



The cure for the winter blahs: Geraniums in bloom like these in the MG greenhouse Photo by LH

Garden Thymes

WSU SKAGIT COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENERS • Fall 2014/Winter 2015

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Meet the Interns

Photographs by Trish Varrelman

The cold, drizzly day that greeted Skagit County on January 6th did not dampen the warm welcome veteran master gardeners brought to the 2015 Meet the Intern celebration at the Padilla Bay Breazeale Interpretive Center. Besides eleven new trainees, we welcomed an MG transfer from Kittitas County.

MG mentors introduced their protégés during the morning session after which everyone enjoyed a potluck lunch. During the afternoon session, the training committee of Cherry Dennis, Cindee Juel and Deborah Smeltzer, Kathy Thornburgh and Diana Wisen reviewed the class syllabus with the trainees and provided training for the online course work. The next ten weeks will keep them all very busy. The mentors and their mentees are:



Gloria Williams (standing) introduced her seventeenth MG intern Linda Baker who comes to the MG Program from the Native Plant Society where she worked with several other master gardeners. Linda was raised in Wisconsin and recently relocated from Chicago.



Harriet Custer is mentor to Mary Deaton who confessed that, as a child, she had been enlisted into helping her mother in the family garden and had no intention of becoming a gardener herself. Life plays tricks and here she is! She lived a number of years in Southern California before moving to the Pacific Northwest to work for a well-known software company. She is interest-

—From Trainees, page 1

Emma Davis is mentor to Lisa Ellis who is originally from North Hollywood. Lisa's grandmother and mother both introduced her to gardening. She received a degree in Early Childhood Education, then moved to Iowa (where she started a church garden), Chicago and Issaquah before landing in Mount Vernon in 2013. The Discovery Garden intrigued her and resulted in her applying to the MG Program.



Jerry Sells introduced John Lindsay, a retired Lutheran pastor and social activist.



John is a Midwesterner from Indiana by way of Chicago, Sitka (Alaska) and more recently South Seattle. He and his wife Katherine moved to Mount Vernon this past summer.



Ruth Sutton introduced her mentee, Nancy Crowell, a recovering Microsoftie, who is an active member of the Seattle Curling League. Nancy grew up in Mississippi, went to school in Tennessee (English Lit) and Florida (film school). Her gardening genes

came by way of her grandfather who grew sweet peas especially for her. Nancy is also a photographer.

Judy Callahan's mentee is Bruce Lindsay, a self-professed moldy rat from Humboldt County (California) via Louisiana, Nevada and Arizona. He was born in the Philippines and raised in LA. Early on, Bruce was drawn to farmers' markets and the growing of food. (That may or may not have had anything to do with his youthful pastime of lobbying avocados against brick walls.) The La Brea tar pits were very nearly in his backyard and helped pique his interest in all things soil-related. Along the way he picked up several science degrees (Agronomy and Geology). He spent 28-years with the USDA and now brings his unique vision to the MG Program.



Linda Bachmann is mentor to Katherine Lindsay whose husband John is also part of the 2015 MG trainee class.

Katherine's previous pursuits included teaching second grade, studying digital photography at Cornish in Seattle and learning about square-foot gardening at South Seattle Community College.

tle

Dave Buchan's mentee is Jonathan Robinson, a graduate of Bellarmine Prep in Tacoma and TCU. As a child, Jonathan had no interest in horticulture as he was most often pressed into service in his father's garden. He studied architecture and art history at WSU.

While in Pullman, Jonathan started working in a garden and unearthed his own gardening passion. He works at Salazar's Nursery in Mount Vernon



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—From Trainees, page 2



Deborah Smeltzer is mentoring Erin Landon who grew up in Bothell.

Erin has a degree in history from Western Washington University and an MBA from University of Phoenix. She is an avid permaculturist, grows tomatoes and cans much of her produce. She

and her husband have a 10-year old son.

