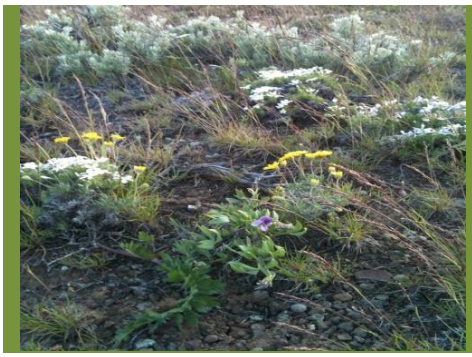

GROUNDED

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Grant-Adams Master Gardeners

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Grant-Adams Counties Master Gardeners, 1525 E. Wheeler Road, Moses Lake, WA 98837
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WSU Extension Master Gardeners Benefit Communities

It is hard to believe that WSU Extension Master Gardeners have been providing public outreach in Washington state for over 50 years! Washington State University Cooperative Extension started the first Master Gardener program in 1973 in the greater Seattle area to assist with urban horticulture and gardening advice. The program has grown to over 100,000 volunteers nationwide, offering Master Gardener programs in all 50 states as well as in eight Canadian provinces and in South Korea.

The WSU Master Gardener (MG) program came to Grant County, Washington, in 1982 when four interns were certified after completing rigorous training through the Cooperative Extension office. By the third year of the program, the number of certified Master Gardeners had grown to 32. Currently, 19 MGs and interns serve Grant-Adams Counties through the WSU Grant County Extension office, and they can help you with your home gardening questions. They have been trained by WSU Extension and local industry specialists in subjects such as taxonomy, plant pathology, soil health, entomology, cultural growing requirements, sustainable gardening, nuisance wildlife management, and integrated pest management.

To keep current with gardening issues and expand their knowledge, MGs must take educational training annually and must also volunteer to participate in a variety of public outreach activities annually that support the program.

How do you find local Master Gardeners?

WSU Grant-Adams Master Gardeners are available to answer your questions through a free online service. Our answers are based on science-based research produced by Washington State University or other university extension programs. We offer a year-round email helpline at ga.mgvolunteers@wsu.edu by phone, 509.754.2011 Ext. 4313. Individuals may contact us through this medium with their questions and, when they provide samples of their gardening and landscape issues or of plants or insects, we can identify them and offer recommendations for controls or management.

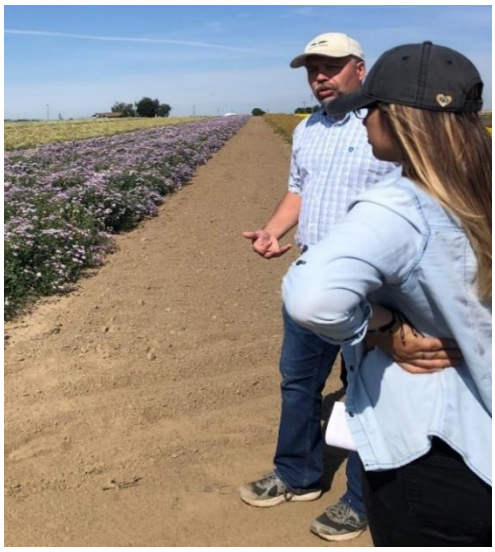
Additional information can be found by going to our website: https://extension.wsu.edu/grant/gardening/master_gardeners.

Master Gardeners also staff plant clinics Saturdays at the Moses Lake Farmers Market through October as well as during the Grant County Fair and the Othello Fair. We also maintain demonstration gardens in Moses Lake, Othello, and Soap Lake; put on an annual gardening symposium in April; publish a quarterly newsletter; and provide other outreach/workshops or talks in the communities we serve.

To learn more about becoming a Master Gardener, go to the Grant Adams Master Gardener web page: https://extension.wsu.edu/grant/gardening/master_gardeners and scroll down to the *Become a Master Gardener Volunteer*. On that page, you will find the 2024 Master Gardener Basic Training Brochure as well as the WSU MG Program Application, available online and at the Extension Office, to fill out and submit to the Master Gardener Program. The next scheduled new Master Gardener training will begin in the fall of 2024.

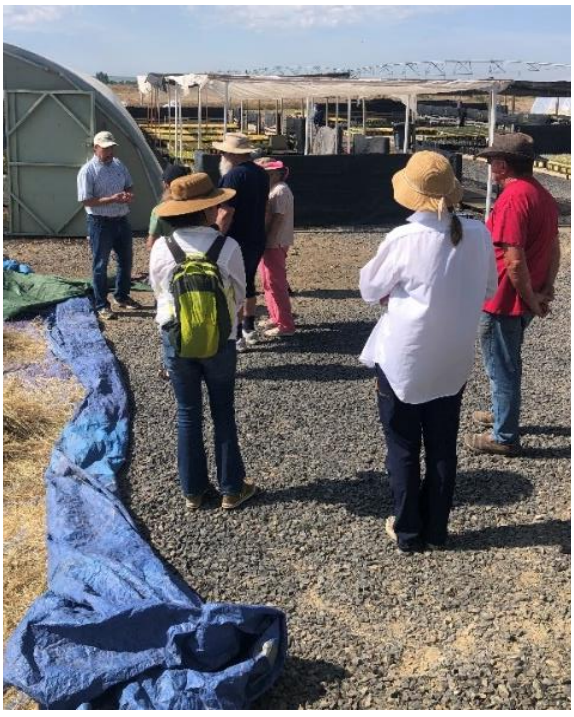
Brilliant Plants Dominate BFI Native Seeds Tour . . . *By Mark Amara*

BFI Native Seeds Co-owner, Matt Benson and Forbs Specialist, Linda Duran conducted a tour of the BFI Native Seeds farm operations near Warden in June to educate Master Gardeners about the types of plantings done at the site and the services available. Since Master Gardeners work with urban and rural noncommercial yards and gardens and many of the plants grown are adapted to our climate, the tour was an opportunity to see what currently does well in the Columbia Basin. Plant recommendations for gardeners seem to change with time and are the result of years of science-based research on what works.



