

Whatcom County Master Gardeners

March 2015

MG & Foundation News

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Garden Project

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From the Coordinator's Desk...

The **2015 MG Class** is well underway - we are in our 4th week of class. We kicked things off on February 5th with a wonderful lunch at the YWCA ballroom, where each student met their mentor. Special thanks to all the volunteers who helped make the luncheon a great success: Kathleen Bander, Ayesha Brookshier, Linda Burns, Alasia Canares, Tammie Corrigan, Karen Gilliam, Margaret Kassner, MaryAnn Lee, Erin Meier, Daniel Menck, Christa Russell, Mill Shires, Julie Turner, Judy Wayt, and Pamela Wild.

So far, we have covered *Botany* with guest Barry Wendling from WWU Herbarium, with assistance from MGs Karen Gilliam, Linda Berquist, Jeff Dodson, David Keller, and Margaret Kassner. (Thanks for your help.) Week Two was *Soils* with Dr. Doug Collins and Chris Benedict. The coming weeks will be busy. We will cover *Pathology*, *Composting*, *Entomology*, and more. Our field trips include Cloud Mountain Farm Center, Green Earth Technologies, Home Depot, Sterling Paz Garden, school gardens, Hovander, and more. Please let me know if you would like to sit in on a session and/or visit class to talk about your project.

With a warm and dry winter, I expect we will see an earlier than usual rush for gardeners to get started. We will most likely see some out of the ordinary garden concerns. Plants might show more signs of stress and, as a result, more worry for the gardener. Remind each other to focus on the big picture - many plants recover from stress - and to keep an eye toward a holistic approach. Focus on our soils, water conservation, habitat protection, fruit tree care, composting, rain gardens and sustainable gardening. These are at the top of my list. I am really excited about the **Annual Plant Sale** on May 9th and I look forward to working with each of you and our customers to provide the best service to our community with great plants, research based information, and environmentally sound solutions.

WSU Master Gardeners will be at the annual **Whatcom Conservation District Native Plant Sale**. Our goal as an exhibitor is to help with plant/tree questions, promote our May 9th Plant Sale and our Composting Program. If you are interested in working a shift at our booth please contact me. For other volunteer opportunities see the listings in the News To Use section of this newsletter.

Beth Chisholm



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 —

THANK YOU!



Judy Boxx filled all 50 seats on the bus to Seattle's NW Flower and Garden Show. It was a great show with attendees bringing home new ideas, plants, gardening equipment and fun stuff. If you weren't one of the lucky ones on the bus, make a note for next year. Thank you, **Judy** and **Sandy Keathley** for making all the arrangements for this trip.

Welcome to our new plant sale chair, **Lynn Morgan-Hill**. We applaud and thank you for stepping forward to take on this important volunteer job. Thanks to **Loretta Hogg** who left detailed and well-organized timelines

and information that will make the job go smoothly. Thanks also to **Linda Bergquist** for all the behind scenes work she does to help get our volunteers involved.

More thanks go to **Amberose Kelley** for helping **Jo Fleming** get our beautiful and information-packed newsletter out. Thank you, **Jo**, for an amazing and never-ending job of creating a newsletter every month.

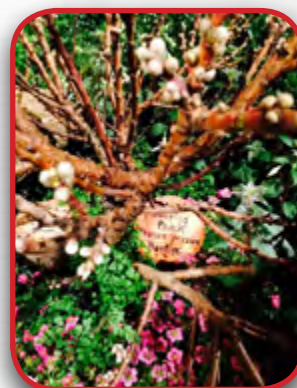
The mentoring program is off to a great start. The introductory lunch was an elegant indoor garden atmosphere with fabulous food. Thanks to all the mentors for their skill and dedication. It will be an amazing year! With this year's new class, we will be asking the students themselves to nominate two of their classmates to the "at large" MG Board Foundation positions for the 2015-2016 term.

This is my final thank you. It's to all those **inspiring and dedicated volunteers** that do a multitude of things to keep our programs running smoothly. There is not enough room here to add each and every one of you, but you know who you are. Happy Spring!

"With rushing winds and gloomy skies, the dark and stubborn winter dies."

