

Weeder's Digest

Whatcom County Master Gardeners

February 2015

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From the Coordinator's Desk...

The annual **2015 Master Gardener Training** kicks off this month. The 10-week course will meet weekly on Thursdays; it will be a full class with 25 students. If you are interested in sitting in on a class, please contact me. Master Gardener, Mary Ann Lee, class of 2014, has volunteered to be my classroom assistant. Also, many MGs from the 2014 class have volunteered to be mentors for the new class. Thanks to all of you.

At the office, Amber and I are working on a **Hovander Demonstration Garden** Handout with a garden map. Thanks to all the Hovander Garden leads who submitted information.

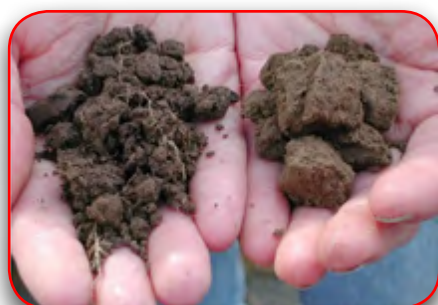
Other Updates...

Workshops at Hovander – are coming together. Thanks to the planning committee: John Dewing, Pat Edwards and Pamela Wild, for organizing. If you are interested in helping with this effort, please contact John or Pamela. We would like workshop teachers to have an opportunity to practice their talk at “lunch and learn” events.

Plant Sale - We have a new plant sale volunteer coordinator, Lyn Morgan-Hill. Thanks Lyn and Linda Berquist for keeping things moving forward for the sale! More details coming very soon!

Clinic - In the clinic, we have had an interesting winter. The strange weather has kept volunteers busier than usual. Now that we are in February, the inquiries regarding dormant fruit tree care, pruning and soil prep will keep us busy. If you have not heard, we have a new 2015 clinic volunteer manager: Jeff Dodson. He is happy to help you feel at ease in the clinic if it's your first time or if it's been years since you volunteered. Now is a great time to join the team.

Volunteer Hours - I have posted the instructions for entering your volunteer hours, NEW Google clinic calendar sign up, and the reapplication form for 2015 on our website links for MGs: <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/mglinks.html>.



Beth Chisholm

*Remember, be
Loyal to your Soil.
Take care of it.*

Soil aggregates:
(L) subsoil &
topsoil (R)



Whatcom County Master Gardeners Program



1000 N. Forest Street
Suite 201

Bellingham, WA 98225-5594
360-676-6736

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/mastergardener/>

MISSION: The WSU Extension Master Gardeners Program trains volunteers to be effective community educators in gardening and environmental stewardship.

WSU WHATCOM COUNTY EXTENSION STAFF:

Drew Betz: County Director

Chris Benedict: Agriculture Educator

Colleen Burrows: Agriculture Special Projects Coordinator

Beth Chisholm: Master Gardeners & Community First
Gardens Project

Cheryl Kahle-Lallas: Office Manager

Whatcom County Master Gardener Foundation

ROLE: The Master Gardener Foundation of Whatcom County supports the MG program with fundraising and provides information about home horticulture to the public through a demonstration garden, lectures and home gardening advice.

MG FOUNDATION BOARD:

President: Linda Battle

1st Vice President: Kathleen Bander

2nd Vice President: Barbara Schickler

Secretary: Shelley Fishwild

Treasurer: Sandy Keathley

Members at Large: Julie Turner & David Keller

Representative to State Foundation: Linda Bergquist

The **WEEDER'S DIGEST** is the monthly newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners Program. Guest articles are encouraged. Please submit to Jo Fleming (jof@uw.edu). Articles are most appreciated if they contain 600 or fewer words and are accompanied by a photo. Editors reserve the right to edit for content and formatting.

COOPERATING AGENCIES: Washington State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension Office.

All the Latest MG & Foundation News!

— MG Foundation President's Message —



Happy 2015! A New Year, a new start, a chance to do some things better and a time to create new goals. Here's a wish list for MG's New Year's Resolutions:

- Record volunteer hours monthly, on line.
- Be open to volunteering in new or different ways.
- Step up. Take on a new responsibility. You are needed.
- Move outside your comfort zone. Grow!
- Get to know more of the amazing cadre of Whatcom County MG's.
- Thank Beth, for her hard work and leadership.

February is a great month for gardeners. We have a plethora of seed catalogs to peruse on those rainy days and the sun breaks give us ample time to get out and prune and tidy our gardens and to plan.

