



Weeder's Digest

Whatcom County Master Gardeners
April 2015

The Plant Sale Issue

All About the Plant Sale!

What's for sale?

Why buy?

Food, crafts, and workshops

Native Plants for your Garden

Soils Clean and Capture Water

Moss in the Grass

Visions of Hovander V

Calendar of Events



Master Gardener Program

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



From the Coordinator's Desk...

Super excited for this year's sale!

24th Annual WSU Whatcom County Master Gardener Plant Sale
SATURDAY MAY 9, 2015
Hovander Homestead Park • 9am - 2pm

EACH SPRING, Master Gardeners of Whatcom County start working on their biggest fundraiser of the year. They gather plants from their home gardens, divide hearty perennials, transplant trees and shrubs, plant thousands of tomato seeds (heirloom & unique varieties), and tend to the thousands of tender and tough plants that are donated for the sale. It is the hard work of these volunteers who create a unique sale with plants at reasonable prices.

- 23 varieties of locally grown & heirloom tomatoes
- Specialty perennials
- Flowers
- Native Plants
- Herbs
- Trees / Shrubs
- Plant Clinic & Information Booth
- Local Food & Environmental Education booths
- Mother's Day Gifts & more!

Mini Workshops will be ongoing throughout the day, topics include composting, plant diseases, planting techniques, raised bed designs, rain gardens and more.

Cash, Checks & Credit/Debit cards will be accepted

**Sale proceeds go to support
the WSU Whatcom Master Gardener program efforts**

Maintain the Hovander Demonstration Gardens
 Sponsor speakers for various garden events
 Support the annual Master Gardener training
 Support the Children's Story Garden at Hovander

Visit our Demonstration Gardens while you are at the sale!

Whatcom County Master Gardener Program
whatcom.wsu.edu/mastergardener
 1000 N. Forest Street • Suite 201
 Bellingham, WA 98225
 (360) 676-6736

MISSION The WSU Extension Master Gardener 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
Beth Chisholm	Master Gardeners & Community First Gardens Project
Amberose Kelley	Master Composter/Recyclers
Cheryl Kahle	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 Gardener Program. **Guest articles are encouraged.** Please submit to A. Kelley (a.kelley@wsu.edu). Limit to 600 or fewer words and include a photo. Editors reserve the right to edit for content and formatting.

Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension Office.



Judy Boxx and David Simonson Present ...

2015 Master Gardener Tomato Project

Big Beef
Black Sea Man
Brandywine
Bush Early Girl
Chocolate Cherry
Country Taste
Early Girl
Fantastic
Gold Nugget
Hundreds and
Thousands
Jolly Elf
Legend
Moskvich



Northern Delight
Manitoba
Oregon Spring
Polbig
Roma
Santiam
Saucy
Siletz
Stupice
Sun Gold
Sun Sugar
Super Sweet 100
Sweet Tangerine
Taxi
Tumbling Tom

28 Varieties of Heirloom Tomatoes started in Hovander's greenhouse
Every color, shape, flavor and size
Sweeter than store bought
Save the seeds!



MG & Foundation News

News, Events and Activities for April



MG Foundation President's Message

I saw this in a magazine last week and it seemed to sum up the Master Gardener Program perfectly:

*If you want something that lasts for days, plant flowers.
If you want something that lasts for years, plant trees.
If you want something that lasts an eternity,
plant ideas.*

Being part of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners Foundation is a continual process of learning, sharing knowledge, teaching, trouble shooting, basking in the successes, learning from our mistakes and enjoying and cultivating new friendships and relationships.

We plant ideas!

There are so many things in our lives that we take for granted. It is not until there is a change that we realize what we had. Such is the case with our meeting room in the extension office. While it has been interesting to try different venues, it also makes us appreciative of our former meeting space and the behind the scenes work done by Cheryl and Beth.

We will not have a General meeting or speaker in May due to the **PLANT SALE**. June and July will find many of us on a bus exploring new gardens and nurseries. August we will meet at Hovander for our annual picnic. Hopefully, by September we will be back in our favorite meeting room at the extension office.

Enjoy this great weather and the blooms and buds that greet us every day.

Happy gardening.