Bayard Taylor

Linda Burshia Battle, President - Whatcom County Master Gardener Foundation



— March General MG Foundation Meeting —



Dr. Merrill Peterson, "Insects: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly"

Thursday, March 12, 7:30 pm

NEW LOCATION: RE Sources Classroom (Above the RE Store, 2309 Meridian Street, Bellingham)

Free and Open to the Public



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/>

Due to scheduling conflicts we've had this year with our General Membership Meetings on the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm in the WSU Extension Office, we are looking at other venues. Thanks to Barb Schickler, we have another great speaker lined up at 7:30, following our meeting on March 12th at the RE Sources classroom.

All the Latest MG & Foundation News!

— MG News To Use —

MG Foundation Garden Tour

Thursday March 19th

10am-noon

Join the WSU Whatcom County Master Gardener Foundation for a walking tour of the trees on Western Washington University campus. Meet at 9:30 am to carpool from Sehome Haggen's Parking (10 parking passes will be passed out at Haggen's). Or meet at 10am at Viking Union campus MAP. Tour will last approximately 2 hrs. Please dress for the weather. For more information, contact Barb Schickler, barbaraschicklegmail.com



Volunteer Opportunities

- **Whatcom Conservation District Plant Sale March 28th**
If you are interested in helping with this annual plant sale, see the volunteer flyer and contact: Brandi Hutton, Whatcom Conservation District BHutton@whatcomcd.org
360-354-2035 ext. 119
www.whatcomcd.org
- **Plant Sale PR Person**
Looking for someone who can assist in advertising for our Annual MG Plant Sale
- **Hovander Children's Story Garden Helpers**
If you like little ones (preschool- first grade), this is for you
- **Edible Educators in the Schools**
Teach students (Kindergarten - 5th grade) about soils, seeds, plants and food

For more details on these March opportunities, email beth.chisholm@wsu.edu.



Potting Day for the MG Annual Plant Sale

Wednesday, March 18 at 1 PM

Hovander Park at the old greenhouse

This will be in place of the potting day previously held at Karen Gilliam's. This is great weather to get digging and cleaning up the garden.

Master Gardener Interns are coming, but we need lots

of veterans to make it a fun and productive day. Bring your plants, or your neighbor's, that can be divided and potted for the sale. Please have them at the greenhouse no later than 1 PM on potting day. If you do bring them earlier, please put plants into a plastic flat (available at the greenhouse) that is lined with plastic or newspaper. Cardboard boxes disintegrate when they get wet, becoming difficult to deal with.

Plants that we don't need and have difficulty selling are: unnamed iris, if we don't know the color; daylilies, unless named and a special color; regular Shasta daisies; and too many Sedum 'Autumn Joy'.

For those who can help earlier, we will be setting up at 11 AM that morning.

There is limited, very little, parking at the old greenhouse. Please carpool, and perhaps shuttle from the main parking lot by the house.

Questions? Karen Gilliam, jkgilliam@gmail.com



Plant ID Group

The Plant ID Study Group monthly session is March 26, 9-11 am at the Cordata branch of the Community Food Co-op, 315 Westerly Rd, in the upstairs meeting room. These sessions are open to new and veteran Master Gardeners and the public – so bring friends.

Some blooms, some leaves, and lots of "I wonder what that is" is going on in our gardens and on walks. We will have native and non-native samples to review. You may bring samples too - just be sure they have some leaves attached. Native ID books and/or a garden plant ID book are useful to look up plant characteristics. WiFi is available for internet access. A small knife and a magnifying lens is helpful to exam specimens.

When the weather is warmer, i.e., June, we will begin study excursions into nature.

For questions and information, contact Karen Gilliam (jkgilliam@gmail.com) or Louise Granger (rutroad@gmail.com). Louise's cell phone is 739-2468.

Mycorrhiza- The Fungus Among Us

by Ayesha Brookshier, MG 2014

The key starting point to any healthy plant is healthy soil. Soil is a vast ecosystem of organic material and living organisms that work together to create a web of soil health. The number one thing we can do to destroy soil is to treat it like dirt! Disturbance activities and the widespread use of commercial fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides have had negative impacts on our soil ecosystems in the form of erosion, compaction, salt accumulation, and loss of soil structure, which in turn contribute to storm water run-off and water contamination.

The question remains then: how do we take steps to improve soil health?

