

## Gardeners in Action

### New 20 in 20 project - The Food Garden



growing groceries, much as before. But now the varieties will not necessarily be rare and endangered, and we will not be planting with seed collec-

tion in mind.

Today, Wednesday April 29, was the inaugural day of working in our new Food Garden! For those who don't know, the Heirloom Garden has been transformed for one season into the Food Garden.

Since we are still concerned about social distancing, Rory has limited workers to seven or eight, and he is drawing names from a hat from those who have voiced an interest, giving interns who need qualifying volunteer hours priority. Let him know if you would like to Sub part.

Brainchild of Rory Flint Knife, this garden has as its primary purpose: feeding those in need in our Valley. At the same time that Rory brought up his idea of having a demonstration garden devoted to food, Phyllis let it be know that she would be unable to lead the Heirloom Garden this year. Since no site was immediately available for the Food Garden, we decided to transform the HG for that purpose.

Today, the garden was weeded and prepped, and radishes, carrots, and potatoes were planted. Pictures show us in all those projects. Working today were: Diana Pieti, Annette Olson, Rebecca Brown, Jim Black, Tom Shiels, Kim Killion, John Strong, and Rory.

**- Submitted by John Strong**

## Master Gardener Program - CHANGES & CHALLENGES

I like the saying "When the going gets tough - the tough get going," which is very appropriate for the Master Gardener 'challenges' we are facing in light of COVID-19. Because of social distancing we have not been able to meet as a group, therefore, we don't get to communicate as readily . . . soooo . . . for those of you who have not heard the following are changes that are being made or were made in our MG program.

- ◇ **Our lecture schedule** was curtailed March 18th so how do we finish? Claudia found she had a Zoom account with WSU and John Strong (our great tech guy) rose to the challenge and learned how to host meetings so we could continue the Foundation Meetings and have a few board meetings to make important decisions. AND the Curriculum team met the challenge with our lectures, although slightly changed, we continued with the presentations being given via Zoom. For those who attended they count for CE (Don's & CJ's as Program Support) so there were ample opportunities for all to get in their 10 hours minimum of CE. Our hope again is when the order is lifted we can have Demo Garden and Heirloom Garden classes for the public this summer and fall that Angela, Virginia and Phyllis have worked hard to prepare. And for John to finish out the Spring Symposiums two remaining classes.
- ◇ **The trainees clinic question answers** could also be given via Zoom and Gilbert & Mary Pearl did give their presentations. The remaining trainees opted to write their answers and you will benefit from all their research when they are posted in the Newsletters.
- ◇ With the Extension office closed, the **Clinic team** rose to the challenge and are taking gardening questions from home by answering phone messages and emails that come into the clinic. They

# Coordinator's

# Corner

will be ready IF we are allowed to be at the Farmer's Market & Fair.

- ◇ As you know many people in Yakima County are affected by the Stay Home order and with no or little income Food becomes a top priority. All the MG programs around the state are rising to the challenge and increasing or developing Food Gardens and Yakima Co is no exception. The **Heirloom garden** normally only grows Heirloom varieties for seed saving and any excess produce might be donated. This year that garden will be changed by the effort of Rory Flint Knife and John Strong to become a **Food Garden** and they will be donating all produce grown to the Mission and the local Food Banks. WSU has given MGs permission to have a maximum of 10 MGs working in the garden at a time as long as all precautions are followed. In addition the Demonstration Garden has a 'food component' of table grapes and berries that can also be donated. Once the park opens up they too fall under the WSU guidelines.
- ◇ Again with challenges comes change. **The Kamiakin Community Garden** unfortunately struggled last year. As you know, MGs can only claim volunteer hours when teaching the community members to grow their produce and cannot work in a garden. So this year Debra Byrd and other Yakima Nation MGs will turn that into the **Kamiakin Food Garden** (where they can claim hours for working) - they will be donating all produce to the Diabetes Center and other worthy causes. The **Buena Community Garden** was our first CG and was an excellent idea in a community that is basically a 'food desert'. However, it too struggled with its members and you may have heard that it will be disbanded. Much of the inventory

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***(Changes and Challenges, con't)***

will be available for our 2 new Food Gardens or any of the new Youth gardens. So again MGs rise to the challenge and 'when given lemons - make lemonade'!