Linda Burshia Battle, MGF President

MG Foundation General Meeting

with guest Geraldine Kildow

April 9 • Extension Office

6:30 pm Social Time • 7pm MGF Meeting • 7:15 pm Guest Speaker

Geraldine Kildow is owner of **North Field Farms** in Whatcom County. A newly retired Nurse Practitioner, Geraldine now finds herself waking early in the morning to tend to her 2500 **Peonies** instead of heading off to see patients. Geraldine has always loved Peonies and began growing them in 1997. Her collection has included Herbaceous (or "bush") Peonies, Tree Peonies, and Intersectional Peonies (a cross between herbaceous and tree).

In 2000 Geraldine was busy planting her Hearty Blues. The blueberries did quite well last year, but we are not the only ones that LOVE blueberries. So does the **Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD)**. Geraldine will give named attention to this nefarious new menace to soft fruit.

Please note: Geraldine will provide her perspective on SWD. For the latest science, research and management of this crop pest please visit our [Whatcom County Ag website](#). WSU Whatcom Extension works very closely with Commercial small fruit growers offering management solutions to this damaging pest.

Barb Schickler, MG Foundation





Plant Sale in Good Hands

Meet a Master Gardener • by Kathleen Bander, MG 2012

IN THE NICK of time, a new leader for the 2015 Master Gardener Plant Sale has answered the call. Her name is Lyn Morgan-Hill, from the class of 2004. She will be the first sale chair to reap the benefit of last year's Chair Extraordinaire, Loretta Hogg, who upon wrapping up the successful 2014 sale, actually *accomplished* what others had only talked about for years: she compiled a complete "How To Put On the Plant Sale" manual. Many kudos go to her! New leader Lyn is confident this year's sale will run smoothly with the invaluable help of the manual.

Through the years Lyn has held a wide variety of interesting jobs. She has worked at a newspaper, as a tour operator, as a ski instructor, as a sailboat charter coordinator, and as a scuba diving instructor.

Lyn spent her early years in Tampa, Florida but eventually resettled to be near her son when he moved to the Phoenix area in 1990. The gruesome heat of summers in the Southwest finally persuaded Lyn to find a more congenial place to live and she eventually settled in the Northwest.

Upon completing a degree in Environmental Planning at Huxley College, she was hired at the Whatcom County Planning and Development Department, where she spent the following 14 years.

While at the county, her supervisors felt it would be useful for her to complete the Master Gardener certification. Thus began many years of volunteer service as a Master Gardener. Lyn helped unload trucks and worked as a table manager at many yearly garden sales.

Eventually, she became the Rain Garden Coordinator for WSU Extension. With the expertise gained through years of working with Rain Gardens, Lyn created a consulting business for those needing help planning and installing rain gardens. She spends her free time in her own garden. She has a 50 square foot bed in which she grows a wide variety of daylilies, which she sells in Deming. Last year she installed a pond and a teahouse, which she is proud to have built herself. She also has an affinity for making wine, and has a cellar full of tempting bottles to share with like-minded friends.

I urge every Master Gardener who has the chance, to introduce yourself to Lyn and thank her for taking on the job of Sale Coordinator. It is an essential role, and by all reckoning, she will fill it perfectly.

Thank You Lyn!

Weeder's Digest Changing Hands

This April we say farewell to Weeder's Digest editor Jo Fleming as she embarks on a journey away from the computer and towards adorable new grandkids. Jo, we cannot thank you enough for the time, creativity, and technical expertise you brought to our newsletter.

Thank You Jo!

Calendar of Events

Free & Open to the Public

APRIL

Gardening Workshop

April 12th • Sunday • 2pm-3pm

Tennant Lake Interpretive Center (Indoors) 5236 Nielsen Avenue, Ferndale

Soils that Grow Your Food: Cover crops, soil biology, and cultivating beneficial soil microbes.

Plant ID Study Group

April 23 • Thursday • 9 am-11 am

Cordata Community Co-op Meeting Room , 315 Westerly Rd

Native plant samples will be reviewed. You can bring samples from your garden to share or identify. Keep some leaves on the samples. It is useful to bring a NW native plant resource book, a magnifying glass and a small knife. All new and veteran MGs, friends and the public are welcome. Coffee, snacks and free wifi are available at the Co-op. **INFO:** Karen Gilliam (jkgilliam@gmail.com) & Louise Granger (rutroad@gmail.com or 360.739.2468)

MAY

2015 Native Flora Fair

May 16 • Saturday • 10am-4pm

Fairhaven Village Green

The WA Native Plant Society, Bellingham Parks Dept., and Wild Whatcom are teaming to put on another fantastic annual event. Plant sale, education and tours. The Whatcom WSU Master Gardeners will be at the sale. If you would like to volunteer contact Beth.