According to Dr. Mike Amaranthus, an adjunct associate professor at Oregon State University, one of the answers lies with mycorrhizal fungi. Dr. Amaranthus has published over 70 scientific articles on mycorrhizae and their impressive uses.



What are mycorrhizae?

Literally translated, *myco* means “of fungi,” and *rhiza* means “root.” Mycorrhizae are specialized fungi that colonize and work symbiotically with plant roots in soil. They substantially increase the plant’s absorption of water and nutrients by increasing root surface area by 100 to 1000 times. Mycorrhizae also release important enzymes into the soil that dissolve hard-to-capture and tightly bound soil nutrients. In turn, the plant supplies the fungi with sugars.

The vast majority of plant species will independently develop these symbiotic relationships with beneficial



credit to Dr. Mike Amaranthus

mycorrhizal fungi. However, in soils that have been disturbed, contaminated, and left fallow, we must take purposeful steps to improve the health of the soil by supporting mycorrhizal growth.

How is mycorrhizal fungi used?

Mycorrhizae can be introduced to your soil by way of an inoculant. A fungal inoculant is best used when first planting, but can also be used on established plants by incorporating the inoculant into the top few inches of soil. The closer the inoculant is to the roots, the more effective it will be. Inoculants come in many forms, including granular forms incorporated into soil at planting, liquids that are watered into porous soils or blended into soil mixes, and gels that are dabbed onto roots. If planning to use inoculant it is best to purchase one that contains a variety of fungi, since different plants are suited to different mycorrhizae.

What does all this mean for people who love to grow plants?

Your plants will be less prone to transplant shock, develop a stronger and more robust root structure, be more drought tolerant, and be larger. Your plants will also be more resistant to diseases, insects, and other pests because they will be healthier in general. Other benefits to amending soil with mycorrhizae include improved soil structure, leading to a decrease in storm water run-off and water pollution. Mycorrhizae are especially effective when used with native plants and are commonly used at restoration sites and in conjunction with sustainable landscaping practices. Thanks to people like Dr. Mike Amaranthus, we know a great deal more about beneficial fungi and how crucial they are to soil health, plant health, and our fragile ecosystems.

News from the Clinic

by Jeff Dodson, MG 2014

Hello Everyone from the Clinic Desk.

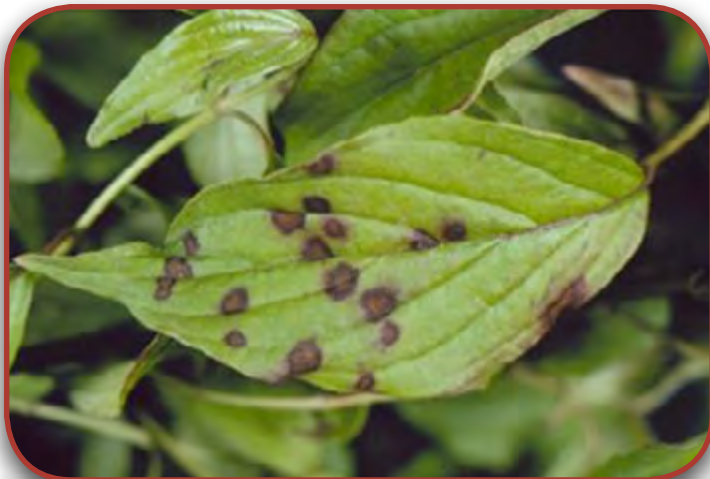
After a semi-quiet winter, the Master Gardener Clinic is beginning to pick up with all sorts of interesting queries coming in. Never a dull moment, but in a way it was predictable because of the oddball weather we got at the end of the growing season last year and the somewhat curious cold season we are currently going through. Different weather always leads to clients coming into the clinic with questions more “different” than usual. Seen as a learning experience and an opportunity to find out more about the problems that might arise with our fellow gardeners, the clinic becomes a focal point of exploration of answers and a dissemination locale for information. Because of the weird, warm winter weather, we are getting reports of tent caterpillar hatches, leaf-spotting pathogens showing up early, and an alarming amount of flowering and new plant growth. Let us all keep our collective fingers crossed that we do not get any more damaging frosts. What do you think are the chances?