It's also time to look forward to the *Northwest Flower and Garden Show* in Seattle on the 11th. If you haven't signed up to take the bus with other MG's, contact Judy Boxx (398-7591 or email her at boxxjj@aol.com). The Foundation was fortunate to book the bus on the opening day when everything is beautiful and fresh. Tickets include admission and are \$40/MG's and 45/non-MG's.

The *Board* will meet on February 5th at 10:00 in the Extension Office. These meetings are always open if you are interested in learning more about who we are and what we do. The following Thursday is the *General Foundation Meeting* at 7pm on the 12th. There is a short social time between the meeting and our scheduled speaker at 7:30. We are fortunate to have *Merrill Peterson* talking about *Entomology. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* is the title of his presentation. Don't miss this opportunity to mingle with fellow MG's and learn from a great speaker.

The *MG Workshops* are scheduled. The *Plant Sale* paperwork has been turned in and we are excited to have *Lyn Morgan Hill* heading up this valuable fundraiser. The *Roeder Home* crew is planning a spring open house. The *New Class* is ready to start an exciting learning/volunteering adventure. Wow! Lots happening. If you're not involved, there is still time!

"And don't think the garden loses its ecstasy in winter. It's quiet, but the roots down there are riotous." Rumi

Linda Battle
President, Whatcom County Master Gardener Foundation

— February General MG Foundation Meeting —

Thursday, February 12, 7:00 pm, WSU Extension Classroom
Merrill Peterson, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*



Merrill Peterson is a professor of biology at Western Washington University, teaching coursework in Entomology. His research focuses on the ecology and evolutionary biology of herbivorous insects, including the evolution of reproductive barriers between hybridizing beetles and how mutualistic interactions influence population dynamics and community structure of insect species. Merrill is currently working on a guide to the native insects of the Pacific Northwest and is the project manager for the Pacific Northwest Moths database. See his work here: <http://pnwmoths.biol.wvu.edu/about-us/site-credits/>



All the Latest MG & Foundation News!

— MG News To Use —

Grafting Vegetables Workshop

February 20, 2015, 9am-Noon

WSU Mount Vernon NWREC

Visit WSU events for more info:

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/index.html>

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Western Washington Fruit Research Foundation - Skagit Co. - Winter Field Day

Saturday, March 7, 2015

Join us at our annual Winter Field Day on Saturday, March 7, 2015! We'll have rootstock and scion wood sales, workshops on pruning and grafting, and Fruit Garden demonstrations on pruning. We hope to see you there! <http://nwfruit.org/winter-field-day/>

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Whidbey Gardening Workshop 2014

Saturday, March 8, 2014

Oak Harbor, WA, 98277 ([Schedule & Directions](#))

[Keynote address](#) by Marty Wingate. A limited number of walk-in registrations will be available on March 8th, walk-in fee \$45.00. Brought to you by WSU Island County Master Gardeners,

<http://whidbeygardeningworkshop.org/2014/>

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Master Gardener Hovander Workshop Series

Master Gardener Hovander Workshop Series kicks off March 1st with "Gardening in Whatcom County."

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/index.html>

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Whatcom County Master Gardeners Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop

Saturday, March 21, 10am-1pm

Deming Library. Pre-Registration is required.

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/index.html>

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Whatcom Conservation District's 22nd Annual Native Plant Sale

Saturday, March 28, 9am-2pm

40 varieties of native plants to choose from.

<http://www.whatcomcd.org/plant-sale>

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Save the Date - Volunteers: Potting Day for the Master Gardener Annual Plant Sale

Mid-March at Hovander—Old Greenhouse

Cloud Mountain Farm Center: Advanced Vegetable Gardening - 5 Part Series

Part 1- February 14, 1:30-3:30pm

Crop planning, crop rotation, soil basics and soil fertility, crop overview and timeline, growing alliums

Part 2- March 7, 1:30-3:30pm

Seed starting, season extension, growing brassicas

This five-part class is designed for intermediate to advanced vegetable gardeners looking to increase their background knowledge, refine their skills, and get new ideas and strategies for growing better vegetables. Topics covered include crop planning, crop rotation, soil fertility, composting, seed starting, season extension, direct seeding, transplanting, weed management, pest and disease issues, water and irrigation, high tunnels, and winter gardening. We will also discuss specific requirements and challenges for all the main vegetable families. Included in the registration fee is the seed and materials needed to start your own vegetable seedlings each class to take home for your garden. **Registration required, space is limited. \$100 for the five part series.**

http://www.cloudmountainfarmcenter.org/index2.cfm?page=_workshops

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WSU Community Horticulture Master Composter & Recycler Class

April 22nd through May 20th

New in 2015, the *Whatcom WSU Community Horticulture Program* will be offering a 4-week course for new and returning Master Gardeners/Master Composters and community members. Classes will be held on Wednesday evenings with Saturday field trips. Download the application from our website at: <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/compost.html> or fill it out online here: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MCRapp>.