Roeder Home Open House & Plant Sale

May 17 • Sunday • 11am-3pm

2600 East Sunset Drive, Bellingham

Come to the Historic Roeder Home Open House and Garden Tour. Master Gardeners will be available to answer your flower and gardening questions.

JUNE

Garden Tour: Far Reaches Farm

farreachesfarm.com

June 11 • Leave at 7 am

Meet at Sports Authority parking lot (Bellis Fair Mall)

A full tour of Far Reaches Farm. We have scheduled a Bellair Charter bus holding 47 passengers. Purchases made at the nursery can be brought back on the bus. We plan a stop for lunch in Port Townsend, a five minute drive from the Farm. We plan to return at approx. 6 pm with a travel time of 2 1/2 hours each way, including a short Keystone Ferry ride. Costs for the tour will be announced soon and checks will be collected before date of departure.

JULY

Garden Tour: Heronswood Gardens

heronswood.com

July 9 • Leave at 7 am

Meet at Sports Authority parking lot (Bellis Fair Mall)

The same charter and logistics exist for the tour of Heronswood Garden, except that a box luncheon will be available after the tour for \$15 (and I hear it is quite good). Hope to see you on one or both of the tours! -Barb Schickler

Native Roots

Science Feature • Ayesha Brookshier, MG 2014

NATIVE PLANTS play a vital role in our ecosystems. They are more suited for our climate patterns and soil conditions. Adapted to regional pathogens, they are more pest and disease resistant. They are typically more drought tolerant, helping to conserve our water resources. Natives play vital roles in erosion prevention and habitat restoration and management. The blooming timeline of natives coincides with our native pollinators, creating symbiotic and nurturing garden-scapes. Native berries attract birds by provide nutrients for individual native bird species. Our natives provide food and shelter for many different critters.

The use of native plants in our landscapes has countless advantages, but when people think of native plants, few commonly known species come to mind. These commonly known plants are wonderful and have many applications. These may include:

Evergreen huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*): Featuring glossy green and red foliage, delicate white-pink blossoms, and delicious small dark blue berries loved by humans and birds alike. Drought resistant, shade tolerant, and can reach six feet in the shade, four feet in the sun. (top photo)

Kinnikinnik or bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*): An evergreen ground cover that forms a glossy green mat with red berries. Dry rocky soils in full sun. Birds love the berries.

Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*): A great understory small shrub/groundcover with vibrant green ever green leaves and dark blue berries. Can reach six ft in optimal conditions, but often remains one to three ft.

Tall Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*): A drought tolerant, upright evergreen shrub reaching six feet. Provides early spring color with its bright yellow blossoms, and later provides dark blue berries for the birds.



Tall Oregon grape by WSU

Red flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*): A drought tolerant, upright shrub with clusters of dark pink flowers that attracts hummingbirds and likes sun.



Red flowering currant by Mikul

These highly adaptable plants are often available at nurseries. Unbeknownst to many though, there is a breadth of less familiar native plants which also display wonderful traits. A select few are detailed on the following page.



The many colors of serviceberry

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*): A drought tolerant, sun loving tree that can reach 30 feet. It produces beautiful white flowers in spring, lush green foliage and tasty dark blue berries (edible to humans and birds) in summer, and an array of wonderful fall color.

Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus cerulia*): A drought tolerant tree that can reach 20 feet. It produces clusters of white flowers in spring followed by delicious blue berries.

Black Twinberry (*Lonicera involucrata*): Often overlooked, a shade-loving deciduous shrub in the Honeysuckle family that can reach 15 feet. It produces beautiful yellow Honeysuckle-style blossoms, followed by tasty black berries. It prefers moist soil and good drainage.



Black Twinberry by WSU

Mock Orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*): Its most striking quality is its fragrance - it smells delicious! An "old fashioned" deciduous shrub with white flowers. Used in home landscapes for many generations, it reaches nine feet in full sun.



Mock Orange by WSU

If you're looking for a smaller native plant for the home landscape, consider **Wood Sorrel** (*Oxalis oregana*), a clover woodland ground cover for shade.