We are working on standardizing the practices and procedures of the clinic and will be training the new class of Master Gardeners on these. This is also a good time for those of you that want to revisit the clinic as a place to expand your horizons

and to accrue volunteer hours. You, too, will get an orientation on how the clinic works as well as an education in sleuthing plant mysteries, researching your own garden’s glitches, networking with fellow gardeners, learning practical solutions to problems arising with our fruit trees, realizing volunteer opportunities....the list goes on and on. Generally, we get clients asking about insect and plant identification, plant disorders, control measures for plant pathogens, how to keep down insect populations. Sound familiar? Come in and give us a shot. You may find you have a skill of which you were heretofore unaware. Who knows? In addition, you may be able to identify places where improvements can be made. Suggestions are always welcome.

Oh, and one last thing. We have some ideas connected with the clinic for projects that might appeal to individuals or groups.

Best regards to all,
Jeff Dodson





Hunger is Unacceptable **GARDEN PROJECT** Growing more than vegetables

This vibrant community-building program reconnects people to the source of their food and supports 70 households annually. Each year in early spring, the **Garden Project** builds 25 raised-bed vegetable gardens in the homes

of low-income Bellingham residents, free of charge. In addition to the garden bed, program participants receive free resources for two years, which include educational workshops, organic seeds and plant starts, basic tools, a growing guide, a seasonal newsletter, and access to a garden mentor. Food is a universal language that cuts across income, culture, language, gender orientation, and age. We encourage people to develop a new relationship with the source of their food, their living space, and their community.

Join us in this great effort to build food & community from the ground up! The **Garden Project** is recruiting for garden recipients, construction volunteers & garden mentors.

For more information, please call (360) 393-2838 or email gardenproject@bellinghamfood.org.



Radio Show Volunteers Wanted

Master Gardeners Jeff Dodson and Kate Nichols produce a radio show called "All About Plants" on KMRE 102.3 FM radio, a community station broadcasting from the Spark Museum and streaming from their website. We would love to have some help putting the show together, especially arranging for interviews. If someone

is interested in learning the technical part of the show that would be great, too. It's easy to learn and there is lots of help available. Call Kate at 360/223-3252, or email katennichols@yahoo.com.

WSU Community Horticulture Master Composter & Recycler Class

Don't forget that 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 April 22nd through May 20th 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>.



2015

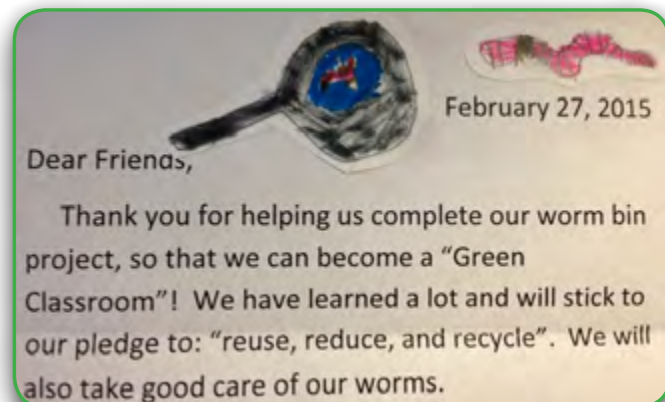
International Year of Soils

March: Soils Support Agriculture

"Consider this: virtually everything in our diet either directly or indirectly comes from soil." (IYS March Video)

The IYS theme for March is "Soils Support Agriculture." As Master Gardeners, we are keenly aware of this connection – though on a smaller scale.

With spring just around the corner (or is it already here?) and food gardens on the brain, I ask you all to take a moment to reflect on the foods and the items that we enjoy which owe their existence to the soil. It has helpers, of course. Don't miss Ayesha Brookshier's article on mycorrhizae.



Last week, the Master Composter team embarked on its first act of volunteerism. We accompanied a RE Sources AmeriCorps volunteer to [Green Certify](#) a classroom with **worm composting**! Making the food to soil to food connection can't begin soon enough. It was positively joyful to witness the kids play with their worm allies and help to assemble their newly outfitted worm bin. Here's to many more future classroom interactions. I hope you'll join me!

Another goal that we have for this year is to get involved with the composting within our community food gardens. We would like every community garden to have an interactive compost demonstration, where again, the food to soil to food cycle is obvious.

I'll leave you with a favorite quote of mine by Aldo Leopold:

"There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace."