Sandy Fielden is mentor to Isabelle DeLise, a native of Basalt, Colorado.



Isabelle moved to Washington State in 2007 and to Anacortes in 2013. She was inspired to delve deeper into gardening while working at Dona Flora Herbs and Flowers. Besides a stint working for Washington Conservation Corps, she has helped maintain the community garden at Western Washington University. In her spare time, she flexes her mountaineering muscles.



Bob Bryan introduced John McMillin, no stranger to the Discovery Garden. His was not your typical childhood by any stretch of the imagination. John grew up on a converted oil barge that was towed all around the world. He attended San Marcos College in Peru. His life long interest is in mitigating hunger. He is a proponent of the hedge apple/Osage orange as a source of protein.



Beverly Dale Crunk is an MG transfer from Kittitas County.



Beverly grew up in Detroit and attended the University of Michigan (“Go Blue!”) receiving a degree in bio-chemistry. She and her husband spent a number of years in Ellensburg raising horses on 50 acres. They have recently down-sized to a third of an acre on Big Lake.

Welcome, Class of 2015! We look forward to meeting each of you over the next few months. Learning has many routes / roots and we hope you enjoy the ride. We’ll join you along the way. ☐



Know & Grow

Diana Wisen

Know and Grow workshops help us fulfill our mission to provide outreach and education to the gardening public as well as continuing education for Master Gardeners. These popular seminars are held monthly on a Tuesday afternoon from 1:00 p.m.—2:30 p.m. at the NWREC Sakuma auditorium adjacent to the Discovery Gardens. Upcoming topics are:

February 17th: David George Gordon, “The Bug Chef.” Join Gordon as he takes us on an unlikely adventure with insects and bugs.

March 17th: TBA

April 14th: Lisa Wasko DeVetter, PhD, Assistant Professor, Berry Crops, WSU NWREC, Mount Vernon. Besides tulips and daffodils, Skagit County is home to many berry patches and fields. Discover which ones do best in our microclimates: blackberry and select minor fruit crops, like hardy kiwis, currants, Saskatoons, etc. ☐

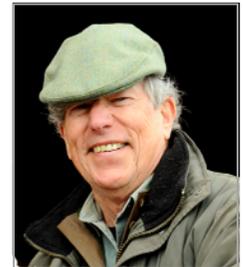


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MG Foundation News

Al Call, President
Photos by Trish Varrelman



Greetings to you all from your Master Gardener Foundation Board! We hope you find much peace and happiness in this new year.

The Foundation ended 2014 in good shape. As of November 30th, the Foundation Checking Account totaled \$9,145, and the Savings Account, \$16,474. As you know, our fiscal year runs July 1 through June 30. All accounts are on or near their budgeted amounts. Our treasurer, Gail Messett, continues to do a wonderful job of managing all things financial.

On a gorgeous sunny day in September, our Master Gardener Rose Garden provided the venue for Skagit County’s centenary remembrance of the beginning of World War I. Mount Baker peaked over the hills while an honor guard posted the colors before an audience of some 50 community members.



We had a record turnout for our garden closure/semi-annual board meeting on October 28th. Eighty-five of you attended a lively meeting and enjoyed a great lunch afterwards. Thanks to Dave Buchan again for tasty burgers and hot dogs off the grill. We also saluted the good work of Brian Wolfe and his crew at Trico Companies LLC, Burlington, who delivered many tons of gravel to the greenhouse and plant house floors, packed them down and installed new flooring fabric.



Al Call and Brian Wolfe

We said “Thank you” to Cindee Juel and Bob Bryan who ended their terms of service on the Foundation Board. They were both active and valuable members and will be greatly missed. However, they are replaced by two other dedicated master gardeners, Brenda Cunningham and Laurie Johnson.

Our new class of Master Gardener Trainees began their studies on January 6th under the tutelage of an enthusiastic training team: Cherry Dennis, Alex duPont, Cindee Juel, Deborah Smeltzer, Kathy Thornburgh and Diana Wisen. The breadth of their life experiences is impressive. The Class of 2014 set the bar fairly high, but we have no doubt that the Class of 2015 can equal or better that standard.