- ◇ Even though many of our teams are 'on hold' - when the Stay Home orders are lightened and then lifted we will come back even stronger. The **Youth team** was not able to help in their many school gardens and youth events this spring but will be there to carry on when the orders are lifted. The **Speakers Bureau** had many of its lecture requests cancelled but hopefully when this ends there will be many groups who will want to learn about growing their own food and other garden topics - the team will be ready to give those gardening presentations. The **Writer's Guild** was able to continue sending in their articles for the Sunday Yakima Herald so Carol & Claudia 'never missed a beat.' A couple articles were especially timely with the one on Victory Gardens and another on Gardening in Hard Times - thank you Diana and Phyllis. Our **Social Media team** with Jenn and Sally keep on posting all the great things MGs are doing and learning.
- ◇ It is our hope that we can have our **Tour of MG Gardens** in June. Being in the fresh air, sunshine and practicing all precautions - we desire to continue that wonderful MG tradition.

So when we look back on these 'challenges' we will take pride in knowing that the Master Gardener program of Yakima County tried their best to meet those challenges. Thank you to all of you for keeping a positive attitude! AND even though we miss being together as a group, we are all together 'in spirit'.



*Photo from Jim Black, who says this Cistanthe tweedy is his sole survivor of this native plant found near Wenatchee. Description: Until recently in the genus Lewisia, Tweedy's lewisia is a regional endemic found in north-central Washington and adjacent Canada. This beautiful flowering plant from the purslane family (Portulacaceae) commonly grows on well-drained slopes often on rocky slopes or in rock crevices from low elevation ponderosa pine sites up to the drier part of the grand fir zone. Fascinating!!*



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***Bev Vonfeld shared a photo from the day her Golden Chain tree "popped."  
Beautiful!!***

# Clinic Conundrums

*Each year, our trainees choose a clinic question to answer as part of their clinic training. This year, because we were not able to have our “normal live lectures,” many chose to write their answer. Each month we will be posting one of their answers so that you can share in the knowledge they obtained by using science based references. Enjoy!*

## **Aging Lilacs** by Kim Killion

*Question: We recently purchased a home with three lilac bushes. They appear to be quite old with leaves and blossoms only at the very top of each. The healthiest is about 15 feet high, the other two about 10 feet. One of the three was seemed dead so we pulled it out, but discovered the interior wood was still green and there was no indication of any pest infestation. Is there a way to rejuvenate lilacs or are we better off just replacing them?*

Response: Lilacs are a versatile and hardy bush, well-loved for their beauty and fragrance. Some lilacs can actually live for centuries, but for maximum health and blooming they require full sun, well-drained soil and regular pruning. It is indeed possible to restore them, though only you can decide whether the investment is worth your while. If not properly maintained, lilacs can become leggy with limited foliage and few blossoms—just what you have described. They are also susceptible to certain pests, including borers, powdery mildew and scales, which generally can be controlled through proper siting of the bushes, regular maintenance and the use of appropriate pesticides when necessary.

Your lilacs appear to be mature bushes that may well respond to a thorough rejuvenation. Lilacs can be restored, but the process for leggy, sparsely leafed bushes like yours generally requires several years of appropriately-timed pruning and regu-

lar attention before the bushes are likely to regain dense foliage and substantial blooms.

In determining whether the investment of time and effort you'll need to restore your lilacs is worthwhile, you should consider several things:

- Most important is the general suitability of the location of the lilacs. Lilacs require full sun to flower well. If the bushes are in a shady spot, you may succeed in restoring the plants' foliage, but without full sun you are unlikely to achieve substantial flowering.



