

The Garden



Starting an Asparagus Bed *Asparagus officinalis*

If you love fresh asparagus, think about starting your own bed. Planting a new asparagus bed is labor intensive initially, but once established, it can thrive on benign neglect. Plus, it is fun to look at.

The spears that are too small to harvest will grow into 5-6 foot feathery billowy fern-like fronds. Asparagus is one of the few perennial vegetables. Tucked away in a spot where it can flourish undisturbed, it will provide years of return with very little investment.

Cultivation can be traced back 2000 years in the eastern Mediterranean area. The name derives from the Greek word "asparagos" which in turn originates from the Persian "asparag" meaning sprout or shoot. Asparagus is low in calories, contains no cholesterol and is very low in sodium. The second century physician, Galen, described asparagus as "cleansing and healing." It contains substances that act as a diuretic, neutralize ammonia that makes us tired, and protect small blood vessels from rupturing.

Until recently asparagus cultivation required patience. However, once established, a bed can continue to produce for 15 to 20 years or more, but starting the bed meant purchasing one to two year old crowns and waiting 2 to 4 years to harvest. New hybrids and all-male asparagus varieties (Jersey Knight is one such all male cultivar) are producing higher yielding and more disease tolerant plants with greater longevity than female plants or mixed plantings.

Steve Solomon, in his book Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades, proposes starting from seed rather than the conventional method of planting one to two year old crowns. Using seed rather

Calendar:

Wednesdays 9 a.m.
78th St. Greenhouse
nancysgarden@comcast.net

Thursdays 9-12
Fort Vancouver Garden

Tues., May 4th, 7:00p.m.
Master Gardener
Foundation of Clark County
Meeting at CASEE Center,
11104 NE 149th St Bldg. B
Brush Prairie, WA

**"With out hard work,
nothing grows but weeds"**
~ Gordon B. Hinckley

HAPPY MOTHER'S
DAY



WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office.

than crowns allows you to affordably destroy the female plant (more later), the extra productive and all male varieties are only available by seed, seeds are cheaper, and heavy production can begin a year earlier. If your growing conditions are iffy, seeds will allow you to test your conditions without a huge investment.

Asparagus is essentially a root crop that stores its food supply in its fleshy roots and sends up “jet powered” shoots that can grow 4 inches per day. The mature shoots look like ferns and it is their job to manufacture sugars to be stored in the roots for next year’s crop. Unlike other root crops, asparagus requires rich, well draining soil. Asparagus doesn’t like to be waterlogged (a problem during our wet winters), so planting in a raised bed will help alleviate drainage problems. Dig the soil well and work in general purpose garden fertilizer (10 10 10) as well as compost. Make an extra fertile strip long way down the center of the bed by spreading a layer of compost or manure about 1 ½ inches thick and spread about one gallon of general purpose fertilizer per every 25 feet of the fertile strip. Dig these amendments as deep as your shovel will go. Soak seeds overnight (no longer than 12 hours). Make a 1/2-3/4 inch furrow down the fertile strip and sow. For hybrid or OP (open pollinated) seeds, sow seeds singly every 2 inches; if you are using male hybrid seeds, sow 3 to a spot – 1 foot apart (thin to one plant as they grow). Outdoor sowing can be done around apple blossom time. Keep the bed moist until the seeds sprout (about 2 weeks). After one month thin to 6 inches apart and side dress with more fertilizer or strong compost. The idea is to encourage fast growth the first year so that you will be able to harvest the following year. Keep the bed weed free! Seeds can also be started indoors 60-90 days prior to the average last frost date (mid-April).

If you did not plant an all male variety, ruthlessly remove any female plants. Around mid-summer the female plants will make seed balls that turn red. Since seed formation is a huge burden on the plant, having an all male bed yields more and larger shoots. Asparagus does not like to be crowded and beds decline mainly due to over crowding from self sown seeds. Removing the female plants and any self sowers will maintain your spacing. If there are gaps, just sow a couple more seeds next spring.



In the fall or late winter, when the fronds turn brown, cut them down and compost them. During winter or no later than early spring, cover the bed with a ½ -1 inch layer of finished compost or aged manure, along with fertilizer. Continue to keep the weeds out. The bed will last indefinitely as long as there is good drainage, rich soil, and the bed is weed free.

The asparagus beetle is the main pest and persistent problems can be controlled with rotenone and/or Neem. Spray often enough so that enough fern fronds remain to create food for the next year’s crop. Asparagus can be bothered by rust, Fusarium wilt and Fusarium stem and crown rot. Control root diseases by maintaining good plant vigor.

