



# Extension 'Cord

2014

## Connecting People, Resources, & Knowledge

*"Welcome to the Extension 'Cord, a monthly briefing paper from WSU Snohomish County Extension. Even though we have existed for over 100 years, we have realized that too many people are unaware of the diversity and impact of our programs. Each issue will highlight the purpose, activities and results of one particular program. The 'Cord will showcase the work of our 1,000 volunteers and 25 staff. Please do not hesitate to contact any of our staff for more information."*

Curt Moulton, Extension Director



## Master Gardener Program

For 40 years, WSU-Snohomish County Extension Master Gardeners have served the residents of Snohomish County by diagnosing plant problems and answering questions on all aspects of gardening and landscape stewardship. The Master Gardener [MG] Program began in King, Pierce, Spokane, and Snohomish Counties and proved so popular that it spread across the state, the country, and then overseas.

Initiated as a question-and-answer program to help home gardeners, the MG program has matured into a proactive, issue-based program that addresses critical issues facing the growing and diverse population of Snohomish County. Trained as volunteer community

educators, MGs provide information, classes, and demonstrations throughout the county on sound food growing and landscape stewardship, which emphasizes sustainable gardening, integrated pest management, water conservation, and storm water management.

Each year, the Snohomish County MG Program trains a new class of volunteer educators in all aspects of community horticulture, approximately 2500 volunteers since the program began—training that stays with them for a lifetime. At any given time, over 350 MGs are working in the program, and in 2013, they donated more than 30,000 hours for the benefit of the citizens of Snohomish County.



Diagnosing plant problems reduces pesticide use. Sixty to seventy percent of all reported plant problems are cultural or environmental issues that cannot be solved by using pesticides. The MG program operates Plant Diagnosis Clinics at more than 25 locations around the county, many once a week during the growing season, plus a year-around, weekday clinic in McCollum Park. Survey results show that intended pesticide use was reduced by three-quarters by those county residents who consulted a Master Gardener.

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For upcoming events:

<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/calendar.htm>



By partnering with Snohomish County Solid Waste, Snohomish County Surface Water Management and The Snohomish County Conservation District, Master Gardeners are able to leverage limited resources in joint efforts to reduce solid waste by the increased recycling of organic waste and the proper use of compost; and reduce storm-water run-off pollution of our lakes, streams, rivers and the Sound through education about rain gardens, natural yard care, and the proper use and disposal of pesticides.

The MG Demonstration Gardens at Jennings Park in Marysville, McCollum Park in south Everett, and Legion Park in north Everett demonstrate a wide variety of sustainable garden techniques and are always open to the public.

Master Gardeners work closely with Extension's Growing Groceries Program to build the capacity of communities and families to grow their own healthy, fresh food through an ongoing training and mentoring program.

The Snohomish County Master Gardener Foundation provides significant financial support for the Master Gardener program including operational funds for the plant problem clinics, the demonstration gardens, other outreach programs, and by providing grants to many county community gardens.

Invasive species, such as the spotted wing drosophila, are an increasing threat to Snohomish County resources. Master Gardeners are designated as first responders and are trained to identify, detect and report new invasive species. Then they help the public cope with these new threats as well as the return of old problems, such as bed bugs.

The Master Gardener Hotline Plant Problem Clinic at the Extension Office in McCollum Park, including the hotline at 425-357-6010, is operated weekdays throughout the year although hours vary seasonally.

**WSU Extension Mission Statement**

Washington State University Extension engages people, organizations, and communities to advance economic wellbeing and quality of life by connecting them to the knowledge base of the university and by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research.

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