

Weeders' Digest



- Washington's Drought
- Plant Sale Highlights
- Hovander Soil Tests
- Clinic Happenings
- Master Composters

From the Coordinator's Desk...

Beth Chisholm

Drought Report

As WSU master gardeners it will be our job this growing season to help others in our community understand and follow water saving techniques both in the garden and at home. It is critical that we educate about the importance of irrigation for commercial crops and instream flows for fish. I'm sure you are all aware that the Governor has declared a statewide drought for all of Washington.

Here is his message:

On Friday, May 15, Gov. Jay Inslee declared a statewide drought for Washington. Although we have had average to above average precipitation this year, there has been significantly less snowpack due to higher than normal temperatures. This will affect water supplies for irrigation and stream flows that depend on melting snowpack throughout the summer and early fall.

In communities where a drought has been declared, local and state officials may recommend water conservation measures to reduce water use. Water restrictions can affect not only members of the agricultural communities – but all individuals with water privileges. For more information on water recommendations or restrictions, please contact your local water authorities.

Using water efficiently plays an important role in ensuring that the world has a consistently adequate water supply. It is up to each individual to use water wisely, in order to play an active role in curbing water waste. Due to climate variability, occurrences of drought conditions are likely to increase – so it is important to implement water saving methods, technologies, and practices at all times.

(Continued)

**Cover photo taken by Suneeta Eisenberg, MG 2014
"Honeymoon"**

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.

From the Coordinator's Desk...

Beth Chisholm

Locally we can choose drought tolerant species, mulch, install drip irrigation, use rain barrels, water in early morning or late evening, and curb the habit of watering our lawns.

Important Facts to Remember

- Most plants in most areas in Washington need water in the summer.
- Frequent, shallow waterings lead to shallow roots. Shallow roots lead to more rapid stress under drought or hot conditions.
- Too much water is as bad as, or worse than, too little. Rate of water application should be no more rapid than the rate at which the soil can absorb it.
- Theoretically, outside watering can be accomplished any time of day, but it is more efficient to water at night or in the very early morning, when evaporation is low. During a drought, watering may be restricted to specific times on scheduled days.
- Fertilizer spread around plants (including lawns) does absolutely no good at all unless it is dissolved in water. Therefore, fertilizers have to be watered in, and soils have to be moist to get the full effect of the fertilizer application.

To learn more visit WSU's dedicated webpage to this issue: drought.wsu.edu/tools-resources/home-garden/

City of Bellingham Water Resources page: www.cob.org/services/environment/conservation/outdoor-water-conservation.aspx



Rain Garden



Rain Barrel



From the Coordinator's Desk...

Beth Chisholm

Hovander Update

Another season at Hovander is underway.

The demonstration gardens are getting rooted for a new season. Please take a look at the NEW Hovander Demo garden Brochure

GREEN HOUSE—Arlene Dangelmaier is once again leading a greenhouse project “Annuals for Everyone”

CHILDREN'S STORY GARDEN—leadership is transitioning from Harriet Arkley and Kathy Barrett to Pam Newland, Ayn Balback & Kay Fast. This season we will not offer veggie patrol. Instead the team will work with special groups and visitors in the garden. 4H clubs, school groups and families are welcome on Wednesdays in the garden

HERB GARDEN- Sandy Bowens is adding some newer Herbs to the collection.

DAHLIA GARDEN- Dick Porter

WEED IDENTIFICATION GARDEN- Janis Walworth

CULINARY HERB GARDEN- Peg Nathon & Shelia Reid

VEGETABLE GARDEN- David Simonson

NATIVE PLANT GARDEN- Kendra Bradford

ANNUAL GARDEN—Elaine Gaeta & Sandy Needham – they are looking for helpers

PERENNIAL GARDEN – Barb Schmidt

New garden projects going in near the pumpkin/ corn patch—keep a keen eye for the new projects. I am very excited to see how all the demonstrations unfold this season.

Composting Demonstration – Amberose Kelley & Master Composter/Recycler volunteers

Low Till Project; Pamela Wild, Dak Jamison, Janet Bieber

“Bee-U-tiful” Pollinator garden- Mary Smith & Laurel Baldwin

Rain water catchment/ water conservation demo (garden sheds) – Satria Brunnemer

2015 Plant Sale Highlights





THANK YOU!

Over 50 Whatcom Master Gardeners along with spouses, friends and family contributed hundreds of volunteer hours to this year's sale. Many thanks to all of you!!

In addition to your sweat equity, wisdom, and tenacity we are also thankful for the ongoing support of Whatcom County Parks Dept as our host site for the sale and all things related to our Demonstration gardens.