The 4-week course will focus on the following topics:

- Science of decomposition
- Backyard and community composting methods
- Large-scale composting methods
- Vermicomposting
- Building compost systems
- Benefits of compost
- Community connections - teach at Hovander, schools or community gardens

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Plant ID Group

4th Thursday of each month, 9am to 11am, Cordata Community Food Co-op Meeting Room (upstairs)

Bring samples of plants to practice ID skills. Native and domestic plant samples will be reviewed. Bring a native and/or domestic plant ID book and a lens, if available.

RE Sources Green Classroom Certification Program: Elementary Schools

On the eve of the winter solstice we find Green Classroom Certification is a FREE program that helps teachers integrate conservation education into curriculum and initiate positive actions in the classroom and in the lives of students. Classrooms choose from 3 conservation topics (Waste Prevention, Water Conservation and Energy Efficiency and Climate Change) and complete four simple steps to become Certified:

1. Host a Workshop
2. Make a Classroom Pledge
3. Complete an Action Project
4. Get Certified!

During Step 3: Complete an Action Project, classrooms have the opportunity to engage with other classrooms, community partners and/or community volunteers to apply the information they learned during the workshop in a setting outside of the classroom! The projects are classroom specific, allowing both the teacher and students to create projects that matter to them, or chose something that sounds interesting from our list of project ideas.

We are always looking for additional ways for community members to get involved! Do you have kids, children of friends, nieces, nephews,



grandchildren or a school near your home that you want to be more involved with? Maybe you're just interested in working with elementary aged youth for your volunteer hours. If you have interest in getting involved with a classroom project, please contact us to learn more: Riley Grant, Sustainable Schools Manager, rileyg@re-sources.org, 360-733-8307.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

As gardeners, small farmers, backyard poultry owners, and community educators, WSU Whatcom Extension asks that you help in the effort to educate yourself and others to reduce the risks of Avian Influenza in our County.

WSDA is advising commercial poultry growers and backyard flock owners to be vigilant with biosecurity measures and surveillance. "We have a vigorous response plan but this development demonstrates how important good biosecurity can be, especially for backyard bird owners," state veterinarian Dr. Joe Baker said. "We have not diagnosed the virus anywhere else in our domestic poultry population, but the presence of the virus in migratory waterfowl is a risk to backyard poultry. One step owners should take is preventing contact between their birds and wild birds."

From WSDA press release:

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

Simple things to remember about disease prevention (from USDA) are:

- Keep your distance-Isolate your birds from visitors and other birds. [Keep your birds from being affected

by wild birds or their feces.]

- Keep it clean-Prevent germs from spreading by cleaning shoes, tools and equipment.
- Don't haul disease home-Also clean vehicles and cages.
- Don't borrow disease from your neighbor-Avoid sharing tools and equipment with neighbors.
- Know the warning signs of infectious bird diseases-Watch for early signs to prevent the spread of disease.
- Report sick birds-Report unusual signs of disease or unexpected deaths.
- Making biosecurity a part of your daily routine while caring for your birds can decrease the chance of AI showing up on your doorstep.

For photos and description of symptoms go to: <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/clinical-signs-photos.php?name=avian-influenza/>

For disease prevention in birds, see the USDA site on biosecurity for the birds. There are several videos on keeping birds healthy as well as keeping things clean: <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov/> and for a booklet: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/2014/pub_bioguide_poultry_bird.pdf

For WSDA updates on this disease in Washington, and WHOM TO CALL, visit their website at: <http://agr.wa.gov/News/2015/15-03.aspx>.