If you're looking for a sun-loving perennial, consider one of the many **Penstemons**. They range in size from a few inches to two feet tall and offer flowers that the bees love.



Penstemon

This is only the tip of the iceberg. There are hundreds of natives to choose from if you go looking. Many natives may look a bit "wild." Depending on your preference, you can embrace this look or make adjustments to landscape design and plant choice. All plants are beautiful in their own way. Additionally, there are many different levels to the use of natives. One can mix up their landscape by just using one or two native trees or shrubs and a lovely native ground cover, or designate specific areas of your landscape to natives. There are many options.

NATIVES AT THE PLANT SALE

The May 9th Plant Sale offers a variety of native trees and shrubs. Choose from a beautiful selection of local treasures, and learn about native plants appropriate for rain gardens.

Resources

[WSU NorthWest Plants Database](#)

[WSU Landscaping with Native Plants](#)

[Washington Native Plant Society](#)

[King County Native Plant Guide](#)



The Case of the Moss in the Grass

Notes from the Plant Clinic • Digger Spade, MG Plant Detective

WE LIVE IN the land of moss, lichens and slugs. Three things it is hard for a gardener to love. For those with urban lawns, this is the time of year that the grass is beginning to grow, and for many the light green patches of moss are all too apparent. So no wonder the clients, two in a row, wanted to know the secret to a moss free lawn.

Now I have a country lawn with lots of mossy patches but there's no social pressure to do anything about it and by the middle of summer it's back to mostly grass. Not an acceptable strategy for the clients.

First, find out what kind of soil, pH, shade and fertility the grass is exposed to. Grass likes well drained, fairly neutral, sunny locations and modest applications of fertilizer.

adding too much isn't a good idea. A soil analysis should indicate how much is needed.

Next, overseed with a good quality of grass mix suitable for this area, a 70/30 mix of perennial rye and fine fescue is a good choice. Mixing the seed with potting soil or a sand peat moss mix will help it get a good start.

Fertilize lightly but 4-5 times a year between April and Halloween and maintain good moisture till the new grass is established.

Use no phosphate fertilizers in the Lake Whatcom watershed. It's the law!



Moss likes heavy wet soils, acidic conditions and shade, no need for fertilizer. So the long term solution starts with an assessment of the location and a program to alter it to suit the grass and give it a chance to thrive. That involves determining the soil type, pH and fertility. If the area is heavily shaded it may be best to switch from lawn to a shade tolerant ground cover. Moss has too big an edge there.

To start, get a soil analysis. Then, it might pay to de-thatch the lawn and dispose of the moss that is removed. Killing the moss first with an iron compound may help.

If the soil is heavily compacted a plug aerator will remove plugs and the holes can be filled with a top dressing of sand. This helps drainage, reduces compaction and lets nutrients get into the soil, gradually improving root growth.

On a small area, removing the moss and aerating with a garden fork could do the job, resulting in a patch with good tilth if some good compost is included.

If the pH is too low, 5.5 or lower, an application of dolomitic lime will help. Dolomitic lime is slow acting, but

Given the right conditions grass will win. Moss doesn't kill it, but it can sure make it hard for a young blade to prosper.

Resources

[WSU Soil Testing for Home Gardeners](#)

[WSU Removing Moss from Your Lawn](#)

DIAGNOSTIC PLANT CLINIC

The Master Gardeners Diagnostic Plant Clinic is open Monday - Friday at the Extension office.

Bring sections of diseased plants or pest samples in closed plastic bags for diagnosis and advice at no cost.

Clinic Hotline: (360) 676-6736, ext. 11

You can also email your plant problems with digital photos to the Clinic Desk: mg.whatcom@wsu.edu

If we don't have an answer, we have the resources of Washington State University and the USDA to help us find out exactly what's bothering that prized plant of yours.



2015
International
Year of Soils



Soil Building • Amberose Kelley, Master Composter & Recyclers

International Year of Soils April: Soils Clean and Capture Water

This topic is near and dear to my heart. Like most Washingtonians, I care about the state of our sound, our streams, and our salmon.

Before there were cities in Washington, most of our rain-fall was absorbed into the soil. Today, that rain water flows over concrete, picking up oil, fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants. Stormwater is the #1 polluter of Puget Sound.