Special thanks to our vendors and non-profit organizations who help round out the sale with more plants, programs and activities

Sunbreak Nursery

Food Coop Cordata bakery & deli

Launching Success Learning Store

Windpoppy Farm

Birdhouses by George

Whatcom Conservation District

Shady Pond Tree Farm

Cahill Enterprise (Upcycled Garden Art)

Mt Baker Bee Keepers

WSU Master Composters/ Recyclers

GENEROUS Community Partners

We have received lots of wonderful plant donations in the past few weeks:

Master gardeners donated approximately 100 TOMATO PLANTS –this is a great way for community gardeners to grow more tomatoes for church & community meal programs for those in need.

Windy Meadows Nursery <http://coco-coir.com/> donated 990 beautiful plant starts to WSU Extension

30 flats of tomatoes

15 flats of beans

4 flats of corn

6 flats of broccoli

These plants were distributed to community gardens throughout Whatcom County and to clients at the Ferndale and Bellingham Food banks

Special thanks to owner Scott Titus for making this possible and to those who volunteered to shuttle and tend to plants!!

Christ the King Giving Garden—John Williams and his crew of volunteers had an abundance of pepper plants. We distributed 200 pepper plants to schools and community groups.

MG & Foundation News

News, Events and Activities for April



MG Foundation President's Message

The build up to the annual Whatcom County Master Gardeners Plant Sale was as exciting and labor intensive as always and then it's over! It plays out like an orchestra building up to a climatic crescendo and then a gradual fade away as everything is taken down and put away. It's not anti-climactic but the beat does change to a slower and more reflective one. The plant sale provides the majority of the funding for the foundation and is a vital project. This year's revenues may even have exceeded our expectations. We had a second, more abbreviated, but brisk sale at the Roeder Home Open House on the Sunday following the plant sale. Another successful year, thanks to many dedicated Master Gardeners.

The plant sale requires a tremendous amount of planning and work and many, many volunteers lend a hand or two or three! To say "Thank You" does not seem adequate for this amazing group of skilled and conscientious people.

Fortunately, for me, I recently read an interesting article entitled "Why Do We Experience Awe"...that often positive feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends our understanding of the world. Awe is the ultimate collective emotion for it motivates people to do things that enhance the greater good.

So, I say thank, you and that I am in awe of each and every one of you for your selfless dedication for something that is much larger than any one of us. You, as Master Gardeners are an awe-inspiring and beautiful garden of dedicated and altruistic gardeners. You make our world and our gardens more lovely and a better place to be.

Linda Burshia Battle, MGF President

Foundation Announcement

This fall the Foundation Board will have two open Member-At-Large seats that are often filled by the new class of MG's. The commitment involves attending a board meeting the first Thursday of every month from 10-12 in the extension office. It is a great opportunity to learn more about the foundation and to serve on the board. The bylaws state "Two At-Large members shall participate in board meetings accepting responsibility for ad hoc efforts of the Board as assigned". Julie Turner and Dave Keller will be vacating those seats and would enjoy talking to anyone interested in those positions. These positions are open to anyone from any class. Let any of the board members know if you have an interest or have questions.



Calendar of Events

MONTHLY

Plant ID Study Group

Thursday, June 25 • 9 am - 11 am • North Whatcom Park Hertz Trailhead

About 15 Participants spent several hours on May 28th touring Karen and Jerry Gilliam's property for large native trees and shrubs and a garden full of perennials ideal for shade.

Our next session will be at North Whatcom Park trailhead. Follow this link for a map:

<http://bit.ly/1G8D2yr>

A parking lot and restroom are handy. This site has many native specimens along a lovely level walk. As usual, a native plant book is helpful for reference (I.E. Pojar's handy book).

These sessions are great for friends, relatives and public participation. Be prepared for cool NW morning weather.

Karen Gilliam: 384-4562, **Louise Granger:** 592-5316

WORKSHOPS, PROJECTS & VOLUNTEER

Christ the King Work Parties

Tuesdays • 9 am - noon • Hannegan Rd next to Hannegan seafood

Mondays • 5:30 pm - 7 pm

Christ the King has a 1 acre Giving Garden where they grow fresh produce for their foodbank:

www.ctkbellingham.com/foodbank/

John Williams and his volunteer crew work hard to plant and harvest food annually. They could use some extra hands over the next week

For details contact **John Williams:** sawdad86@gmail.com, or show up!

Sustainable Living Festival

Saturday, June 27 • 10 am - 4 pm • Corner of Laurel & State St

Sustainable Connections is hosting music, a kids corner and a beer garden. Master Composter Recyclers will have an interactive tent. Don't miss it!

EVENTS

Northwest Fair

August 17—22

The theme for this year's MG tent is soil conservation! Happy International Year of Soils.