It has been my privilege to serve as your president this year, and I look forward to “one more year” with optimism and gratitude for your guidance and support. Thank you all for your hard work to further the mission of the Master Gardener Program.

Al Call



Skagit Talks

Skagit Master Gardeners
can be heard on

Skagit Valley
Community Radio
out of

Skagit Valley College

KSVR-FM 91.7

5:00—5:30 p.m.

Third Friday of the Month

Worm Composting is Easy and Fun

by Cedar Wyatt

Photos by Carla Glassman

Live in an apartment, mobile home, or RV? Have a home with a small yard? Don't have time for a three cubic foot compost bin or the strength or energy to turn the compost every couple of weeks? Worm composting or vermicomposting could be for you.

Worms and their bins are great for small spaces inside the home under the kitchen sink, in a basement, utility room, laundry room or the garage. A small shady area on your porch or yard could also work. A suitable spot for your bin out of the direct light and sheltered from strong winds will help keep the bin within a temperature range of 59° - 77° F.

Worm composting requires a bin. Plastic bins can be purchased online or at agricultural supply stores and come in several shapes and sizes. Vertical bins encourage the worms to move upward, leaving the castings ready to use in lower bins.



MG Carla Glassman and her family designed this worm bin with recycled tires.

You can also build a worm bin to suit your chosen location. Many worm bin plans can be found online.

Worms are clean and have very little scent. They are cool and slippery to the touch, they don't bite, and their castings smell slightly earthy, like humus.

Worms prefer darkness and need air to breathe, a steady temperature, food, and enough moisture in the box to keep their skin moist. They spend most of their time in the vegetable scraps and bedding.

Worms aren't good swimmers and can drown if there is excess fluid pooled in the bottom of the worm bin. Bins that are designed to self-drain allow excess water to drain into a lower level, thus keeping the moisture at a constant and healthy level. This drainage, known as worm "tea," is composed of worm castings diluted with water. It can be used half-strength to water your indoor plants, or used full-strength on outdoor plants.

Compost worms are part of the biological family Lumbricidae. This family includes hundreds of species. Within this family each worm species has a two-word italicized Latin

name. The most frequently recommended worms for composting in the Pacific Northwest are *Eisenia fetida*, *Eisenia andrei*, and *Lumbricus rubellus*, because these species live in the top few inches of the soil under dead leaf litter, which best matches the worm bin environment.

You will need about a pound of worms for each cubic foot of worm bin. For example, if your bin is two feet long by two feet wide by one foot tall, this works out to four cubic feet and four pounds of worms. Often you can get compost worms from a friend or neighbor who already has a worm bin. You can also purchase worms via the Internet.

If you purchase your worms you will find that most compost worms are sold under names such as red worms or red wigglers or night crawlers. These names do not give you accurate information about the worm's temperature tolerance or habitat preference.

Worms are also sold by quantity rather than by weight of worms. Before you order worms, contact the worm farmer and request the biological name of the worms, weight and number of worms being offered.

Worms like to eat fruit, vegetable scraps, coffee grounds with paper filters, tea leaves with or without bags, dried ground egg shells, grains, pasta, crackers, and bread.



MG Trisha Varrelman checks out the worm bin in the Discovery Garden.

Add food to the worm bin by lifting the bedding material and placing the food under it. The food may be whole or chopped. The new food may be mixed with the worm castings and previous food or placed on top. The worms should not be fed meat, fish, or dairy products including cheese, oils, fats, litter box material, any kind of pet stool or urine, non-biodegradable materials, or biodegradable plastic bags.

The worm bin bedding can be made up of a combination of torn paper bags, shredded office paper, torn or shredded mail, torn newspaper (excluding colored high-shine paper), cardboard, sawdust, composted animal manure from chickens, rabbits, ducks, or goats, shredded drying leaves, straw or dried grass clippings.

