



GROUNDDED

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Another Successful MG Plant Sale . . . *by Mark Amara and Barbara Guiland*

This year's annual sale on the first weekend in May was another profitable venture that supports the Grant-Adams Counties WSU Master Gardener Program. Preparations for the annual plant sale took many months of behind-the-scenes action which came together at McCosh Park in Moses Lake on May 5.

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Master Gardeners (MGs) began preparing for the sale last December in the Big Bend Community College greenhouse sowing seed and potting materials under the leadership of Trudie Walsh. MGs also propagated, divided, and planted seeds and plants in their respective yards and greenhouses for the sale. Plants that MG Kris Nesse contributed from her greenhouse were of exceptional quality and quantity.

The group offered a wide selection of plants and bulbs for purchase. Customers know they can find well-known bedding plants and perennials as well as plenty of unusual varieties. The variety and combinations of quality plants are some of the reasons people keep coming back year after year. Iris Fung was instrumental in helping organize the logistics of the plant sale.

In addition to direct plant sales, the Master Gardeners held a raffle of donated items. The raffle committee, which included Marylou Krautscheid, Terry Rice, and Lisa Villegas, obtained prize donations, advertised the raffle, and saw that raffle tickets were printed, and money collected. The raffle drawing was held at the plant sale and the prizes delivered to the winners. Six prizes were awarded:

- Karen Porter--WSU Master Gardener Basket
- Mike Williams--St. Brigid's Brewery Gift Basket
- Jennifer J.--1/2 cord of firewood
- Mike Bradley--Handmade afghan
- Emily Cooper-Florist in the Garden gift certificate
- Patty Martin--Seed Cupboard Nursery Gift Basket

Barbara Guiland sold garden gloves. Diane Escure, Marta Tredway and Glen Martin tended the cash register while George and Carol Roper, Cynthia Calbick, Arrow Coyote, Diane Escure, Mary Lou Hobson, Duane Pitts, Tina Bradley, Sandra Odell, Kris Nesse and other MGs answered plant questions, helped customers, and made the event a success.

The Master Gardeners use plant sale proceeds to educate urban and rural home gardeners on ways to improve horticultural practices and solve gardening problems through plant clinics and gardening presentations. MGs also maintain demonstration



The quality and quantity of available plants was exceptional this year.

gardens and assist schools and other organizations with horticultural programs geared to their needs.

Grant-Adams Area Master

Gardeners thank everyone who supported our plant sale through their purchases, plant donations, loaned tables, and help in setup/take down. Funds generated help the MG Foundation fund programs that benefit the communities in which we live and work.



Though the sale started slowly, hundreds of people attended.

Gardening Symposium Rated Fantastic!

The 4th Annual Columbia Basin Eco-Gardening Symposium took place on April 21, 2018, at the Technical Skills Center in Moses Lake, with 86 attending. Master Gardener Kris Nesse served as Master of Ceremony for the event, which featured three presentations focused on home gardens.

The trio of accomplished speakers included Allan Felsot, who discussed options for using pesticides in the garden; Karen Lewis, who spoke about managing home orchards; and Linda Chalker-Scott, who completed the program with a fascinating talk on dispelling common garden myths. All the speakers were affiliated with Washington State University Extension from the Richland campus, Moses Lake, and Puyallup, respectively.

The event featured many donated door prizes, a showcase of 16 vendors, and free refreshments. Attendee evaluations gave rave reviews about the food, facility, door prizes and the vendor marketplace.

The event would not have been as successful as it was without the cooperation and organization provided by the joint efforts of Grant-Adams Master Gardeners and Grant County Conservation District. Set your calendars for the 5th annual event, which will be held on Saturday, April 13, 2019.

Coordinator's Column

The three WSU Master Gardener (MG) Volunteer Co-Coordinators, Duane Pitts, Terry Rice, and Mark Amara are learning how to manage the program, train staff, compile reports, document MG accomplishments and recruit for the next MG certification class of 2019. Since the beginning of the year, the three veteran MGs have assumed these duties as volunteers to keep the program alive and well in our two counties in cooperation with and through guidance from Washington State University Extension.

