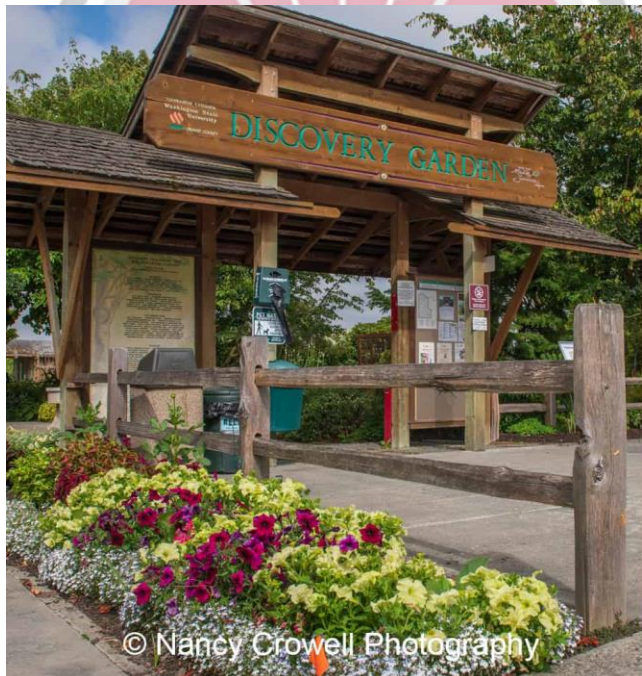


6/16/23

Ask a Master Gardener

Timely insights on relevant topics from our area's home gardening experts



Discover the Skagit Valley Display Gardens Open House

*Discover the Discovery Garden, NW Fruit Garden,
and the Salal Native Plant Garden*

By Janine Wentworth, Skagit County WSU Extension Master Gardener

Discover the Display Gardens Open House

June 24, 2023 · 10 am – 2 pm

Free Admission

- Skagit County WSU Extension Master Gardener Discovery Garden
- Western Washington Fruit Research Foundation
- Salal Native Plant Garden

June is the beginning of summer blooming, fruit and vegetable growth and early harvests.

Enjoy the summer gardens of Skagit Valley at the [Discover the Display Gardens Open House](#). Skagit Valley is home to 8 acres of display gardens operated by volunteers as a learning resource for the public.

All three are nestled together in the green fields of the WSU Northwestern Washington Research and Extension Center west of Mount Vernon on HWY 536 (Memorial Hwy.)



While all three of these gardens are open to the public daily, the Annual Open House is focused on educating and inspiring visitors interested in many specific areas of interest, including pollination, water-wise gardening, native plants and raising fruits and vegetables in the Skagit area.

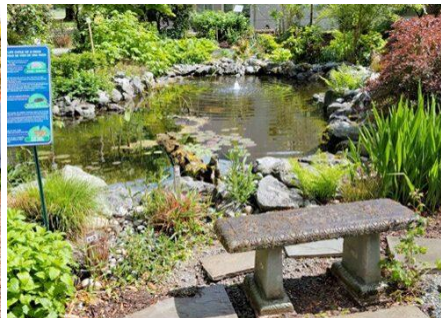
The Discovery Garden

Designed to support Skagit home gardeners by promoting science-based gardening practices, Skagit area WSU Extension Master Gardeners have created 30 garden rooms within the garden, featuring hundreds of plants chosen

to flourish in Skagit Valley. Come and spend time with the volunteers who maintain the gardens and learn more about what they grow.

In addition to tours of the garden rooms, Master Gardeners will be on hand offering activities for all ages including:

- Free garden tool sharpening
- Solutions to plant problems
- Plant identification-- to help you know what you have
- Expert advice on weed identification and management



Left: While at the Discovery Garden, visit the small fruits garden and learn more about food you can grow in your own back yard. Photo © Nancy Crowell Photography. **Center:** Visit the learning station near the pond in the Naturescape Garden. There you will see Koi fish and learn about pond maintenance and construction as well as drip irrigation. **Right:** Bring a blanket and picnic lunch and enjoy the day at the Discovery Garden. Photo © Nancy Crowell Photography

Learn about effective gardening at the 8 education stations located throughout the garden area. Master Gardeners will offer instruction on topics such as:

- Developing healthy soil
- Composting
- Pollinator support
- Fruit tree pruning and thinning
- Gardening with native plants
- Weed identification: Match examples of common weeds with their names so you can learn how to identify them and control them
- Clean water and water conservation: Visit the learning station near the pond in the Naturescape Garden. There you will see Koi fish and learn about pond maintenance and construction as well as drip irrigation



Pollinators: Learn about plants that support pollinators from Master Gardeners who plant and care for the pollinator gardens and the pollinators that live in the garden. The pollinator station at the Open House will teach ways to help native bees and other pollinators thrive in home and community landscapes because pollination is an essential survival function.