Meet Your Board President: Linda Burshia-Battle

by Kathleen Bander

Growing up in the far NE corner of Montana sounds idyllic. And that is exactly how Linda Burshia-Battle characterizes her early life when she lived on the Ft. Peck reservation. Her mother was a member of the Sioux tribe who met her German husband when he was working on the reservation. Linda was close to her grandparents, and credits them with introducing her to gardening, as well as the hunting, fishing, and gathering activities she and her siblings participated in from a young age. When young, her grandparents allowed Linda to pull her wagon around their huge vegetable garden, pick whatever she wanted, then sell the produce. She even got to keep the proceeds. This early training meant Linda would have a vegetable garden almost everywhere she subsequently lived.

Linda began her college career at the University of Montana, studying archeology. She switched to education, however, when her advisor steered her away from this field, telling Linda that archeology was for men. In field work, he argued, it made the male students uncomfortable to have a woman working alongside them.

The good news is that Linda soon learned to love teaching and working with children, and upon finishing her degree in Early Childhood Education in South Dakota, she began working to set up a Head Start program in Vermillion, South Dakota. Over time, she began to see a need for guidance counseling in the schools, so Linda enrolled in the University of Wyoming to become a school guidance counselor.

Linda had worked for 5 years in group foster homes and schools when she decided to enroll in medical school, and was accepted at the University of Utah, in Salt Lake City. She attended the school for two years. She met her husband-to-be when he was in medical school at the University of New Mexico, and after a long-distance relationship, Linda and Ron got married. By that time, she had decided becoming a doctor was turning out not to be what she wanted, so when Ron continued his medical education in Albuquerque, New Mexico, they moved to Albuquerque where she accepted a job as the Director of the Ronald McDonald House in their new city.

They remained for 11 years in Albuquerque, taking advantage of the widely diverse locals they were befriending and the beautiful environment. Linda especially loved learning to cook locally authentic food, a combination of the Native American and Spanish influences.

When Linda and Ron adopted their daughter Gillian they moved back to Montana, feeling that it would be a better place to raise a child. There they remained until their daughter was about to enter college.

Both Linda and Ron had always loved to sail. They were limited in Montana to sailing on lakes, but their lives changed when Ron met a man who had sailed around the world, and in 1998 Ron and Linda paid a trip to Bellingham to take sailing lessons. Part of that was sailing around the San Juans.



Board President: Linda Burshia-Battle continued...

Of huge appeal to them was the relatively mild year-round conditions in the Northwest. Both of their main interests, gardening and sailing, were severely curtailed during the tough winters of Montana. Sailing was not possible in sub-zero conditions. And although Linda went through Master Gardener training in Montana, it was an entirely different thing there than here. You always had to factor in long months with feet of feet of snow covering everything. With their daughter off to college, they decided to move to Bellingham. Ironically, they encountered a snow and ice storm in Bellingham during their move. But when Linda noticed that primroses were blooming, and many plants looked fine despite the snow, and with the next day's rain, that the snow all vanished, she was convinced they had made the right move.

Linda realized that though she had been through Master Gardener training in Montana, she knew little about the plants of the Northwest. So she enrolled in the Whatcom County Master Gardener class of 2012, and began to learn just how little she knew. All the rules had changed.

Linda is nothing if not persevering, and she welcomed the change to expand her knowledge, meet new people, and find good opportunities for volunteering. She has always volunteered in one way or another, so when approached to be a member-at-large on the Master Gardener Board, she readily agreed. Linda was particularly active at the Hovander Gardens, where she met great people, and learned about the organization. So when the Board asked her to take over the Presidency, she agreed.

Linda continues to work at Hovander, loving the beauty and peace of the place. She hopes that more recent grads will join the ranks, as several of the veteran volunteers will leave in the near future. Linda also enjoys all the preparation for the annual sale, particularly working in the greenhouse. It's like work/study, in that she has fun doing the work, and soaks up the learning at the same time. She has also been active in the Master Gardener project at the Roeder Home. Having been there from the start of the project, she is astounded at the transformation a group of volunteers can achieve.

As the summer approaches, Linda is becoming more excited about a trip her family has planned to Alaska this year. She often spends quality time with her two grandchildren—3-year-old Brennan, and 3-week-old Vanellope. Turned out that their daughter ended up moving to Bellingham. If you want to catch up with Linda and Ron most of the year, you'll have to swim, as they are most likely to be on their boat. Or catch Linda at Hovander or in her own garden. Because for either sailing or gardening, as Linda says, "I don't mind the rain and clouds. And I don't miss the feet of snow and ice!"