Terry Rice and Mark Amara recently attended the annual State Master Gardener Program Coordinators Conference in Wenatchee in early June. Much of the session focused in on setting the priorities for the State Coordinator Leadership Team, which, in turn, benefits local programs. There were discussions about ways to standardize processes, develop partnerships, and work cooperatively within and between our



Allan Felsot spoke about pesticide usage while the audience sat quietly taking it all in or asked questions as appropriate. Along the wall behind the speaker were some of the many door prizes given away during the event.

respective counties. Lists generated are being synthesized and prioritized. We are optimistic outcomes will only improve our programs.

MGs in the Grant-Adams Counties area are a small dedicated group of certified volunteers. Our group relies on science-based, unbiased resources available through Washington State University Extension to provide credible and well-researched materials to our clients. The MGs are committed to a variety of community outreach activities. Those activities include organizing educational events like the annual gardening symposium as well as teaching gardening classes, maintaining and improving demonstration gardens in Moses Lake, Othello, Ephrata and Soap Lake, maintaining a seed library at the Ephrata Public Library, writing articles for various news media, assembling and distributing a quarterly newsletter, and staffing plant clinics at farmers markets or online.

This MG program is supported by the nonprofit Grant-Adams Master Gardener Foundation (MGF) which raises and disperses funds to provide financial support for MG projects and programs. Anyone interested in gardening can join the MGF and/or contribute to it as a tax-deductible donation. This is all part of an effort to keep the public engaged and informed, helping them learn and practice sustainable horticultural practices at home gardens, yards, and small acreages in urban or rural settings.

The next scheduled training program to become a certified MG volunteer will be in 2019. Sign up through the Grant-Adams MG website (<https://extension.wsu.edu/grant/>) (click on Master Gardener Volunteer Program and then on Gardening Information. Scroll down to Become a Master Gardener Volunteer and click on Master Gardener Basic Training Brochure) or you can pick up a leaflet at the WSU Extension Office in Moses Lake at 1525 E. Wheeler Rd.

Pruning Clematis: It's Complicated ...

By Barbara Guiland

Clematis vines, like most roses, grow well in our part of the state. There are more than 200 hundred species, with many cultivars. These plants are not particularly disease prone and they like the well-drained soils and fairly neutral *pH* that is most common in the county. The plants prefer sun on their tops and shade for their roots; a shallow-rooted groundcover around them might help with shade. Because they are heavy feeders during the summer, using a balanced fertilizer about once a month will help maintain them. The problem is knowing how to prune them so that they look good and stay healthy.



Group three. *jackmanii*. Photo by B. Guiland

Although both CLEmatis and cleMATis are correct pronunciations that can be used when referring to every vine (It's sort of like the 'tomAto'- 'tomAHto' argument), there are some rules about pruning the different varieties that should be followed if you want their best bloom.



Every spring when blooming begins, I start thinking about pruning the varieties of clematis I have in my garden. It helps to know there ARE different varieties that are pruned at different times of the year and in different ways. When I first started growing the vines, I was not careful about recording the varieties that I purchased. For years I had one vine that never seemed to bloom until I figured out that I was pruning it at the wrong time of the year and in the wrong way!

Here are some general instructions for identifying what kind of clematis you might have and how to prune them. The information is from the "Clematis" Bulletin from the Spokane Extension Master Gardener site and from Lee

Reich, a well-known garden writer, in his article in *Fine Gardening Magazine*. The key to knowing when to prune is being alert to **when** the vine **blooms**, according to Reich, although there are some variations depending on the variety, which is where it becomes important to know the name of your cultivar too. The “Clematis” Bulletin has an extensive list of clematis vines with instructions about when and how to prune them. I haven’t gotten any better at keeping track of how to care for new vines. I won one this spring at a gardening conference but since it didn’t have a name or instructions for pruning, I’ll have to wait a year to find out how to prune it right.