Local Food: The Skagit County WSU Extension Master Gardeners offer extensive resources for local gardeners. During the Open House, Master Gardeners will be giving talks on healthy soils, growing your own vegetables, and weed identification and eradication. The *Grow Your Own Food* page at

While at the Discovery Garden, visit the Vegetable, Small Fruits, <https://www.skagitmg.org/home/resources/food/> is also an excellent resource for gardeners getting started, and Doc's Arbor garden rooms for ideas and examples of food-producing plants that grow well in the Skagit County area.



Left: Educators from the Xerex Society will be at the Open House demonstrating techniques for making your garden pollinator friendly. **Center:** Learn smarter vegetable gardening tips from the Master Gardeners who have research and tested a variety techniques that face gardeners in the North Puget Sound area. **Right:** Throughout the growing season, garden waste is sorted, chopped, and chipped-- the browns and greens are combined and turned, giving us nutrient-rich compost in a few months.

Composting: Curious about how to get started composting? Composting reduces waste and provides an inexpensive treatment for home gardens and landscapes. Healthy soil is essential to have healthy plants. Come talk to our soil experts and learn about your soil and what you can do to improve it.

Growing the Discovery Gardens since 1996

In 1994, the Skagit County WSU Extension Master Gardeners had a vision for a garden that would demonstrate best practices for gardening in the Skagit area. After two years of planning, the garden's first structure of trees and fences was placed in the fall of 1996. Over the following two years, many committed WSU Extension Master Gardeners, along with the help of the community, planted the gardens.



The WSU Master Gardener Program addresses important sociologic and environmental issues by teaching research-based horticulture information. We want people to have important skills and abilities that help mitigate challenges and to understand that everyone has a role to play in creating and sustaining healthy and resilient communities.

Salal Native Plant Garden

The second garden participating in the Tri-Garden Open House is the Salal Native Plant Garden. Bordering the Discovery Garden to the south, the Salal Native Plant Garden is entered by walking through the Discovery Garden following the paths to the south. This labor of love and concern for native plants is manifested in an extensive and charming display garden.

Created twenty-five years ago as a collaborative effort between volunteers of the Salal Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society and the Washington State University Agriculture Extension Agency at Mount Vernon (WSU), the Native Plant Garden is now a half-acre oasis that holds the seeds for the future of native plants in the lower Skagit Valley. The garden is a terrific resource for homeowners who want to learn how to incorporate more native plants into their landscaping.

Western Washington Fruit Research Foundation (NW Fruit)

The third garden on display is the fruit garden known as the Western Washington Fruit Research Foundation (or NWFruit.org). Here volunteers will answer questions about fruit trees. The 6-acre garden

was designed and constructed by volunteers of the foundation and contains large informational signs and handouts based on the research conducted by Washington State University.

During the Open House volunteers will be on hand to explain examples of netting for bird control, a Tatura trellis, and answer questions about the expansive espalier display.

The fruit garden contains a large collection of fruiting plants with many unique varieties, including a collection of 17 variations of Gravenstein apples, a collection of antique apples from all over the world, and unusual fruits such as medlar and blue honeyberry. Located on the west side of the Discovery Garden the fruit garden is open to the public seven days a week from dawn to dusk.

Please join us for the Open House festivities on June 24, 2023 from 10 am – 2 pm. You are welcome to bring a blanket and picnic lunch and enjoy the day with family and friends.

The gardens are open and free to the public throughout the year, 7 days a week from dawn to dusk. Visit the gardens throughout the seasons to view the seasonal changes. Signage in each garden identifies plants and makes for interesting and educational self-guided tours.

RESOURCES:

- [Discover the Display Gardens](#) website
- Learn about Master Gardener program priorities: <https://mastergardener.wsu.edu/priorities/>
- Interested in Composting and Vermacomposting? See our recent blog article at: <https://www.skagitmg.org/vermicomposting/>
- Get started growing your own food: <https://www.skagitmg.org/home/resources/food/>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Janine Wentworth became a master gardener in 2018. She and Kay Torrance are co-chairs of the Discovery Garden Open House.

Questions about home gardening or becoming a master gardener may be directed to: Skagit County WSU Extension Office, 11768 Westar Lane, Suite A, Burlington, WA 98233; by phone: 360-428-4270; or via the website: www.skagit.wsu.edu/mg