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION



2015 Native Plant Sale and Expo March 28th 9am to 2pm at the Roe Studio on the Campus of Whatcom Community College 237 W. Kellogg Rd., Bellingham, WA

Dear Volunteer,

Thank You for your interest in volunteering for the Whatcom Conservation District for the 2015 Native Plant Sale and Expo. With your participation we hope to make this a successful celebration of spring again this year. We have several time slots available where volunteers are needed. Prior to the sale we will be packing pre-orders at the sale site and prepping the site for the event. And most importantly, volunteers are needed on the day of the open sale as greeters, bare root helpers, pre-checkout/customer assistance and clean up. Feel free to sign up for as many shifts as you can.

Pre-order packing:

Tuesday, March 24 (8:30am-4:30pm)
Wednesday, March 25 (8:30am-4:30pm)
Thursday, March 26 (8:30am-4:30pm)

Shifts Available

☐ 8:30am-12:30pm ☐ 12:30pm-4:30pm
☐ 8:30am-12:30pm ☐ 12:30pm-4:30pm
☐ 8:30am-12:30pm ☐ 12:30pm-4:00pm

Sale Site Set Up:

Friday, March 27 (9am-3pm)

☐ 9:00am-12:30pm ☐ 12:30pm-3:00pm

Day of sale:

Saturday, March 28 (8am-3pm)

☐ 8:00am -12pm ☐ 11:30am-3:00pm

More volunteers are needed early on Saturday, as that is our busiest time. The shifts above are suggested times and we will be flexible with your schedule. Please let me know the shifts you would be available so that I can strategize and have nametags ready. We will have sign in sheets at the event locations. Please remember to sign in as we would like to acknowledge you in our upcoming newsletter.

Very useful to bring list:

- ▲ Warm clothes, rain gear (It's March!)
- ▲ Gloves
- ▲ Sturdy Shoes
- ▲ Your knowledge and love of native plants

Contact the WCD with any questions or concerns, preferably before the Expo as we will be very busy during the week of the sale.

Thanks again!
Brandi Hutton
bhutton@whatcomcd.org
360-354-2035 ext. 119

International Compost Awareness Week | May 3-9, 2015

SOIL PRODUCTION
HORTICULTURE
AGRICULTURE
LANDSCAPE
WETLAND CREATION
FLOWER GARDEN
ROADSIDE PROJECTS
STORM WATER MANAGEMENT
EROSION CONTROL
Be loyal to your soil.
Compost!

An Interview with Mike Boxx

Boxx Berry Farms, Ferndale

by Beth Chisholm

I had a chance to sit down with Mike Boxx to learn more about one of my favorite local family farms. Charlene and Bill Boxx, came out West from Missouri and started farming in Whatcom County alongside others from the Midwest. The prime soils and great climate were a huge draw. Mike and his brother Roger grew up on the family farm, which has been family owned and operated since 1960.

Mike says, It has always been a family effort; he and his brother are constantly learning from their parents. Slowly the brothers started taking on more responsibility and a few years ago, the brothers officially took over the farm, allowing their parents to slow down a bit and shift towards retirement.



The Generosity Piece

A few years ago, Mike's friend from a local church asked him if he would consider growing some carrots for the Fraser Valley Gleaners in B.C., <http://www.fvgleaners.org/>. The goal was to grow 100,000 pounds of carrots that would be processed, blended into soup mixes and shipped to Haiti. Mike, of course, said 'yes' to the challenge. They got a late start but ended up growing, harvesting and shipping 10,000 lbs. of carrots for the much needed hunger relief efforts in Haiti. This was a spark that led to a conversation Mike had with former WSU Whatcom Extension employee, Dan Coyne. Why not utilize the land base they have and plant more than they can sell and donate the surplus? That was 6 years ago. Since then, every year, Mike and his brother overplant on the farm for our local Bellingham Food Bank, <http://www.bellinghamfoodbank.org>. Mike says this is really made possible because of his working relationship with Max Morange of the Bellingham Foodbank and the hundreds of volunteer gleaners who do the harvesting. This work was recently recognized in Seattle. Mike was honored by a crowded room of University District Rotarians as he accepted the 2014 Mike Shanahan Award on behalf of Boxx Berry Farm for their volunteerism, growing food for Whatcom County Food Banks. Over the past six years Mike and the entire Boxx family have grown more than 500,000 lbs. of fresh produce for donation to hungry families in the community.