There are other reasons to prune the vines as well as increasing their lovely blooms: The vines can get overloaded with nonblooming stems, or out of reach and too high to see, or top heavy and pull the whole plant over. Pruning is good for the vine, stimulates new growth, limits disease, and makes the vine more attractive. To get the best results, clematis growers have divided the varieties into three groups, with pruning instructions for each group. If you don’t know which group your vines belong to, try letting the plant grow freely for a year or two and watch how it flowers. Then, according to Reich, you should be able to assign the vine to a group. According to the Spokane Bulletin, all clematis vines in their first spring should be cut back to the first two sets of strong buds on each stem. That’s what I’ll do with my new plant.

- **GROUP 1.** These vines bloom only on old wood, i.e., previous year’s growth. (See the Spokane Extension bulletin “Clematis” C018 for some names). The vines can be lightly pruned right after blooming. Take off seed heads and take out the weak or dead stems. Cut back the ones that have gotten too long.
- **Group 2.** The vines bloom twice—in the spring on old growth and again later in the year on new growth. They also are lightly pruned following the bloom. If seed heads are removed right after the spring bloom, you’ll have more fall bloom. The heavy growth on these vines should be untangled and the dead and weak stems removed in the late fall or early spring.
- **Group 3.** Clematis that bloom on new growth should be pruned hard in late fall or early spring, leaving only two or three buds for the next year’s growth. These include the jackmanii varieties. I have several of these and love their late spring growth that lasts into summer. Spending a little time to get the pruning right is worth it.

References

Clematis. Washington State University Extension. Spokane County. C018

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2076/2017/07/C018-Clematis-16.pdf?x14598>

“Pruning Clematis: When They Bloom Determines When to Prune”, Lee Reich, *Fine Gardening*

<https://www.finegardening.com/article/pruning-clematis>

WILDFLOWERS IN MY YARD . . . by Duane Pitts

When we moved into our country home five years ago, wildflowers were blooming everywhere on the property. We did not know weed from flower, so we watered them all if they were by our flower beds and let them flourish, until our son Joshua pointed out the goat’s head (puncturevine or *Tribulus terrestris*) at the edge of the driveway. Then our son Jeremy showed us the Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*), which we thought were the most beautiful yellow snapdragons! Surprise!

As a result, we started using the *Noxious Weeds That Harm Washington State - A Field Guide for Eastern Washington* field guide for eastern Washington to dig up all those “pretty flowers.” Five years later, we think we got all the noxious weeds removed. But knowing Mother Nature, we are most likely wrong. They will come back, but now we know what to look for.

As we dug up the noxious weeds, we kept the wildflowers for the beauty they provide and for the pollen that attracts bees and other pollinators who need all the food they can find in this desert-like area. To the list of wildflowers we have identified — blue dwarf fleabane, foothill daisy, spreading phlox, and common yarrow — we added two others this year: Redstem filaree and Fiddlestick tarweed.

The redstem filaree often grows close to the ground and spreads out. It has small purple flowers and long seed pods that remind me of okra pods, but much, much thinner, like pencil lead thin. If they grow near shrubs or other plants in the garden, along the driveway or in the tree line, I water them to prolong their flowering season, which helps the bees and other pollen gatherers.



Redstem filaree with long, thin seed pods



Fiddlestick tarweed (*Amsinckia lycopsoides*)

Though the fiddleneck tarweed is a native but not a noxious weed, which some people consider a nuisance, it finds a home near the margins of the irises. Some people would just pull them up, but we keep them for the red-orange, eye-catching centers.

With all the rain this spring, the fleabane came back in profusion, dotting the sides of the driveway, and the common yarrow has almost overpowered the iris flags. And tucked among the irises, we found the redstem filaree, a member of the geranium family.



Snapdragons and daylily

We keep checking the property for other wild flowers we may have missed, but with spring almost over and flowers fading or turning into seed pods, there are bound to be more wildflower discoveries awaiting us next spring.

References:

Turner, M. Gustafson, P. Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 2006.
 Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board, Noxious Weeds That Harm Washington State: Eastern WA Field Guide. Publication 820-264E (R/6/11). Also check its website: www.nwcb.wa.gov
<http://extension.wsu.edu/publications/pubs/pnw135/?p-page=5> on Toadflaxes
<https://pubs.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=15659> for Cover Crops, which include native flowers
<http://extension.wsu.edu/whitman/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2013/11/CommonFiddleneck2006.pdf> for Common or fiddleneck tarweed

Can or Should I Prune My Tomato Plants? . . . By Barbara Guiland



Barbara Guiland

This was a question at the Farmers Market plant clinic this month. I thought there might be other gardeners who would want to know whether to prune their tomatoes and how they should do it. The answer is: “Yes, you can; whether you should is up to you.”