Harvest your crop the second year. Harvest only those spears as big as your thumb, but exercise restraint to allow the ferns to develop to create more food for the following year. By the third year, the bed should be thick with good sized spears. Cut up to three weeks, or until the size of the shoots begin to decrease. Sit back and enjoy your fresh picked asparagus!

References:

<http://nwrec.hort.oregonstate.edu/asparagu.html> accessed 2/3/10

http://ohioline.osu.edu/b826/b826_4.html accessed 2/3/10

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asparagus> accessed 2/3/10

<http://www.world-foodhistory.com/2008/08/history-of-asparagus.html> accessed 2/3/10

Solomon, Steve. *Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades, The Complete Guide to Organic Gardening*, 6th ed. Seattle: Sasquatch Books,

News Release

May 4, Tuesday 7:00 PM meeting for Clark County Master Gardener Foundation: Speaker Todd Murray of WSU Extension...Aliens in our Gardens...Asian Fruit Flies to Wire Worms.

Todd will present information on some of the introduced, invasive insect problems in our home gardens. He has worked for the last 14 years as an entomologist, beginning his career at WSU in small fruit and ornamental pest management.

Room202/205, 11104 N.E. 149th St., Brush Prairie. Members and the public are welcomed

Looking ahead to future meetings:

June 1, Gardens and agriculture in Nicaragua by Master Gardener Kit Stowell

July 6, FOOD, picnic and fun

August, no meeting

[September 7, Pending, Scottish heathers](#)

October 5, Annual Business meeting and Yolanda Vanveen, Vanveen Bulbs

November 2, Historic Apples by Master Gardener Karen Palmer

December 7, The personal side of Christmas Tree Farming by Several experienced Master Gardeners...value added green items will be available.

**MG COORDINATOR CAROLYN'S CORNER**

Carolyn's Corner May 2010

May is the month when our spring gardens truly shine! Mine is looking quite nice with the iris blooming and the conifers just budding out. Those glorious iris came from the MG Foundation plant sale a few years ago. They were a bargain too good to pass up and I feel both proud and frugal as I admire them each morning when they are fresh with dew.

This year's MGF Plant Sale is May 8 and 9 – don't miss it!

This two-day plant sale requires year round labor to produce the excellent quality and choice of plant material offered at the sale. I know that this year's sale will be a success because I've seen the massive numbers of dedicated volunteers out at the greenhouses.

I want to express my personal gratitude to those volunteers – because their efforts produce the majority of funds for the MGF budget each year. All the wonderful projects and programs funded by the Foundation would not be possible without the plant sale income. So please tell all your friends that this is the one spring sale not to be missed.

Happy Shopping!
Carolyn

**Organic Remedies**

Tip of the Month:

Moistened Newspaper

Use: To trap earwigs.

How to Make: Moisten tightly roll newspaper or corrugated cardboard.

How to apply: Place outside in the evening where earwig damage is apparent. In the morning dispose of the paper and the trapped insects.

Green Energy Drink

Ingredients

4 oz spinach
1 apple
3 oz yellow pepper
a pinch of cinnamon
1 T wheat germ

Directions

Juice all ingredients and serve in a tall glass. Really good without the yellow pepper also.



may to-do-list

VEGETABLES

It should be safe to plant almost all vegetables now. The warm weather crops like tomatoes, squash, cucumber, pumpkins and peppers can wait until mid to late May. Carrots, lettuce, potatoes, corn, beans, peas and most of the rest of the popular vegetables can be seeded or planted anytime now.

PLANTS

This would be good time to select and plant those plants that you need to replace the ones that winter killed. Since most plants are now grown in containers, they can be planted into the garden at anytime now.

LAWNS

This is a great month to eliminate lawn weeds, control moss, thatch (if needed), aerate, feed and overseed the lawn. Actually few lawns will need all this care so only do the steps that are necessary to get your lawn in tip-top shape.

BASKETS AND CONTAINERS

As soon as the evenings warm-up a little more the Fuchsia, Geranium, Impatiens and mixed baskets can be put outside. If you already have put these out into the garden be sure to keep tabs on the weather, so there is no chance of the baskets getting nipped by a late frost.

FERTILIZING

There still is plenty of time to fertilize all the trees and shrubs.

MULCH

Mulch with organic matter - tree trimmings, compost, or barks. Applying 2 - 3" will reduce water usage and improve the organic content and texture of soil.

Contributors

WAYNE CHANDLER
Foundation Pres. and
Co-chair, Endowment
Committee

MARILYN BROWN
Co-chair, Endowment
Committee

KAREN PALMER
Foundation Exec. Admin.