- Lilacs prefer soil with a pH of 7.0 to slightly alkaline and good drainage. You should test the soil and assess the need for amendments. Note that excess nitrogen will encourage leafage, but inhibit flowering.
- Next, inspect the bushes for pests and address any issues. Look for evidence of borers (1/16" to 1/8" holes in stems and branches). Any material infestation should be dealt with by a professional. Powdery mildew (whitish dusting on the leaves) should not have a significant impact on the plant, but attention to soil (above) and pruning to increase circulation will help to manage it. Scales on the stems or bark can be managed using a hard spray from your garden hose and the use of dormant oil and summer oil. Badly damaged stems and branches should be pruned (see below).

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### ***(Lilacs, con't)***

Given the size of your bushes, a professional should be used for any pesticide application to treat scale.

Assuming your bushes have a proper location and have addressed any material pest infestation, the next step is pruning. Remove all pest-infested branches and stems that cannot be sufficiently managed through other means. Next is “renewal pruning”. Prune about 1/3 of the oldest branches (canes). Some recommend cutting these right to the ground to produce the greatest amount of new growth (canes and suckers), but others caution that it can also be overly stressful for plants already suffering the consequences of poor maintenance for an extended period of time. Consider pruning to eye-level, ideally, just above a set of leaves, if any are present at that level. Pruning should take place right after flowering, before seed formation. All spent blossoms should also be removed at that time. (Permitting lilacs to form seeds may inhibit flowering the following year. Also, lilacs set their flower buds the summer before the year of bloom, so winter pruning should be avoided.)

Over time you should begin to see growth of vigorous stems from the base of the bush. Repeat the pruning process described above for each of the two subsequent years. Also remove excess suckers and stems to avoid the bush from becoming overgrown. Within three to four years you should have a fully rejuvenated bush and strong flowering. Starting in year 4, continue your annual pruning schedule, pruning 1/8 to 1/6 of the oldest canes

(which, at this point, your bushes should be healthy enough that these canes can be taken right down to the ground). Of course, keep an eye out for pests as part of your regular maintenance and trim other plants and trees as needed to ensure your lilacs continue to enjoy full sun. You should be able to enjoy your lilacs for years to come.

#### **Sources:**

Washington State University Extension – WSU Hortense website: <http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/Home/HortsenseHome.aspx>

Montana State University website article “Dr. Bob’s Northern Gardening Tips: When should I prune my lilacs” Robert Gough, Ph.D. (June 11, 2004) <https://www.montana.edu/news/1773/doctor-bob-s-northern-gardening-tips-when-should-i-prune-my-lilacs>

University of Maine website: <https://extension.umaine.edu/piscataquis/programs/home-gardening/basicgarden/lilacs/>

The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University: <https://www.arboretum.harvard.edu/plants/featured-plants/lilacs/how-to-plant-and-care-for-lilacs/>

University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension website: <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/douglas-sarpy/pdfs/ce/resources/ce-g1860-lilacs.pdf>

University of Minnesota Extension website: <https://extension.umn.edu/trees-and-shrubs/lilacs>

*The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body, but the soul.*

Alfred Austin

# *From Our Foundation President*

## **What's Happening with the Foundation?**

- Melody Westmoreland, Foundation President

Well, it's been an interesting couple of months for sure. We've now held multiple Foundation meetings via Zoom technology. It's worked but is a poor substitution for actually meeting in person. It's hard to hold meaningful discussions using the chat function, and when you get more than a handful of folks participating it becomes next to impossible for everyone to talk.

What have we accomplished?

We have elected our Board Officers for the 2020-2021 year : Debra Kroon as Vice President, Nancy Probst as Treasurer, Carolyn Heffron as Secretary, and Rory Flint Knife and Dan Fortier as our Members at Large. Welcome Carolyn and Dan, thanks for your willingness to be involved. Also, thanks to Debra, Nancy and Rory for continuing for a second year on the Board. Oh yes, and I will continue as President for the next year as well – I appreciate your support!

I mentioned it at our last meeting but I want to say it again – a big shout out and thank you to Pat Moszeter and Alyssa O'Neill for their participation on our previous Board as Secretary and Member at Large. It takes commitment to serve on the Board and I know everyone appreciates the time they have given.

