

Whatcom County Master Gardeners

May 2015

# Weeders Digest



Garden Tours & Other Events

Welcoming a new MG Class

Springtime in the Clinic

Master Composters Have Arrived



# From the Coordinator's Desk...

Beth Chisholm

**Congratulation to the 2015 Master Gardener class.** All 22 students successfully completed the course and passed the final exam with flying colors. Great job. This group of interns is full of energy, ideas and passion for sustainable gardening, public education and community involvement.

**Here are a few of the projects that they have already started:**

Working with Shuksan middle school students at Lydia Place Garden:  
Brendon Orth-Sheridan, Kay Fast, Shawn Flaherty

Merdian Middle school garden and afterschool garden club:  
Marla Rodgers, Barbara Brown

Northwest Youth Services WE GROW vocational garden:  
Penny McGinty, Erin Meyer 2014, Judy Wayt 2014, Suneeta Eisenburg 2014

Homeport learning center gardens: Karen Saupe

Foodbank Garden Project mentors:  
Ayesha Brookshier, Judy Kasper, Jesper Pfeil, Wendy Blum, Shawn Flaherty

**MG Class of 2015 Hovander Projects include:**

Composting demonstration— Amberose Kelley

Pollinator garden— Mary Smith

Children's Story Garden— Ayn Balback, Pam Newland and Kay Fast (all 2015) have taken a leadership role at the Children's story garden this season. Harriet and Kathy will advise them

**Other MGs working in schools include:**

Parkview elementary afterschool garden club - Daniel Menck 2014

Beach Elementary school garden - Ginny Winfield

Kendall Elementary classroom worm bins - Amberose Kelley 2015

**See you at the Plant Sale!**

**Whatcom County Master Gardener Program**

[whatcom.wsu.edu/mastergardener](http://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**

<b>Drew Betz</b>	County Director
<b>Chris Benedict</b>	Agriculture Educator
<b>Beth Chisholm</b>	Master Gardeners & Community First Gardens Project
<b>Amberose Kelley</b>	Master Composter/Recyclers
<b>Cheryl Kahle</b>	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](mailto: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.



Cover photo taken by Doug Bascom, MG 2009  
"Dogwood"

# Meet the MG Class of 2015

Meet a Master Gardener



**A wonderful group!**

**Keep an eye out for these fine faces in the Plant Clinic and at Hovander as they complete their internships.**

# MG & Foundation News

News, Events and Activities for April



## MG Foundation President's Message

May is a pretty spectacular month for gardening, not only in our own yards and gardens but in the many delightful gardens and projects at Hovander. It's amazing how quickly everything falls into place and a new growing season begins under the experienced hands of our Hovander veterans. Opening day was a joyful reunion with an amazing amount of delicious food appearing for the coffee break. The new class of MG's had to be impressed.

And then, there is all the sowing of seeds, transplanting, potting, propagation, care and nurturing of the plants that become the largest part of the annual Whatcom County Master Gardener Foundation Plant Sale. It is coming up quickly thanks to the tireless work of many.

Whew! It's a very busy time for everyone. The new class of MG's is out of the classroom and onto the volunteer phase of their training. Their help and expertise is appreciated.

The Roeder home volunteers have weeded and mulched and pruned and planted to make sure everything is ready for the open house and plant sale on May 17th from 11-3. See the article in this newsletter for more details.

On another note, Kaye Dykas has been our "Sunshine Committee" for many years. She does a lovely job of sending cards and caring thoughts and encouragement or cheer for those MG's who are in need of a little care and support. If you know of any of our MG's that would benefit from this, please Let Kaye know at: [kdykas@telcomplus.net](mailto:kdykas@telcomplus.net)


*"We come from the earth, we return to the earth and in between we garden."*

Enjoy our spring.

Linda Burshia Battle, MGF President

No MG Foundation General Meeting **this month -**

**See you at the May 9 Plant Sale!!!**



# Calendar of Events

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## MONTHLY

### Plant ID Study Group

Thursday, May 28 • 9 am - 11 am • 1155 Clarkson Lane, Ferndale

We will meet in May at the home of Karen Gilliam. As many of you know, Karen's home is a rich perennial collection set in a native plant environment. This is an opportunity to view her garden as a follow-up to the frenzy of that March potting day for the Plant Sale. Dress warmly and wear appropriate shoes for dewy grass and garden paths. Also, it is useful to take notes about her garden perennials (or you will wish you had). Parking is across road or as directed. See you there!