Part of Local Economy and Tradition

Each summer, about 30 local youth are hired to help work on the family farm. Mike enjoys this aspect of the farm; teaching and mentoring young people comes natural to him. He says he rarely gets burned out from the hard work of farming because each day is different. A typical day may include being pulled away from making jam or pickles to repair a broken farm implement in the field. His duties also include planting, welding, irrigation, hauling landscape plants and more. Mike is in charge of equipment maintenance on the farm - an important job since much of the cultivating equipment is antique. Roger handles the day-to-day management and farm operations, but both brothers can often be found behind the wheel of a tractor late into the evening. Mike has mentored many young farmers through the years and would like to continue offering opportunities to young farmers. His generosity seems endless. Together, the Boxx brothers continue the tradition of their father, Bill, and mother, Charlene. This family farm is a real Whatcom County Treasure. www.boxxberryfarm.com



A Little about the Operation

Boxx Berry Farm is a 100-acre diversified berry and vegetable farm situated on sandy loam soil about 1 mile from the Nooksack River. At the farm, you will find approximately 30% of the land in berry production, including strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. The remaining acreage is a mix of sweet corn, red and yellow potatoes, carrots, garlic and onions. If you have ever purchased garlic or corn from Joe's Garden's, www.joesgardens.com, it was most likely grown by Mike and Roger.

Five acres are dedicated to mom Charlene's flowers. For 15 years now, Charlene has grown and sold fresh cut flowers and beautiful bouquets at the farm stand and to Haggen Stores in Whatcom County. More recently the majority of the flowers are going to Seattle Metro Markets.

There are 2,400 dahlia plants that are dug each fall and replanted in the spring. It's a stunning site in late summer; it's a great destination farm to visit throughout the season. Other crops grown and sold at the farm include beets, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, and dill. (Some produce sold at the farm stand is from Eastern Washington.)

2014 Reflection of Center for Self Reliance (CLSR) Garden Year-End Garden Report

by Lynn Loveland and Jean Kroll

On the eve of the winter solstice we find ourselves reflecting upon this past season's long days of never-ending sunshine and the growth and abundance that came forth from the gardens. Some of the headlines from this growing season include:

- A significant increase in growing space thus providing an increase in food grown for the community.
- Over 2000 pounds of produce that was donated to Chuckanut Towers, South Side food bank, Common Threads Farms and numerous other individual recipients.
- Involvement with the local Bellingham Bike Cargo company that has helped us with our free CSA by delivering fresh produce once a week to people with limited mobility, limited income and limited access to fresh food.
- An increase in the number of volunteers that increased dramatically. These volunteers helped with garden prep, planting, watering, harvesting garden produce, pulled weeds and performed general maintenance tasks. Their enthusiasm and endless energy has been greatly appreciated. They came from WWU Center for Service Learning, Geology Dept., Fairhaven College and Explorations Academy. Volunteers also came from all ages, affiliations and backgrounds to Thursday night work parties as well as periodic work parties. Total number of volunteer hours exceeding 500 hours! We would like to express a sincere thank you to all our volunteers!
- Events included our annual cider press party, Volunteer Appreciation party, Kids and Bugs event, Annual Garden Tour (sponsored by Sustainable Connections), Community Garden Bike Tour organized by WSU Ext., and a Summer square dance.



In 2015, we look forward to:

- The completion of the house remodel that will provide endless opportunities for workshops; from food preservation to wild crafting, medicine making to cooking with local foods... and so much more!
- Serving more recipients our fresh, organic produce.
- Increasing and diversifying the ways we will demonstrate local self-reliance.
- Creating our expanded garden design.
- Planning more community events and celebrations.
- Developing new garden projects that will include linking with other community organizations such as WWU, WSU Extension Service and various church service communities.

We feel a sense of deep satisfaction that we are accomplishing *The Center for Local Self Reliance's* mission of giving back to the community and demonstrating local self-reliance! We look forward to more involvement and engaging with our local neighbors and friends.

Wishing you all Blessings and Abundance in the New Year.
Lynn Loveland and Jean Kroll

As Exciting as Watching Grass Grow III...

Unless You Are a Master Gardener Listening to Hovander's Visitors

by Pamela Wild, MG Class of 2008

This is the third of five articles relating some of the experiences I had while tending the Living Mulch/Reduced Tillage (cover crop) demonstration plot at Hovander Homestead Park and some ideas that occurred as a result.