Calendar of Events

TOURS

Far Reaches Farm

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

Barb Schickler

Green Earth Technology

June 20 • 10 am - 11:30 am • 774 Meadowlark Dr, Lynden, WA

Ever wonder what happens to the food scraps in your FoodPlus! bin? Learn all about the process of large-scale, aerobic composting and the farm-to-table-to-farm cycle made possible by our own local commercial composting facility.

RSVP Amberose Kelley: a.kelley@wsu.edu

Heronswood Garden

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

The Value in a Soil Test

Chris Benedict, Whatcom Agriculture Educator/Agent

Everyone passing through the Master Gardener Program is trained on interpreting soil test results. Having this information can improve your plants, limit the impact that over fertilization can have on our environment, and can save you money. It is hard, though, to always see the real dollar value of paying the \$15-\$45 for a test, so I wanted to summarize an experience we had recently with some soil tests.

The Value in Soil Testing

Soil samples from a few beds at Hovander were sent in to evaluate the nutrient content. Results showed high level of many nutrients, which is common in managed soils that are annually amended as is the case at Hovander. This is particularly true when organic sources such as compost are used over a long time. The love from volunteers out there had paid off! What the results showed is that no further nutrient source would be needed in these beds for at least a year (maybe 2-3); proving that getting your soil tested can save you money AND the time needed to apply amendments. Also, samples were taken from several areas and we found high variability across the samples. This underscores the importance of taking soil samples from areas that you intend to *manage* differently. This could be annual beds vs. perennial beds or high feeding vegetables crops vs. vegetables that require less nutrients. Really the difficulty is in making the decision on how complicated you want to make it and how much money you are willing to pay for the testing. Information is **extremely** powerful in this case.

As a follow up, several interested Hovander volunteers got together to discuss the results from the lab over breakfast one morning (my huevos were wonderful of course). The group came up with some great ideas on how to use these results as a beginning point for a long-term monitoring of soils at Hovander. Additionally, we discussed plans to make the annual testing of Hovander soils part of the new Master Gardener class. Students will take soil samples, evaluate the results, and develop amendment recommendations as part of the class. We also will be mapping out Hovander to help with plant rotations year to year and with the soil sampling.

What You Get

Each lab has different costs associated with testing packages, so knowing ahead of time what you are looking for is helpful and will help you to navigate through the decision making process. Additionally, each lab will display the results in a different manner, but most importantly is knowing how they analyze the soils. In acidic soils, like we have in western Washington, we use the Bray method for measuring elements like phosphorous. If you send the soil to a lab that does not normally handle these types of soils, you will get an incorrect lab result. Some labs will supply you with recommendations while others may charge for the service, but keep cognizant of where these recommendations come from and whether they are directly applicable to this area.

So in short, soil tests cost very little in the big picture and can really help you to make sound management decisions when it comes to caring for your soil and plants. Below are some additional resources for anyone looking to delve deeper into managing their soils.

More Information

A Home Gardeners Guide to Soils and Fertilizers

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/EM063E/EM063E.pdf>

Soil Fertility in Organic systems: A Guide for Gardeners and Small Acreage Farmers

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/PNW646/PNW646.pdf>
<http://puyallup.wsu.edu/soils/gardening/>

A Listing of Local Labs

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/documents/SoilTestingLocalLabs.pdf>





From the Clinic Desk

Jeff Dodson, MG 2014

HELLO EVERYONE, from the Clinic Desk.

A man walked into a prison, checked in with the appropriate authorities and was granted entrance into a restricted area where he sat and talked to a prisoner for a while. Upon leaving, another man who had been watching the visitor approached him and said, "I know this is a restricted visitation site and only relatives of the prisoners are allowed to talk to them. If you don't mind, what is your relationship to that prisoner?" The visitor answered, "Brothers and sisters, I have none, but that man's father was my father's son?" Can you answer this riddle? Do riddles interest you? When I was a kid I could not get enough of Sherlock Holmes, Father Brown, The Hardy Boys, and, yes, even Nancy Drew. Now I find myself working weekly on riddles in the real world. The Master Gardener Clinic provides this sort of interesting, educational, fun challenge each time I spend time there. It can do the same for you. Lately, the new interns to our ranks have been coming in for their orientation to the basic workings and how-to's of the clinic. When asked, each and every one of them noted how nervous and ill-prepared they felt for clinic work. By the way, this is the same answer I got when I asked veteran MGs who have come in to learn more about the clinic. By the time our sessions are done, the very same people mention how they are no longer spooky about working in the clinic. Dubious? Come and see.

In the recent Plant Sale some of our Master Gardeners that have spent time in the clinic were able to exercise their knowledge by helping assess the health of the donated plants and helping identify some of the plants that were "unknowns". We even had several mystery insects brought in from MGs that found them on sale material. Nothing too scary (viburnum leaf beetles, webworms, aphids) but we held out the plants from the Plant Sale that

housed these insects. To be fair, I should mention that we left in the plants on which we found green lacewings and ladybugs.

