are made separately.

| Conference Registration Dates | Conference Registration Fee |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| February 15 through April 30 | \$170 |
| May 1 through July 14 | \$190 |
| July 15 through registration close | \$210 |

Lodging

Reserve your room now at the **Red Lion Hotel at the Quay** right on the Columbia River in Vancouver. Stay at the host hotel where all events will take place, and take advantage of the special Master Gardener Conference room rates.

Our special MG Conference rates are as low as \$89 for a queen bed and \$99 for two queen beds (up to four people). Regular Red Lion rates range from \$135 to \$159 per night.

You can make reservations either by calling (360) 694-8341 or online by going to www.redlion.com/vancouver.

If making reservations online:

- enter the dates of your reservation
- check "Special Rates" in the "Group Rate Code" field
- type in the code 100922MA
- then click on "Check Availability"

If you make reservations by calling the Red Lion Hotel at the Quay in Vancouver at (360) 694-834 be sure to mention the 2010 Master Gardener Conference to get the special room rate.

The Red Lion has 160 rooms, so book your hotel room now!

WSU Master Gardener Legislative Day in Olympia

The Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State is sponsoring "Legislative Day." It's one of the few opportunities we have to showcase our WSU Master Gardener program for our counties' respective senators and members of the House of Representatives. The event is scheduled for Wednesday, February 10th., On that day, leaders from local Master Gardener programs from all corners of the state are encouraged to journey to Olympia to tell their legislators just how valuable the program is for their constituents. All too often the only time the legislature hears from us is in times of budget crisis. Although this session is another very difficult time fiscally, the state Master Gardener foundation invites you to bring a positive, inspiring message to Olympia. If you have something you would like to share with our legislators please let Cori know.

The Common Sense Gardener
4131 Mud Bay Rd.
Olympia, WA 98502

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Spring Forward!

Don't forget to change your clocks at 2am on
Sunday, March 14, 2010.

Equinox or Solstice?

Spring Equinox-First day of Spring
3/20/10
Equal parts of day and night.

Summer Solstice- First day of Summer
6/21/10
Longest day of light in the year.

Fall Equinox-First day of Fall
9/23/10
Equal parts of day and night.

Winter Solstice-First day of Winter
12/21/10
Shortest day of light in the year.



Do you know what perihelion and
aphelion mean?

Perihelion is when the earth is closest to
the sun.

It already happened on January 3,
2010.

Aphelion is when the earth is at its
greatest distance from the sun.

It will happen on July 6, 2010.