We have agreed to keep our by-laws updates on hold until we can meet again in person. It's not too late to send comments and/or suggestions if you have them; if so, please send to me and I will keep them with those I have already received from Ken Tolonen and Gilbert Plascencia. Our last updates were completed in October of 2018 so we have some time to get this project completed.

We have approved a plan to manage the "plant sale that didn't happen". By the time this goes to print there will be lots more information on our success. My hope is that we are able to recoup our direct costs, any more will be a bonus for sure. All Master Gardeners will have the opportunity to shop as well as to purchase for their family and friends. Remaining plants will go to local vendors so that, hopefully, folks throughout the Valley will be able to have some "Master Gardener grown plants" in their own gardens.

We sustained a break-in at our Greenhouse. Replacement parts have been ordered and will be installed when they arrive – hopefully in the next several weeks. It's a reminder that we must be diligent in maintaining security measures when no one is working there, and keep our eyes and ears open.

We weren't able to enjoy our annual Root Beer Floats, a tradition on the last day of class. We did, however, send each of the new trainees a small gift card for Arctic

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Pres: Melody Westmoreland



VP: Debra Kroon



Treas: Nancy Probst

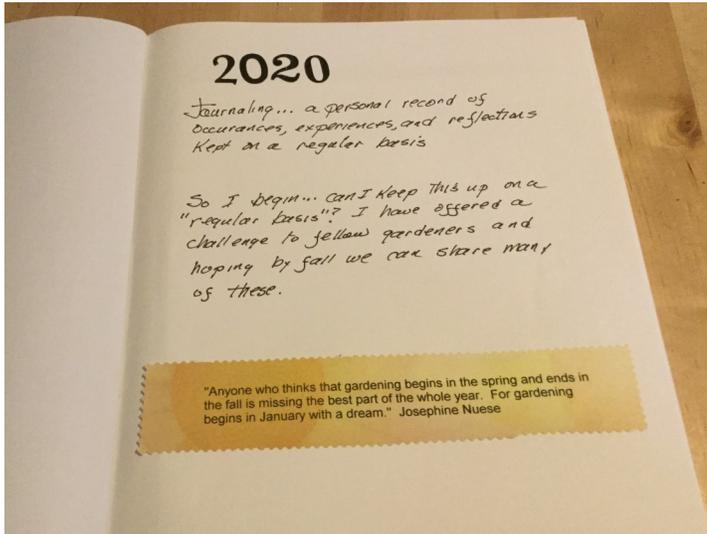


Sec: Carolyn Heffron

# Daily Habits...of Writing

by Diana Pieti

How are you doing with your garden journals? Remember the challenge early on to keep it up this year and hurry for me I have done that. I keep mine right on my table so I never fail to post. I hope you will be bringing yours to an event this fall.



**(From the Pres., con't)**

Circle so they could stop by and purchase a treat – a small way to say thanks for sticking with the Master Gardeners during a year to remember.

A couple of reminders – the May Foundation meeting has been moved back one week to May 13th to accommodate our sale. We only meet once each month during the months of May through December on the first Wednesday of the month at 10:30. Hopefully June will find us back in the Red Barn meeting in person. Keep your fingers crossed!

## Additional Board Members

### In Memory

We are saddened to learn that our fellow gardener, Mary Sue McMahon, passed away April 19 at Cottage in the Meadow. She joined Master Gardeners with the class of 2006 to learn better practices for use in her own large garden. She enjoyed the classes and getting to know fellow gardeners through working in the greenhouse and the clinic. She especially liked working at the Fair and the Farmer's Market every year. Grooming and getting all the plants ready for the plant sale, then interacting with all the customers gave her much satisfaction. She gained Emeritus status in 2017. Sue made lifelong friends through her participation in Master Gardeners. We will miss her smile and her helping hands.



Member at Large: Rory FlintKnife



Member at Large: Dan Fortier

## In the Garden

If you haven't grown a garden recently, or ever, this could be your year. Many Americans suddenly find themselves furloughed, or working from home.