Soil can purify this polluted stormwater. It acts as a physical, chemical and biological filter, trapping contaminants and sometimes decomposing them with the aid of bacteria and fungi. Creating compost and building healthy soils is about more than reducing waste or nourishing plants—it is at the very heart of sustainability and the protection of our natural resources.

Watch the video: youtube.com/watch?v=ZwQeTJFeedk

Master Composters/Recyclers

In March, the Master Composter/Recycler Program conducted its first tabling event at **Dirt Fest 2015!** hosted by Common Threads. Compost caterpillars were assembled, demonstrations unveiled, and little wormies found new homes with Birchwood Elementary schoolers. Here's to Dirt Fest 2016!

What else have we been up to?

- Talking organics with the **Towards Zero Waste** team.
- Planning a **soil conservation demo** plot at Hovander. This would complement the new composting demo Site
- Helping Birchwood Elementary pre-schoolers set up a **worm bin**.



Worm composting at Dirt Fest!

There are a few coveted spots remaining in the Master Composter/Recycler Program. Classes start April 22.

[Apply Today!](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MCRApp) [Surveymonkey.com/s/MCRApp](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MCRApp)

COMPOSTING AT THE PLANT SALE

Don't miss our booth at the plant sale! Master Composter/Recyclers will be conducting demonstrations on vermicomposting and backyard composting. There will also be redworms available for sale and wormy exploration and crafts for the kids!

As Exciting as Watching Grass Grow...

Unless You Are Playing in the Dirt • Pamela Wild, MG 2008

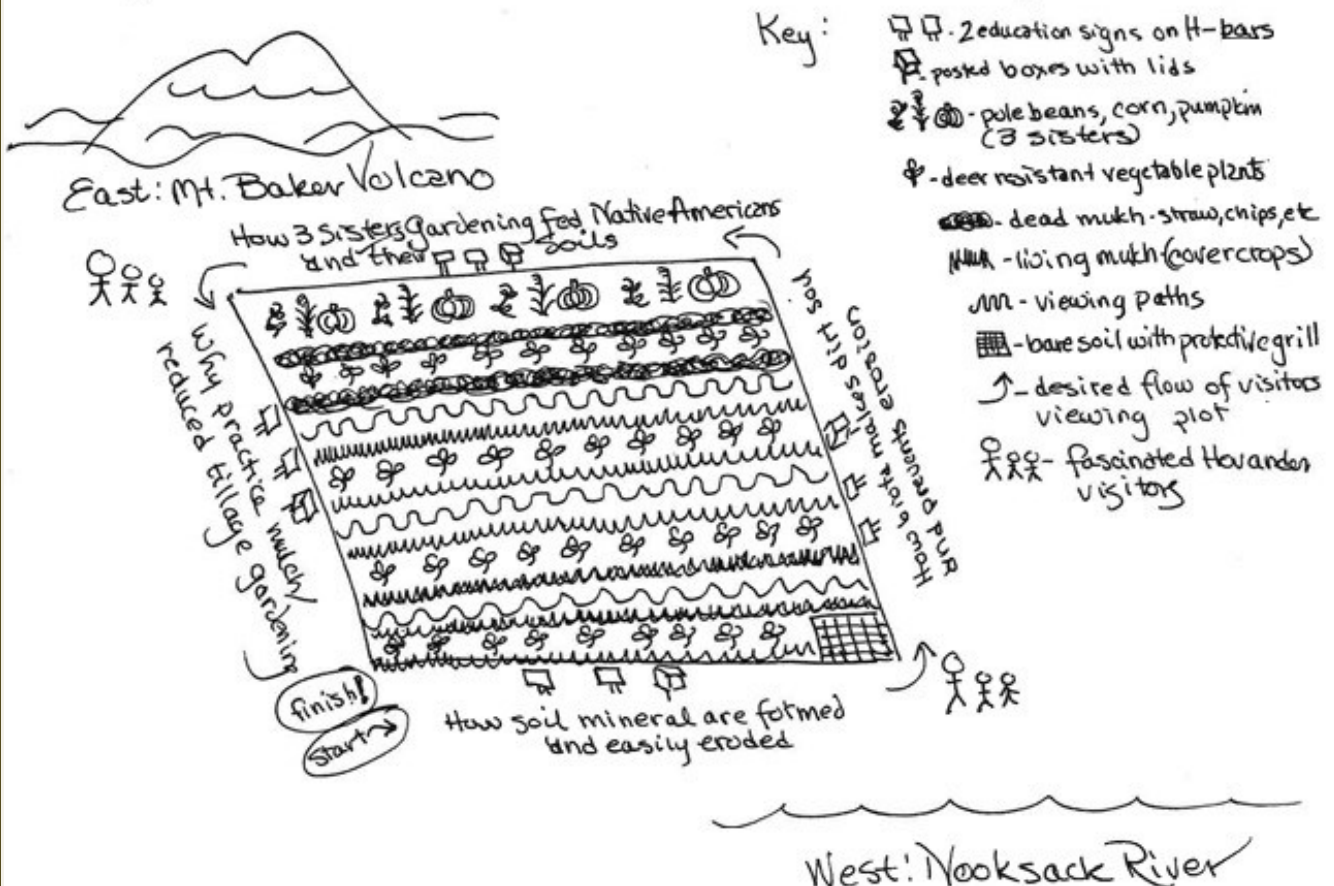
THIS IS the fifth and final article relating some of my experiences tending the Hovander Cover Crop plot and an idea that resulted from talking to visitors. The previous article gave examples of how two signs and a posted box expands and diversifies the demonstration gardens' outreach to that of a "Nature of Horticulture Center". Below is a design turning the cover crop plot into an interactive, roofless "exhibit" promoting soil stewardship through the use of mulch and reduced tillage, and why these practices are vital for the home garden and feeding our very populated planet.