BARBARA NORDSTROM
Article Contributor

JEANNE CADY
Newsletter Editor

CAROLYN GORDON
MG Program Coordinator

SALLY DUNCAN
Greenhouse #6 Crew

HEATHER LUND
MG Foundation

SALLY GREENLEE
Web Team



WSU Extension Clark County Master Gardener Program

11104 NE 149th St.,
Bldg. C-100,
Brush Prairie, WA 98606

PHONE:
360-397-6060

FAX:
360-397-6122

PROGRAM CONTACTS:
The Answer Clinic
mganswerclinic@clark.wa.gov

Carolyn Gordon
MG Program Coordinator
gordonc@wsu.edu

Dr. Brun
brunc@wsu.edu

Emily Chase
Web Team
chasere986@q.com
892-1105

Ray Peterson
On-the-Road Events
rpeters@pacifier.com
573-2592

[http://clark.wsu.edu/volunteer/mg/
endowment/contribute.html](http://clark.wsu.edu/volunteer/mg/endowment/contribute.html)

Clark County MG Endowment

We're on the Web!

WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office.

Master Gardener Foundation of Clark County

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

78th Street Property.

MASTER PLAN APPROVED!!

We're still there!!

On April 06 I testified at the County Board of Commissioners hearing in which they subsequently approved the proposed Master Plan for the 78th street property showing the greenhouses in the same general location as they currently occupy. The only change made by the Board was the deletion of the extension of 75th Avenue shown on the map accompanying the Master Plan. Several other folks representing varied interests also testified in support of the proposed Master Plan; thus, there is broad support with moving forward with the approved Master Plan.

We're currently exploring options to replace the older greenhouses. But, first, we'd like to develop a detailed site plan for future development of the greenhouse complex—is there anyone out there with cartographic experience willing to give us a hand? We have a general idea of what we would like to see; but, we need to put it on paper. Your help would be greatly appreciated!! Contact me!

Whenever an opportunity presents itself, I encourage you to become involved and promote the Master Gardener Foundation's continued use of the 78th street property. So far, our ability to use the property enabled us to raise over \$30,000 last year! That is money that was used to support the Master Gardener Program and other worthwhile community projects—details in the 2010 Budget elsewhere in this Newsletter.

In addition, we've been able to donate some plants to other non-profits like Second Chance Housing, Evergreen Schools Skill Center and the 4-H Restorative Community Service Program—all to help our fellow Clark County Citizens.

Without our continued use of the 78th street property, none of this would be possible. Thank you for your past and future involvement!!

2010 Master Gardener Conference—Things continue to happen! In addition to the registration website being completed, arrangements for the tours are essentially complete, the meal arrangements have been negotiated, evening entertainment has been arranged and the sign-ups continue to accumulate. Our “numbers” are looking very good and we're well on our way to a “bang-up” conference! If you

haven't already signed up, just click on the link below to reserve your spot—the sooner you sign up, the more likely your chosen class will be available:

https://www.regonline.com/wsu_master_gardener_advanced_education_conference

The sponsorship committee has secured seven sponsors donating a total of **\$13,000 plus** in cash and merchandise!! **That is awesome!!**

Gold (\$4000)—Sunlight Supply, Inc. (National Garden Wholesale)

Silver (\$2000)—Portland Nursery

Silver (\$2000)—Proven Winners

Bronze (\$1000)—Edward Jones

Bronze (\$1000+merchandise)—Shorty's Nursery

Bronze (\$1000)—Columbia Sportswear

Bronze (\$1000)—Outback Fireplaces

Bronze (\$1000)—Ameriprise Financial

And, other businesses and individuals have stepped forward with some nice things for the silent auction. If you know of a business or individual that might be willing to contribute and/or if you have a contact within that business, please let Dean Sutera know. Dean's e-mail is dsutera45@msn.com

Plus, it is looking like all 25 tables in the “MG Marketplace” will be laden with goodies for you to purchase. There will be everything from plants to conference logoed merchandise to our very own cookbook to purchase!

As in any project, there is a lot of essential work going on behind the scenes. Much of that work is being done by the Coordinators—Dean Sutera, Karen Palmer and Fran Hammond—and scores of volunteers. If you'd like to help, contact Dean, Karen or Fran—they'll integrate you quickly!

“From Trowel to Table”—that's the title of our new cookbook that just went to press! **Many THANKS** to Al Pavelko and his group of dedicated volunteers—Judy Hargreaves, Marie Ogier, Bob Damon, Toni Wyffels, Karen Palmer, Susan Sanders, Sidne Kneeland and Dolly Fambro—for writing, editing and publishing our cookbook containing over 500 recipes using ingredients we grow in our gardens. The cookbook will be loose-leaf, lays flat or stands up on the supplied easel and will be priced at only \$14.95. You can order one on line at MGFCClark@gmail.com or come to the 2010 Conference and buy one in our store!