## WORKSHOPS & PROJECTS

### Annuals for Everyone

Wednesday, May 13 & 20 • 9 am • The Greenhouse at Hovander

After the plant sale the greenhouse will be available for our demo project "Annuals for Everyone." All who are interested are welcome to join us. We will be working on our drip irrigation system, getting pots ready, and planning our plant layout. On May 20th we will plant our flowers.

Arlene Dangelmaier: [eadangelmaier@comcast.net](mailto:eadangelmaier@comcast.net)

### Pulse on Health

Friday, May 15 • 9 am - 12 pm

WSU Research Station Center, 16650 State Route 536, Mount Vernon

**FREE WORKSHOP** Space Limited, Reserve Now: [pulseonhealth.brownpapertickets.com](http://pulseonhealth.brownpapertickets.com)

Jody Dylan, Award winning science teacher from Mt Erie Elementary School will present on successful strategies and techniques for incorporating 4th grade garden-based, STEM-focused curriculum in classroom learning.

## EVENTS

### Annual Backyard Habitat & Native Flora Fair

Saturday, May 16 • 10 am - 3 pm • Fairhaven Village Green


Master Gardeners will be at the Native Flora Fair! Come learn how to make your yard, school, or business landscape wildlife friendly and certify your landscape with the National Wildlife Federation.

### Sustainable Living Festival

Saturday, June 27 • 10 am - 4 pm •

### Northwest Fair

August 17—22



# Calendar of Events

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## TOURS

### Roeder Home Open House, Garden Tour and Plant Sale

Sunday, May 17 • 11 am - 3 pm

Historic Roeder Home and Urban Garden • 2600 Sunset Dr. at the end of Broadway

The Whatcom County Master Gardeners would like to invite you to see how we have restored the gardens over the last three years. We have turned it into a demonstration garden with plants labeled. The home will be open for free tours as well. Have you seen this beautiful 1910 craftsman?! This home was given to the Whatcom County Parks in 1971 and is used for many community events and rented for weddings. **There will be several great plants for sale and all proceeds benefit the Master Gardener program.** Cash or check accepted. Make checks payable to: Whatcom Master Gardeners Foundation.

### Far Reaches Farm

[farreachesfarm.com](http://farreachesfarm.com)

June 11 • Leave at 7 am • Meet at Sports Authority parking lot (Bellis Fair Mall)

Bus Fee: \$30.60

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. Make checks payable to: Whatcom Master Gardeners Foundation, mailed to: Judy Boxx, 270 E Laurel, Bellingham WA 98226

### Heronswood Garden

[heronswood.com](http://heronswood.com)

July 9 • Leave at 7 am • Meet at Sports Authority parking lot (Bellis Fair Mall)

Bus Fee: \$35

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! Make checks payable to: Whatcom Master Gardeners Foundation, mailed to: Judy Boxx, 270 E Laurel, Bellingham WA 98226

Barb Schickler



# From the Clinic Desk

Jeff Dodson

## HELLO EVERYONE

Thank you for the renewed interest of those of you that came around to find out how the clinic is changing. The invitation stands for the rest of you to do the same.

Several interesting changes are coming about at the Whatcom Master Gardener Clinic. Firstly, plans are underway to relocate the desk itself, the reference material associated with the clinic and some of its workspace out from the center of the Extension Office common area. Its new home will be back against the wall that delineates the common area from Beth and Amber's office. Also in the plans are some cubical walls that will help make the clinic a place where Master Gardener clinicians and their clients can talk without disturbing the rest of the people in the office area. In addition, a new phone system is in the works that will allow more flexibility and efficiency in receiving inquiries, gathering information and managing the calls once the client has been helped.

You may have noticed that we are down to using one computer. An emergency arose that necessitated the second monitor be utilized in another office. I am told that replacement monitor is in the works. In the meantime, we are managing quite well but miss the added flexibility of being able to work on several client inquiries at a time.

Next, there has been well-founded concern that the electronic system we adopted to store and manage the data generated by the day-to-day workings of the clinic is too cumbersome, difficult and confusing to work with. Apparently, we are not the only county with this experience as many of the others using this system are now abandoning it. Our solution to date is to revert to the former method of storing information by filing it as a hard copy form instead of electronically.

Lastly, I want to mention an opening for a person or persons to work on a project that will benefit us all. As you may know, our entomology collection serves us in the clinic as a learning, teaching and research tool for Master Gardeners and clients. Other agencies such as universities and agriculture departments have expressed interest in our collection as a research tool for their work, too. However, before they can do that, we need to do some maintenance on the organization and labelling of the insects now residing in our display boxes. It is an opportunity to learn more about bugs and what goes into collecting and labelling them while simultaneously amassing volunteer hours. As an amateur bug aficionado, I can tell you entomologists can be a persnickety lot when it comes to collections. However, (just how many "Howevers" do you think I can fit into one paragraph?) the guidelines for what needs to be done to make collections acceptable to researchers and their ilk are clearly defined and so just need to be carried out. Look to me to help you with this. However,....I don't really have a However to go here, I just wanted to add another However for those keeping track.

