

# Master Gardener Demonstration Garden

by Carol Barany

**G**ardening was recognized as an art for the first time in Europe in the mid-16th century. Philosophers, exploring just what it took to create great societies, recognized that public gardens were vital. I can only wonder what took them so long.

I hope you've experienced the pleasure that comes with taking a deep breath in an outdoor garden. If it's been a while, we have a gem right here in Yakima that you can visit any time you want, but how about during National Public Gardens Week? This annual observance begins on the Friday before Mother's Day, and takes place from May 12 to 21 this year.

The Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Ahtanum Youth Park is sited on land that has a long history in the Valley. A Department of Agriculture farm labor camp from the 1940s until the late 1960s, work and housing were provided to thousands of families. It had little beauty then.

Yakima County Master Gardeners acquired use of an acre of the site in 2005, and have been dedicated to enhancing and improving the property a little more each year. This garden represents Yakima in a unique way. With Ahtanum Ridge as a backdrop, this site experiences much of the same environmental conditions as your home garden.

A point of great pride for the Master Gardeners who tend the garden, they hope it can be an example and inspiration for what can be accomplished on a shoe-string budget and a load of elbow grease.

You'll see an array of garden styles, including a Cottage Garden, Children's Garden, Xeric Berm, Shade Berm, and a Woods Walk. Grapes have been planted and raised beds have been built. A composting area demonstrates how you can set up your own composting system at home.

Several generations of killdeer, quail, nuthatches, wrens, hawks and a magnificent Giant Horned Owl have called the garden home and have delighted visitors.

Racoons visit at night, leaving their footprints in the soft soil, and a family of skunks once took up residence under the tool shed. Providing natural habitat as well as nesting boxes and bird feeders, this garden is recognized by Washington State as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat.

Master Gardeners consider it a privilege to steward this precious piece of land and are vigilant in practicing environmentally sound and sustainable gardening methods. For the public, it's a place where you can go to see up close a selection of flowers, trees, shrubs, and other flora that thrive in our area without high-maintenance.

Need some new ideas for your own garden that won't break the bank? Master Gardeners creatively repurposed an array of discarded items, giving them new life as trellises, pathways, benches, and whimsical garden art pieces.

The garden is a wonderful place to visit any time of the year, but right now is peak season for the glories of a long-awaited spring. A kiosk posts bulletins to showcase what's in bloom and a bit of information about those featured plants.

You'll find volunteers working in the garden on most Tuesday mornings. Come by and say "Hi." They'll be glad to take a break and answer your questions. But you're welcome to visit any day.

The garden is open during park hours at the Ahtanum Youth Park, 1000 Ahtanum Road in Union Gap. It is located near the Red Youth Barn in the southeast corner of the park.

Come to the garden to take a class, or just to browse, rest, and simply enjoy. Bring your camera or bring your lunch. And visit throughout the year, to see how it changes with the seasons.

These one-hour Saturday classes in the Demonstration Garden are free at begin at 10:00 am

MAY 27	MEADOWSCAPING
JUNE 10	SEEDS AND SUNFLOWERS (CLASS FOR CHILDREN)
JUNE 24	SUMMER CARE OF ROSES
JULY 8	SOIL TESTING (BRING A SMALL BAGGIE OF YOUR SOIL)
JULY 22	ORCHIDS
AUGUST 12	HERBS
AUGUST 26	DEMONSTRATION GARDEN TOURS
SEPTEMBER 9	MULCHING AND COMPOSTING
SEPTEMBER 23	TREES AND WATER GARDENS (AT THE ARBORETUM)

Master Gardeners also maintain an Heirloom Garden and a West Valley Food Garden, and both are used for teaching. Visit the Master Gardener website for a complete list of free gardening classes: <https://extension.wsu.edu/yakima/home-garden/master-gardeners/> and click on 'Events.'