The evidence is mixed about whether pruning tomatoes increases yield or not and whether it creates larger and better tomatoes without harming the plant. If your space is limited and you are growing indeterminate type tomatoes, you may decide to try tomato plant pruning to avoid overcrowding the plants. If you grow determinate types, you may be trying for larger and fewer tomatoes ripening at one time. You just need to make sure that you do it in a way that reduces the chances of disease but allows you to get the amount of fruit you want.

Here are some suggestions:

- Don't start pruning plants until they get to be about 1 - 2 feet tall. If the plants are any smaller than this, the plant may not recover from the shock of being pruned.
- Cedar Circle Organic Farms urges you to stake your tomatoes when you plant them to allow for a lot of heavy growth. Driving in stakes after they've grown large gives the plants an unneeded shock.
- Prune early to take out the so-called tomato suckers (see illustration). Where the branches meet the main stem, there is an additional branch growing. This is the tomato sucker.
- Using a sharp, clean pair of pruning shears, snip these small sucker branches off. You can continue to prune out these extra branches for the rest of the season.
- Prune away any leaves touching the soil. You can also remove leaves on the interior of the plant to increase air flow and light.
- **However**, don't prune too much. You want to leave branches that shade the fruit so that you avoid sunscald in July and August. By mid-September you can begin cutting back vines because any fruit that is setting might not ripen before frost.
- Prune in the early morning on a dry day. There is less chance of infection through the cuts.
- The best watering methods for pruned plants are soil level (like using soaker hoses) rather than overhead watering, which is more likely to invite the diseases that plague tomatoes.
- Your answer to the question of, "Should I prune my tomato plants?" is your own, but now you have some additional information on why and how to prune tomato plants.



References

Illustration: Becky Sideman, UNH Cooperative Extension

Vegetables: Growing Tomatoes in Home Gardens. Washington State University Extension Fact Sheet FS145E.pdf
<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/FS145E/FS145E.pdf>

Should You Prune Tomato Plants" <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/tomato/should-you-prune-tomato-plants.htm>

"How to Prune Tomatoes" CCF staff. <https://cedarcirclefarm.org/tips/entry/how-to-prune-tomatoes>.

Testing Soils Helps Determine Fertilizer Needs . . . *By Mark Amara*

Soil surveys, produced by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, are accurate to tens of acres or more depending on the intensity of land use. So, besides knowing soil type and its range of characteristics, to determine what actual nutrients or fertilizers are needed in a yard or garden for healthy plants means doing some actual site-specific soil testing. Soil should/can be tested about once every three to five years prior to planting.

This is an easy way to learn about what fertilizers are needed, what amendments might be considered, what the fertilizer options are and how much can be added. The types of laboratory tests that are run on a standard soil sample often include organic matter, pH (acidity or alkalinity), nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, and micro nutrients like calcium, boron, magnesium, zinc, iron, manganese, and sodium that are needed for soil and plant health.

Sample bags with instructions for collecting soils are provided by testing firms performing laboratory analyses on the samples and should be picked up ahead of time. Samples should be taken from the area to be planted. Avoid lanes or paths, corners or edges, areas between beds unless those areas are planted, areas of poor drainage or areas previously used for confining animals (like chickens, horses, or cows or other livestock), compost, rock, or weed heaps, or manure piles.

Take samples from the 0 to 12-inch zone from several representative areas in the yard or garden, or deeper depending on the rooting depths of preferred plants. Sample soils using clean shovels, trowels or augers and thoroughly mix materials in a clean bucket. Soil collected for testing should be devoid of undecomposed organic matter (manure, leaves, or grass, roots) and rocks of any size that can contaminate a sample. Collect it in sufficient quantity to fill the sample bag. Fill out the appropriate paperwork at the soil testing firm, detailing what you want the soil to be tested for to determine costs.