To help answer questions surrounding the workings of the clinic, there is a new reference notebook of information for volunteers sitting on the desk. Please take a look at it whenever you like. It is meant to be a dynamic reference so please feel free to make suggestions to the Master Gardener Coordinator (Beth) or Master Gardener Clinic Manager (myself) as to what you feel might be appropriate to add to it or remove from it. Eventually, we will have a second notebook that can be checked out and taken home for those of you that would like to pursue clinic interests in more depth.

Best regards to all,

Jeff



The Case of the



Digger Spade, MG Plant Detective

IN EARLY MAY a client brought in a few leaves from his Bosc pear tree. He said probably half the leaves on the tree were affected. Neither Digger nor any Associate had seen the exact thing before. The leaves were peppered with little galls about a millimeter or two in diameter and some larger raised areas - the sort of thing that might be due to a leaf miner or a fungal infection; or something else? We told the client we would do some research and get back to him.

Under the microscope we opened up some of the bumps and found nothing. Clearly the middle layer of the leaf (mesophyll) was gone but even under high power we didn't find an occupant and there wasn't anything that looked like fungal growth. The surface of each bump on the underside had a small depression that looked like an escape hatch. That pointed to an insect and a very small one at that: it had to be mite sized.

The client had told us that when the leaves first emerged he had seen very small red spots on ones that now had turned into blisters. Searching for "Pear mites WSU" provided two excellent publication that provided the information we needed and that we could send to the client. One was for Pear Blister Mites the other for Pear Rust mites. Our choice was the former. Further checking under the microscope did reveal something that looked like a very small transparent caterpillar with tiny front legs just like the one shown in the publication's photo gallery. It turned out that the holes in the blisters are entry points created by the mites as the blisters are used by second and future generations to get into the leaf and feed, as well as to exit from as mature mites.

The client had, quite naturally, wanted to know what to do about the problem. So we cranked up the Pesticide Information Center Online (PICOL), the WSU pesticide data base, to find out what would be available. There are 14 insecticides available to homeowners for managing blister mites including horticultural oils, sulfur, carbaryl and permethrin. This year the fruit may be damaged but aggressive control with summer, dormant season and early spring treatments will probably fix things for next year



Pear leaf blister mite galls (E. Beers)



Pearleaf blister mites (E. Beers)

For Blister Mites see: <http://jenny.tfrec.wsu.edu/opm/displaySpecies.php?pn=330>

For Rust mites see: <http://jenny.tfrec.wsu.edu/opm/displaySpecies.php?pn=310>

PICOL Database: <http://cru66.cahe.wsu.edu/LabelTolerance.html>

International Year of Soils

Master Composters/Recyclers • Amberose Kelley, MG/MCR 2015

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SOILS

June: Soils Support Recreation

As you enjoy the outdoors this June, remember your soils! Whether you are playing golf, going running, attending a music festival, or even fishing, soil plays a fundamental role in making your recreation possible. Say "I see you, soil" by staying on the trails when walking, riding, biking, etc., to limit soil compaction and erosion.

Watch the video: youtube.com/watch?v=nA3x2oOs394

Read more: soils.org/files/sssa/iys/june-soils-overview.pdf

Master Composter Recyclers

Master Composter Recycler training is wrapping up. You may have seen us at the plant sale in May! Volunteers are now embarking on their summer projects, which include:

- Installing and hosting workshops from the imminent compost demo site at Hovander
- Hosting a tent at the Sustainable Living festival
- Conducting waste audits and waste diversion training for local businesses
- Teaching worm composting workshops at Haggens
- Compost demonstrations and workshops at community food gardens, such as:

The York Farm

Blaine Community Garden

Faith Lutheran Community Garden

Kendall Community Garden

We hope the master gardener community finds ample opportunities to meet and exchange garden and composting inspiration with the composter recyclers. Composting is so important for healthy gardens – especially during the drought. Not only are many of our composters avid gardeners, but they also have accrued some unique information

over the last few months regarding resource conservation and the transformation of energy. For a good conversation, ask them about one of our many wonderful field trips to:

- Green Earth Technology commercial composting facility
- Ragfinery
- Cloud Mountain Farm on-farm composting workshop
- Greenacres Memorial Park green burial tour
- Sanitary Service Company tour
- Bellingham rain gardens

Join Us!

Do you compost at home? Do you practice other sustainable living and gardening techniques, such as using a rain barrel or making your own cleaning products? We would love to hear about it. Send photos, stories, recipes or questions to Amberose at: a.kelley@wsu.edu



Master Composters at the Plant Sale. From L-R:

Amberose, Jean, Ken, Eric, Julie, Grace