—See *Worms*, page 6

—From *Worms*, page 5

You don't have to make a mixture of these items, one or two works well as long as the bedding is coarse enough to hold moisture and can be fluffed up to provide air flow. The bedding covers the food scraps providing darkness and moisture for the worms while they eat.

Moisten dry bedding material before placing it in the bin. Use one part bedding material to three parts water by weight. Weigh your dry bedding material first then weigh the water separately. Two pounds of bedding material, needs six pounds of water. Place bedding in an appropriate container, add water and mix. Allow the mixture to rest and absorb the water before adding it to the worm bin.

Depending on conditions (temperature, amount of material added, number of worms, size of bin, etc.), you could expect to use the castings anywhere from one to six months.☐

Where Have All the Elm Trees Gone?

Al Call

Most of you know about the World War I monument that was placed at the east end of the Discovery Garden in 2008. Many of you attended the ceremony that was held at the monument on September 11th of this year to honor once again those 84 young men from Skagit County who lost their lives in that war.

What is not so well known is that the inscription on the monument also mentions the elm trees that were extensively planted along State Route 536 to honor those fallen soldiers and sailors.

Only two trees remain. What happened to the other elm trees and why? It all began back in 1931 with LeRoy Anderson whose dream it was to honor his uncle, Ole Leaf, one of the 84 who died. Anderson was able to have elms planted along both sides of the road all the way from Mount Vernon to Avon Allen Road.

The trees thrived for the most part until the early 1950s when all of them but two, were torn out by the State Highway Department to widen the road and install utility lines. Popular is the view that the trees died from the Dutch Elm infestation, but that disease did not reach the Northwest until the 1990s.

The two remaining trees are still in their original location—right in front of the Net Drive-In. Give them a friendly wave the next time you pass by.

Thanks to Steve Jones, PhD, director, WSU Research and Extension Center in Mount Vernon, the elm story is not over. He has approved a project to plant elms along the south side of Memorial Highway (SR 536) for about two-tenths of a mile just west of the Discovery Garden. Project details should be finalized very soon.

So it seems those two lonely old elms will soon have companions once again.☐

Washington State Advanced Education Conference

Registration opens March 1, 2015

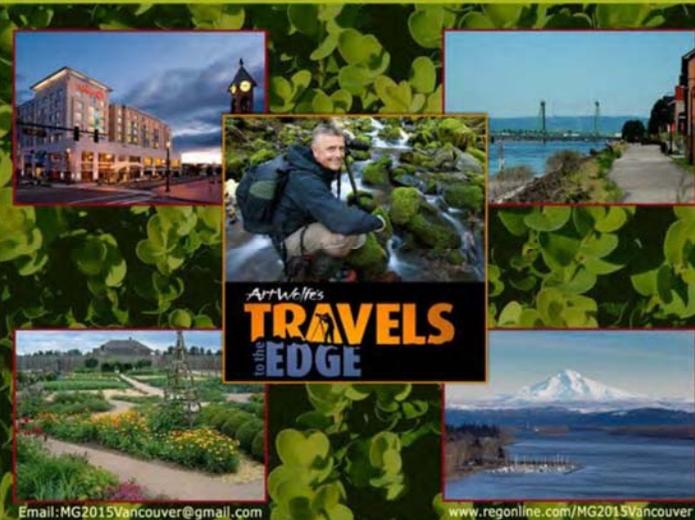
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September 17 - 19, 2015

...in Vancouver, WA

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Hosted by:
Master Gardener Foundation of Clark County

WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office. Reasonable accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities and special needs who contact Nicole Martin at 2606 West Pioneer, Puyallup, WA 98371, (253) 445-4516, nmartin@wsu.edu at least two weeks prior to the event.

Skagit County Master Gardener Plant Fair

Saturday, May 9, 2015

8 a.m.—2 p.m.

Skagit County Fair Grounds