Best regards to all,

Jeff



# The Case of the Mutating Maple

## Digger Spade, MG Plant Detective

**THE CLIENT** brought in two small branches. One had small green maple leaves, the other had highly divided leaves that were green in the center with pink and whitish trimming around the edges.

His question: how come the Japanese maple “Butterfly” that he had planted 15 years ago and until last year had only the colorful leaves it was supposed to have had started to produce the quite ordinary looking green leaves?

We had no quick answer. We would look into it and get back to him. By poking around on the internet we found that “Butterfly” was a relatively old cultivar originating in Japan. But we couldn’t find out how it was produced. It could have been produced by treating seeds with radiation or colchicine, growing up seedlings and selecting ones that were unusual, or it could have arisen by accidental mutation. Or it may have formed at a graft union when a shoot formed with some cells from the scion and some from the root stock.

These kind of variegated plants are classed as **CHIMERAS**, meaning that some of their tissues have one genetic origin and others have a different origin.

The growing tip of a shoot called the meristem contains three layers of tissue. New cells are formed at the tip and migrate out to form side shoots and leaves. So if a cell at the very tip of one of these layers mutates or is derived from a different parent (as in a graft chimera) the layer it gives rise to will have a different character than those derived from the other layers.

We couldn’t find out which layer or layers were mutated in the “Butterfly” but that wouldn’t concern the client. The answer to his question was that some of the new shoots in his tree had reverted to a parental form. The chimera was unstable though it had not chosen to show it for 15 years. His option if he wanted to keep it as a “Butterfly” was to prune out all of the green-only shoots. If left alone the tree might revert to all green shoots.

Since the trunk and branches are a nice green shade he may still like it first as a mix of contrasting leaf forms and then as a robust green-only tree.

So we gave the client this information and in case he wanted to know a lot about chimeras we gave him a link to a presentation on the topic. Since variation is a big deal in horticulture it was fun getting to know more about it.

### Resources

[Using clones in vegetative propagation:  
dept.ca.uky.edu/PLS440/schedule/variationinclone.pdf](http://dept.ca.uky.edu/PLS440/schedule/variationinclone.pdf)



# The Case of the Crispy Callunas

## Digger Spade, MG Plant Detective

**THE CLIENT** came in with a sample. The question, “What’s wrong with my heather?” The answer was obvious, no re-search needed.

“It’s dead.”

When you can break off brittle twigs there is little doubt.

But the next question, not so easy: “What killed it?”

The client told us that the heather was planted at least five years ago, had grown well and flowered every year. It had seemed OK last summer but now most of the plant was dead, though part still had leaves and flowers. Several other heathers had similar but lesser damage.

Interestingly, in hikes around the neighborhood we had noticed quite a few heathers with similar symptoms, though couldn’t be sure about their condition last year.

Heathers are generally pretty healthy but they are subject to a few diseases. Root and crown rots caused by Pythium species, *Phytophthora cinnamoni* and Armillaria root rot might be a factor. The client described the site as a fairly steep slope very well drained, which would argue against the P options. Armillaria also seemed unlikely but could be checked for by looking under the bark for fungal plaques at soil level or below.

So what is left? November 2014 might be the cause. We had several days of dry, unusually cold and breezy weather early in the month. The cold killed quite a few perennial plants that were still growing because of the pleasant fall weather that preceded it. Even seedling red cedar were killed this winter. The leaves on many trees froze before they could senesce, turned brown and dried up before dropping. This scenario has played out for several years now and plant damage has sometimes been extensive. If November weather killed the heather, we can expect to see more examples as the spring unfolds. Even plants that are typically hardy here can be caught with their sap up, and if that freezes there can be lots of cell damage. The same

kind of damage that can kill plants in pots when their roots freeze.

So we told the client how to check for what we thought was the unlikely possibility of a root or fungal disease and to cut back into plant to see if there is healthy tissue in the larger stems. If he pulled up a plant we asked him to bring it in so we could check the condition of roots and main stems. Unfortunately, heathers don’t seem to grow back from heavy pruning so removing and replacing the severely affected plants may be the only solution. Then, knowing whether diseases were a problem is important so that something other than heather can be planted.



Corbett’s Red Scotch Heather  
*Calluna vulgaris* “Corbett’s Red”  
WSU