This draft has two signs and a posted box on each side of the plot. While all of this might not occur the first year, it

reflects our enthusiasm for comprehensive soil education.

The west-side of the plot will face Mount Baker, with the Nooksack River to the visitors' backs. The two signs will utilize the volcano and the river's dynamics to describe how soil minerals are slowly formed and how they can be quickly swept away. With bare soil in a corner of the plot (and well protected from animals by a screen cover), the laminated paper in the posted box will encourage visitors to "play in dirt", tactilely exploring its texture, composition and vulnerability.

DRAFT: Soil Stewardship Demo Plot Layout - April 1, 2015 - by Pamela Wild, '08





As Exciting as Watching Grass Grow...

Another side will tell the story of what turns dirt into soil: biota. The two signs will relate how the thousands of species, and the billions of micro- and macro-organisms in a handful of soil, feed and protect all plant life. The laminated paper in the posted box will teach about soil biota through smell and tell how to further investigate their home's soil biota.

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On the third side will be a row of corn, pole beans and pumpkins, and the two signs will describe how Native Americans protected and nurtured their soil with Three Sisters gardening. The posted box will include seeds packages stapled to printed instructions encouraging visitors to try Three Sisters with their own garden

Reading references for children and adults telling the stories of humans' history with soil could include:

Out of the Dust
Grapes of Wrath
The Man Who Planted Trees,
The Worst of Bad Times
Dirt: The Erosion of Civilization
Out of the Earth.

On the final side of the plot, two signs will explain how the various dead and living mulches feed and protect the soil organisms that in turn feed and protect the rows of growing garden plants. The posted box's laminated paper will encourage exploring between the rows and why a gardener would choose one or several types of mulch. The final goal of this activity, indeed, the entire demo plot, is to encourage practicing with dead or living mulch/

reduced tillage in their own home gardens. WSU resources will be provided.

There will be many changes, big and small, that will be tried and reworked as we strive to embrace soil history, politics, literature, folklore, biology, geology, meteorology, topography, geography to develop a motivating, interactive plot. We will be "growing" the education tools of the plot as much as we will be growing the cover crops.

If the challenge of teaching soil stewardship interests you, please contact me and become a part of this team effort. There are many tasks, big and small, that need your help. Thank you.

Pamela Wild
(360) 671-1123
wildandrich@msn.com

The author wishes to thank Sue Blake and Amberose Kelley for the following resources that helped inspire the ideas described in this article. They include, but aren't limited to: Gross and Zimmerman's Interpretive Centers: The History, Design and Development of Nature and Visitor Centers; Evans and Evans' The Nature Center Book: How to Create and Nurture a Nature Center in Your Community; Moscardo, Ballantyne and Hughes' Designing Interpretive Signs: Principles in Practice; Soil Science Society of America's "2015: Year of the Soils" website; University of New Mexico's Soil Education website; Smithsonian Institute's Dig it! The Secrets of Soil website.