As Always,
Be loyal to your soil.
Amberose Kelley

Sign Up

Master Composter Master Recycler Course, coming April 22: www.surveymonkey.com/s/MCRapp

Watch:

IYS March Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGV2jlg_P4M

Read:

A Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold

Let's talk soil! Do you compost at home? I would love to share your soil building endeavors and experiences in the coming issues.



As Exciting as Watching Grass Grow IV...

Unless You Are Growing a Roofless Museum

by Pamela Wild, MG 2008

This is the fourth of five articles sharing some experiences I had while tending the Living Mulch/Reduced Tillage (cover crop) demonstration plot at Hovander this summer. In the last article, I related Hovander visitors' love for that "crown jewel of a horticultural classroom." I suggested we use their quotes to inspire greater diversification and expansion of outreach because we aren't thinking big enough for this rich in resources, "glorious, roofless museum." These, and a few other events, noted below, encourage me to offer a simple idea to you.

When I arrived in Whatcom 17 years ago, I asked "Why isn't there a nature center here?" I have never received an answer. We MGs have had many long conversations regarding the lack of new MG recruits for Hovander due to training requirements, changing demographics of trainees and an increasing interest in food production and environmental science rather than ornamentals. Then there is the visitors' appreciation for all that the demonstration gardens provide in this "roofless museum." What about taking a slightly different approach that embraces all of the above? How about thinking of Hovander as a Nature of Horticulture Center?

I preface my proposal and its playful working title by stating that it does not involve taking away a single magnificent dahlia, spending lots of money or rearranging anything. Hovander's demo gardens are already near perfect. I do propose that we simply add two laminated 11 x 8.5" signs on H-bars, and one posted box per demo garden. These small additions would provide a wider spectrum and deeper understanding of the *nature* of horticulture and provide a more interactive educational experience. Isn't that what the demo gardens are for?

Imagine two small signs in the dahlia plot that share: *Who were the first people to grow dahlias and why? How big is the dahlia industry? Who promotes dahlias in Whatcom?* In a few paragraphs, the historical, geographical, economic and home gardening aspects of dahlias, plus a sister horticultural organization, are introduced to visitors. The posted box would contain a laminated quiz (with answers on the back) asking: *Do dahlias have a fragrance? How do dahlias attract pollinators? Does the dahlia tuber have other uses? What is your favorite*



dahlia in the demo plot? Why do you think the Master Gardeners grow these dahlias? Two signs and a box to facilitate learning, exploration, expanded thinking, and encouragement of personal tastes.

Or, what about the vegetable garden? One sign could relate some history of the Hovander family's gardening. The second sign could state the garden area and labor necessary to provide the family with their year-round nutritional needs and compare it with what most of us need to buy at the grocery store. The posted box provides a math problem, such as, *How many square feet of garden would your household need?* along with resources on how to start their own yard or patio garden.

I will be sharing this vision of a *Nature of Horticulture Center* with our new MG and Master Composter/Recycler trainees so to encourage them to develop demo gardens for Hovander inspired by their own passions for horticulture – ornamental, food production or environmental! – as part of their community service. Composting and worm bin demos will be returning this Summer. What else will our newbies bring to the feast?

For the fifth and final article, I will share the results of my research to transform last year's cover crop plot into an interactive soil conservation display, complete with history, folklore, economics, politics, geology, biology, and of course, the best in WSU science... again, like one would enjoy at any museum or nature center. Gross and Zimmerman* define a nature center as giving a "sense of place". Embracing a *roofless nature center* will allow us to tell the greater story of the place horticulture has had in the past, present and future generations of our beloved places— Hovander and our planet.

*Gross and Zimmerman, Interpretive Centers: The History, Design and Development of Nature and Visitor Centers, UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc., Stevens Point, WI, 2002.

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8:30am-12:30pm | <input type="checkbox"/> 12:30pm-4:30pm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8:30am-12:30pm | <input type="checkbox"/> 12:30pm-4:30pm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8:30am-12:30pm | <input type="checkbox"/> 12:30pm-4:00pm |

Sale Site Set Up:

Friday, March 27 (9am-3pm)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9:00am-12:30pm | <input type="checkbox"/> 12:30pm-3:00pm |
|---|---|

Day of sale:

Saturday, March 28 (8am-3pm)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8:00am -12pm | <input type="checkbox"/> 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