Plant Sale—2600 tomato plants plus hundreds of pepper plants plus lots of herbs and watermelon and lots of annuals will be ready for our sale May 8th!! The folks volunteering at the greenhouses are amazing!! And, **the leadership supplied by Nancy Funk and Julie Carlsen is equally amazing!!**

You have responded well to our call for replacement perennials for those that died from our extreme cold snap last winter—**THANK YOU!!**

While it is too late for this plant sale, if you have some perennials (except daylilies and iris) you'd like to donate, please contact Libby Adcock at: adcocklibby@juno.com . We'll pot them up and they will be ready for our fall plant sale during the Harvest Days celebration.

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m. thirty plus folks show up to work like heck getting everything done under the leadership of Nancy Funk and Julie Carlsen. So, come on out and join the fun—yep, we enjoy what we are doing!

We're at the greenhouses every Wednesday from 0900 to 1200 and will gladly sell plants to anyone who stops by. The only caveat is that exact change is required.

As you can see, we're working hard to raise funds to better enable our Foundation to fulfill its dual purposes of supporting the Master Gardener Program and Providing Horticultural Education to the Citizens of Clark County. Please contact any Director with any fund-raising ideas you might have. Or, if you have skills/experience at applying for grants or would like to learn how, please let me know!!

I-5 Washington Welcome Sign Planting—Your Board has agreed to plant the Welcome to Washington sign located in I-5 near 4th Plain this year. And, we need your help!! Our tentative “planting date” is June 05 and many trowels make for light work! Elena Kokta has volunteered to lead this effort and Elena's e-mail is: ekokta@hotmail.com and she'd love to hear from you! ☺

We also need help transplanting the flower plugs into four-inch pots on May 12 because the state is going to buy the flowers from us. So, we'll be performing a community service while making a few dollars from growing the flowers. That's the best kind of project to have!!

May 04 Member Meeting—the speaker will be Todd Murray, an entomologist from WSU Extension speaking on Aliens in our Gardens! While Todd's focus will be on introduced pests, I think we should bring whatever insect that is “**bugging**” you for him to ID!! ☺ Look for details elsewhere in the newsletter.

Heather Lund and Loran Mate are your program coordinators for the evening meetings of members. Loran and Heather welcome, and want, your suggestions and feedback. It is your meeting and they want to please you!

Master Gardener Endowment

Last month I announced Pat Shields as the new chair of the Endowment committee. And, while Pat continues as the chair, she, unfortunately, was recently involved in a car accident and suffered whiplash. So, the rest of the committee is “pitching in” while Pat recuperates. That's just what we do—help when others need our assistance.

As the stock market recovers, so does the Endowment Fund. We are now within \$3,000 of our fund value equaling the amount contributed. Given that we started the fund immediately before the “Great Recession”, we are doing quite well!

YOUR BOARD—Your Board member names and contact information are elsewhere in this Newsletter and I urge you contact any one of us with any suggestions, concerns or “Thank Yous” you would like to convey. We’re here to serve you and we can best do that when we know what you want!

Thank you,
Wayne Chandler
MGF Board President

Foundation Membership

There is still time to join the Master Gardener Foundation for 2010, if you haven’t already done so. Dig out that membership form that is buried in your “to do” pile and send it back. If you can’t find the form, email me at MGFClark@gmail.com and I’ll be happy to send you a new one. In addition to the good feeling you’ll get from supporting all the wonderful activities you read about in this newsletter (plus more), you’ll get discounts at many nurseries and garden supply centers just by showing your membership card. Thanks for your support.



Master Gardener Foundation of Clark County

1919 NE 78th Street, Vancouver WA 98665

360-576-6030 ext 17

MGFCClark@gmail.com

President:

Wayne Chandler

cny89172@centurytel.net

686-8328

Vice President:

Libby Adcock

adcocklibby@juno.com

910-6731

Secretary:

Nancy Funk

nancysgarden@comcast.net

798-4004

Treasurer:

Treca Selkregg

slkrggtrcslk@netscape.net

737-0848

Directors:

Dick Bernards

bernardsr@aol.com

887-3459

Dixie Jawad

ladydixie@aol.com

834-4444

Elena Kokta

ekokta@hotmail.com

835-9790

Ken Pellens

kenval1@msn.com

573-5486

Wanda Wilson

wwilsonwilson@yahoo.com

576-0539

Executive Administrator:

Karen Palmer

kpj3@iinet.com

260-5569