Maybe you're desperate for a safe outdoor activity for your out-of-school kids. With so many of us bunkered down at home during the pandemic, now is the perfect time to get outside and start a garden.

Even a modest 10' x 10' plot can produce an amazing amount of fresh food at a time when you may be making fewer trips to the grocery store. Having a productive garden also means that you can donate a share to the needy in our community.

Whatever your reasons for gardening, understanding the mechanics of soil temperature will give your seeds their best chance. If soil temperature is too high or too low, crops won't grow well, if they grow at all.

Soil temperatures don't match air temperatures. On sunny days, the sun's rays move through the atmosphere, strike the earth's surface and warm it. Hot air rises quickly by convection, increasing air temperature. What happens in soil is much different. Heat moves downward more slowly by the process of conduction. Research tells us that for a typical soil, the peak temperature at a depth of 2" occurs about an hour after the peak surface temperature and is 30% less. The maximum temperature 4" down occurs 2-3 hours later and is 66% less.

The process is reversed at night, when the surface radiates heat back into the atmosphere and air temperatures fall rapidly. It's different underground, where heat travels upward much more slowly, and subsurface temperatures don't change as much. In winter, this slow loss of heat from the soil moderates the effects of freezing air temperatures, assuring survival for perennial roots. Last winter's blanket of snow also insulated the soil from the frigid air.

Soil moisture also affects soil temperatures. Water's high heat capacity means wet soils can absorb a lot of heat before their temperatures change, the reason why wet soils take so long to heat up in the spring. And when water evaporates, heat (energy) is lost. Sandy soils don't hold much water, heating up

during the day and cooling rapidly at night. Gardens with clay soils hold water and warm up slowly. Loam soils, a mixture of the two, are best for maintaining temperature and moisture.

So when do you know it's planting time? For every crop, there are two temperatures to consider: the minimum temperature for germination to occur at all, and the optimum temperature for the best seed germination. Lettuce is a good example. If lettuce seeds are planted when soil temperatures are in the 30s, they'll germinate slowly and may take weeks to emerge. In very wet soil, they could rot. If you wait until the soil warms up into the 40s, seedlings will germinate more quickly and catch up to, and perhaps surpass, the earlier planted seeds. But we all know what happens if lettuce is planted too late, when soil temperatures are already in the 70s. The crop will germinate, but it will bolt quickly, making for a skimpy harvest. While perfect for eggplants and melons, lettuce and other cool season crops will not grow well in soil that's too warm.

Gardeners can manipulate soil temperatures. If your garden beds are covered with a thick layer of organic mulch, moving it aside will allow the soil to warm faster for planting. Row covers provide a limited amount of warming, working like cold frames and greenhouses do. Covering soil with a clear or lightly tinted plastic sheet will help it heat more rapidly and hold that heat in at night. Clear plastic can raise soil temperature 5 degrees F at a depth of 2" and 3 degrees F at 4". The cover also helps with weed prevention and water loss, but must be removed at planting time so soil is not overheated. Black plastic sheets warm the soil more slowly, but can be left in place through the growing season.

WSU has a free on-line bulletin that gives seeding, germination, and growth parameters for 69 different crops. The chart on page 8 includes: depth to plant seeds, distance between plants and rows, number of days to germination, optimum soil temperature ranges, base air temperatures, how long it takes seeds to grow to transplant size, and days to maturity. You can find it at:

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2071/2014/04/Home-Vegetable-Gardening-in-WA-EM057E.pdf>

Read it, and then go out and plant something!

# May 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	
3	4	5	6 <b>Plant Sale (MGs)</b>	7 <b>Plant Sale (MGs)</b>	8 <b>Plant Sale (Friends &amp; Family)</b>	9 <b>Plant Sale (Friends &amp; Family)</b>
10 <b>Mother's Day</b>	11	12	13 <b>10:30 Foundation Meeting via Zoom</b>	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 <b>Memorial Day</b>	26 <b>Newsletter Articles Due</b>	27	28	29	30
31						