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### THREE GARDENING MYTHS

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So spring is finally here. A lot later than most of us expected. Time again to enjoy gardening and get our hands dirty! The following are a few myths from the book The Informed Gardener by Linda Chalker-Scott. She is an extension urban horticulturist and associate professor at Puyallup Research and Extension Center. THE MYTH OF INSTANT LANDSCAPING We have all done it. Bought a shrub, dug a quick hole the size of the container, plopped the plant in it, and put a little dirt around it. And now our landscape is beautiful. The reality is that it takes some preparation and time to properly and successfully plant a shrub or plant. The hole you dig for the plant needs to be twice as wide but not deeper than the root mass. The roots grow horizontally and need to be unobstructed. If you purchase a shrub or plant and the roots are root bound and circling the pot, they need to be straightened out or removed. The roots need to be directed outward. It is also suggested to remove the potting material from the root mass and not adding it to the planting hole. The planting material is usually more porous than the surrounding soil. Consequently, that soil dries out quicker and the plant may suffer. The author recommends that shrubs and trees are planted bare-root.

THE MYTH OF DRAINAGE MATERIAL IN CONTAINERS I am guilty! I have a lot of planting containers. There is solid scientific proof that using sand, gravel, pebbles, or other coarse materials will NOT improve drainage or prevent unwanted creatures from entering the drain holes. Yes containers need drainage holes for root aeration. The reality is that soil scientists have proven again and again that water does not move easily or more quickly from soil to and through coarse or larger materials placed at the bottom of the containers. The water will not move to the bottom of the container until the finer soil is saturated. Consequently, any drainage material put in the bottom of containers will hinder water movement. So it is best to use the same soil or planting material throughout the planting container. I will be changing my ways!

THE MYTH OF HOT-WEATHER WATERING It is hard to believe right now, but sooner or later it is going to get really hot this summer. And we will be worried about watering our plants. We have been told that water on leaves on a hot sunny day in the heat will attract the sun's energy, and the sun's heat will burn the leaves, because the water on the leaves will attract the heat and burn. The reality is that myth has been around for a long time and there are other reasons for leaf scorch. They include drought, salt, wind stress, high temperatures and cold stress. If a plant shows signs of dehydration, it needs watering immediately. The best time to water is in the early morning. Watering during the day encourages evaporation and water loss. Watering in the evening can cause the establishment of fungus pathogens. Happy Gardening!

To yield more information contact Ferry County WSU Master Gardeners with garden practice questions. 509-775-5225, x1116, [jordant@wsu.edu](mailto:jordant@wsu.edu), 350 E. Delaware Ave. #9 Republic, WA 99166 in the basement of the Courthouse. For Extension publications go to <https://pubs.wsu.edu/>.

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