Grant and Adams Counties soils often test low for nitrogen and sulfur, which are both soluble in water. This means these nutrients can leach away rather quickly with typical watering practices (or more quickly with overwatering). Some of the trace elements (micro nutrients) like boron, zinc, and copper are also important to plant health. Many of our soils are on the alkaline side of the pH scale. If pH gets much above 8, gardeners should consider adding sulfur to bring the pH closer to 7, which is considered neutral and the optimum level for growing just about anything. High (above 8) or low pH (below 5) can tie up nutrients making them unavailable to plants, so it is important to monitor soil often and find ways to maintain or improve conditions.

Our soils are usually low in organic matter. In the native condition, organic matter is 1% or less. Ideally, the higher the organic matter (2-4% or more), the more healthy and productive soils become. Improving soils with organic matter on an annual basis is recommended. You can incorporate plant residues, add straw or alfalfa or other untreated materials like leaves and pesticide-free grass clippings, or planting cover and/or green manure crops.

Adding manures tends to accumulate nutrients to excessive levels. For example, when cow manure is added year after year to build organic matter, phosphorous and potassium can reach levels that may be too high for many plants to endure. Then, it may be necessary to find ways to ameliorate these conditions, like growing plants that help utilize the nutrients and help moderate its levels or avoid/limit fertilizers with phosphorus or potassium. Similarly, growing plants on high pH soils can be done without amending it if you know what plants will tolerate higher pH. When blueberries are grown in eastern Washington, soils must be amended to bring the pH down into the acid range because the plants will not produce well otherwise.

There are several soil testing firms in our area. The WSU Master Gardeners cannot recommend one firm over another. It is up to the gardener to check out possibilities and determine which one works best for their needs.

Soil Test Farm Consultants, Inc.

2925 Driggs Drive W
Moses Lake, WA 98837
(509) 765-1622
www.soiltestlab.com

Best-Test Analytical Services LLC

3394 Bell Road NE
Moses Lake, WA 98837
(509) 766-7701
besttest@scml.us or www.besttestlabs.com

Kuo Testing Labs Inc

337 S 1st Ave
Othello, WA 99344
(509) 488-0112
www.kuotestinglabs.com/

Cascade Analytical Environmental Agricultural Laboratory

3019 G. S. Center Road
Wenatchee, WA 98801
(509) 662-1888
info@cascadeanalytical.com

USAG Analytical Laboratories

1320 E. Spokane St.
Pasco, WA 99301
(800) 244-0573
emswcd.org/tools/conservation-directory/2411/usag-analytical-services-inc

Analytical Sciences Laboratory

University of Idaho
Holm Research Center
PO Box 442203
Moscow, ID 83844
(208) 885-7081
www.uidaho.edu/cals/analytical-sciences-laboratory

For more information on soil testing:

Cogger, Craig. Home Gardener's Guide to Soils and Fertilizers. Washington State University. 2005.

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb1971e/eb1971e.pdf>

Washington State University Extension web site: Organic Farming Systems and Nutrient Management. Soils and Soil Testing. 2013. <http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/soilmgmt/Soils.htm>

Washington State University Extension: Soil Testing for Home Gardeners, Whatcom County Extension. No Date. cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/EM057E/EM057E.pdf

Master Gardener Plant Clinics

WSU Master Gardener (MG) volunteers are available to address your home gardening questions. As our county has undergone many budget/personnel changes in the past couple years, this has impacted how our MGs communicate with the public. You may contact a MG volunteer with your home gardening questions through the following e-mail address: ga.mgvolunteers@wsu.edu. Messages sent to this address will be answered by MGs in a timely manner. For face-to-face contact, or if you have a plant or insect sample that you would like to have identified, please see the MGs at one of the following Locations:

- **Ephrata Farmers Market** – Grant County Courthouse, 35 C St. NW. First and Third Saturdays. June through September 8 AM - Noon
- **Moses Lake Farmers Market** – McCosh Park - Dogwood Street Side, Saturdays, May through October 8 AM - Noon
- **Othello Ace Hardware** – 420 E. Main Street, Last Saturday of each month, May through August, 9-11 AM

For help with diagnosis and identification, plant and insect samples can be dropped off at the Extension Office Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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