Have you ever had an experience when you thought you knew something very well but, after seeing it through others' eyes, your heart is broken open and you learn to love it more than ever before? That is how the good people, who visited this summer and generously shared their experiences, made me love the Homestead anew. It was humbling to hear how we have filled their hearts with many nurturing experiences and cherished memories from deep gratitude of all of our good works.

I wrote down some of their words:

- "I'm taking my photos of the demo gardens to my horticultural group and establish a high standard for our own community service."
- "This is all done by volunteers?"
- "I love how the Children's Garden not only introduces the kids to gardening but introduces new books, too!"
- "I love to learn about weeds and herbs and medicine and folklore."
- "I came from (a distant place) just to see Hovander; we've heard so much about it." (Said by many)
- "I read each sign every time I come here. My family and I learned so much about gardening from them."
- "So THAT is a gooseberry!"
- "It's like a roofless museum!"
- "I bring my children here often to teach them that everyone values gardening—not just me—and so they will value it all their lives."
- "I have modeled my own home gardens on Hovander's gardens. They have given me guidance as to what to do and do it right."
- "We come every summer night/weekend. It's like our summer home." (Also said by many)
- And my absolute favorite from a little girl dancing in the dahlia garden enticing her friends to come in by singing: "This is where the magic princess lives!"



This summer, I learned that Hovander is everyone's home to live, rest, play, celebrate, explore, learn, and sometimes say good-bye forever to loved ones. Spend an evening there, and a broad slice of Whatcom's citizenry will be seen beating a path to our gardens' gates who consider it a "home away from home."



What to do with these insights? I ask you to join me in diversifying and expanding our outreach. Our neighbors will eagerly and gratefully embrace new learning resources. Hovander is a pearl of great worth with volcanoes, mountains, wetlands and domestic animals to the east; the river to the west; fertile pastures, wildlife, and four grand historical buildings all around...a crown jewel of a horticultural classroom. Visitors don't take it for granted and Master Gardeners across North America can't even dream of what we have. In the next article, I will make the argument and offer a painfully easy and inexpensive solution—pointed out by a visitor—that we are simply not dreaming big enough. Isn't the greatest tribute to our dedication and high standards of excellence to be asked for even more of our craft? This and their touching my arm and pointedly asking me to tell you, "Thank you."



2015

International Year of Soils

Welcome to the International Year of Soils!

by Amberose Kelly

2015 has been declared the International Year of Soils by the UN General Assembly.

What perfect timing to launch Extension's spring composting and recycling course!

Soils are essential to everything dear to Master Gardeners, community garden members, and society at large. We have big plans for 2015. To start, Whatcom County is entering a new age of organics recycling. Keep an eye out for Towards Zero Waste initiatives. Extension is partnering with local organizations to reclaim the "waste" in "waste management" and to embrace our available resources. Organics recycling is only a small piece of the puzzle, but easily the most elegant. Nothing (in this writer's humble opinion) is more magical or regionally significant than the transformation of common household refuse to valuable reserves that benefit our county at every level – from your home garden to neighborhood parks to the protection of our natural resources.

The International Year of Soils (IYS) offers an exciting platform for this discussion. Each month presents a new theme; January was "Soils Sustain Life." Future newsletters will discuss the monthly theme and feature an aspect of soil science and composting. I invite you to contact me with your ideas, questions, and discussion points. Do you compost at home? I would love to share your soil building endeavors and experiences in the coming issues.

The IYS theme for February is "Soils Support Urban Life." We often don't think of soil in the context of the urban jungle – even one as subdued as Bellingham – yet soil is (literally and figuratively) the foundation of life as we know it. Urban soils play an integral role in storm water management, the filtration of toxics from our waterways, and food security. See this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkJ7H9DMEX4>

Start the year of right by picking up some relevant literature. Enjoy the following book review by *Pamela Wild*.

And always,
Be Loyal to Your Soil.

Amberose Kelley

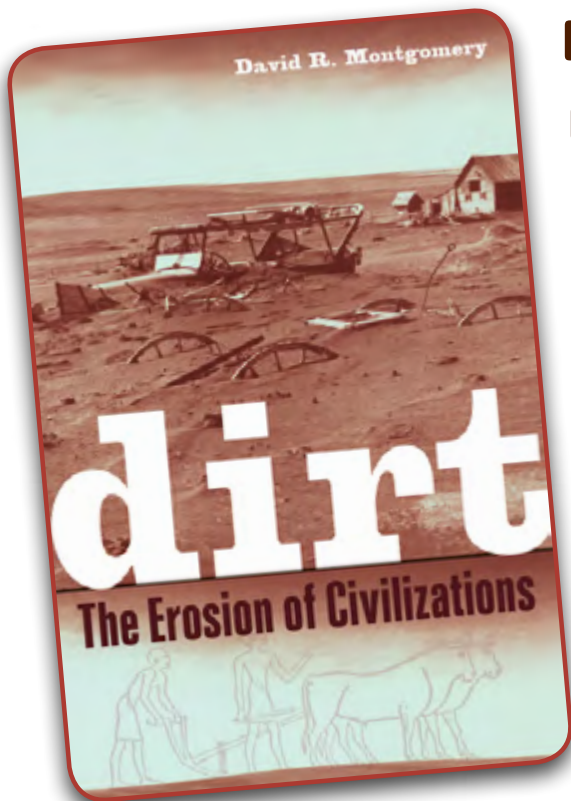
Recommended Links:

IYS: www.fao.org/soils-2015/en/

WSU toxics research in the news: www.nytimes.com/2015/01/27/science/cleaning-up-water-by-running-it-through-dirt.html?smid=fb-share&r=0

Master Composter and Recycler course application: www.surveymonkey.com/s/MCRapp

Compost Survey: www.surveymonkey.com/s/MCRS1



Dirt: The Erosion of Civilization

by David R. Montgomery, Ph.D.

University of California Press, ©2007

A Book Review by Pamela Wild, MG 2008

I was introduced to “No-Till, Low-Till” gardening during my 2008 Master Gardener training. It turned my head inside out as to what soil is and its relationship to plants and to all of life. Adopting this technique made gardening easier and more enjoyable, but I needed to understand the big picture. Changing from double digging to disturbing the soil as little as possible caused me to question everything I knew about plants and their relationship to the soil they were anchored in.

Dirt: The Erosion of Civilization introduced me to a still vastly unknown subterranean world that we desperately rely on. “Soil is our most under appreciated, least valued, and yet most essential resource,” begins David Montgomery, a University of Washington geomorphologist and a Macarthur Genius Award winner. Beginning with Darwin’s final publication—the first research on earth worms and their role in soil building—Montgomery launches his story about both the natural and human causes of soil creation, manipulation and erosion that have brought many a civilization to its knees.

The maltreatment of soil has directed much of history: use it, abuse it, exhaust it, expand your empire, move on, or die is the usual script. Dr. Montgomery writes about the introduction of agriculture, soil and erosion management in both fragile and vigorous environments. He tells the tale of soil from such diverse civilizations as ancient Mesopotamia, China, Egypt and Rome – and

more recently the Dust Bowl, the Sahel and the Ogallala Aquifer.

Just as I was about to throw myself on the compost pile in despair, he relates promising research projects that have stabilized, even reversed, the destruction of soil and the making of deserts. But we need to be educated to make a difference in our soil’s – and civilization’s – outcome.

It can be difficult to grasp the enormity of the statistics on erosion. The image that amazed me most is that of a dump truck’s worth of topsoil spilling into the Gulf of Mexico every second. Amazed because this is occurring in a nation that has the scientific understanding of the meaning of such loss, the historical experience of the consequences, and the horticultural and engineering resources to prevent it.

We don’t study soil, its erosion and its inextricable value to our lives in our social studies or science classes. What does our soil stewardship mean to our present and future public health, economics, politics and standing in the world? Montgomery gives many dire possibilities if we stay ignorant.

Though written for the layperson, Montgomery often compresses very big ideas, important to understanding the rest of the book, into single, small paragraphs. Re-reading was frequently necessary. However, if you simply want the gist of his thesis and points, a once-over will suffice. I recommend this book as a gift to anyone interested in joining Master Gardeners, students considering professions as diverse as science, politics, civil engineering, horticulture, and history, teachers, and the big, futuristic thinker in your life. Perhaps you? It is a fine read to make you unpopular at any cocktail or dinner party. Such is the lot of truth-sayers.

Other suggested reading for “No-Till, Low-Till” gardening: *How to Have a Green Thumb without an Aching Back*, Ruth Stout; *Lasagna Gardening*, Patricia Lanza; *The One-Straw Revolution*, Masanobu Fukuoka and Larry Korn.