Matt Benson and Linda Duran of BFI Native Seeds. Photo Credit: Mark Amara

Matt Benson and Linda Duran of BFI Native Seeds led a tour attended by Several Master Gardeners. The tour began with a walkthrough of the plant propagation area where plugs are started in greenhouses and then transferred to outdoor growing areas. Tour goers were able to see nursery operations where thousands of sagebrush and other plants had been established and then planted into fields.

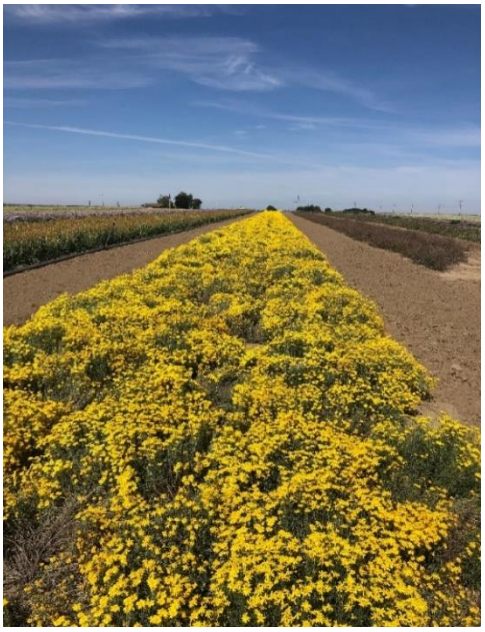


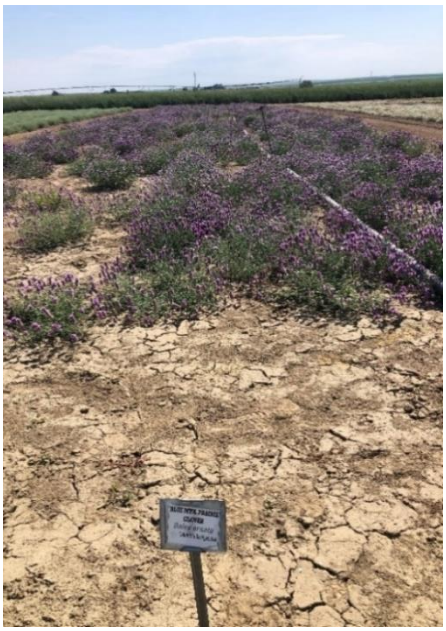
BFI Native Seeds tour attended by MGs. Photo Credit: Mark Amara

BFI Native Seeds specializes in preserving local genetics and growing native plants for restoration, erosion control, and riparian enhancements to assist with pollination and to increase endangered or threatened-species plant and animal populations. The organization provides source-identified native grasses and forbs for local landscaping as well as for major habitat establishment projects. BFI Native Seeds has a full range of services from site evaluation, consultation, collection, propagation, seed cleaning, mixing, and delivery to site preparation, weed management, planting and monitoring.

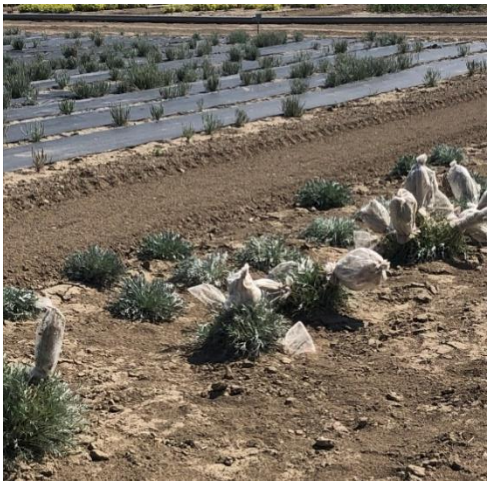
Jerry and his son, Matt Benson, began BFI Native Seeds in 1993 by planting one grass species on a small field. In 2023, the operation has grown to 250 separate plantings of native forbs, grasses, and shrubs, some on less than 1/10th acre up to 25 acres or more, covering about 1200 acres. Plantings are done to generate/grow native seed, which is sourced genetically from places all over the west, from New Mexico to British Columbia. Homogeneous grows and mixes are assembled for mostly government agencies and some other organizations. Retail operations are limited to surplus availability.

BFI Native Seeds grows mostly grasses and forbs (herbaceous non-woody plants) as well as a few woody plants like bitterbrush, sagebrush, and rabbitbrush. The fields featured many in bloom during the tour that day, as shown in the following photos.





Above Photos (Left to Right): Oregon Sunshine; Evening Primrose; Mountain Prairie Clover. Photo Credit Mark Amara.



Northern wormwood (*Artemisia campestris var. wormskioldii*). Photo credit: Mark Amara

One particularly unusual planting the group viewed is northern wormwood (Artemisia campestris var. wormskioldii). The plant is a low-growing perennial that only occurs on the banks of the Columbia River near Wanapum Dam in Grant County. BFI Native Seeds is propagating the plant from just a few specimens.

Planting Native Landscapes Can Save Money . . .

By Mark Amara

Many people take water for granted in our area and have covered their yards in lawn or water-loving trees. They do not realize that there are consequences to living in a desert climate in eastern Washington. The Columbia Basin receives only 6-9 inches of annual rainfall. If the area did not benefit from the irrigation water provided through the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, it would look more like a desert.

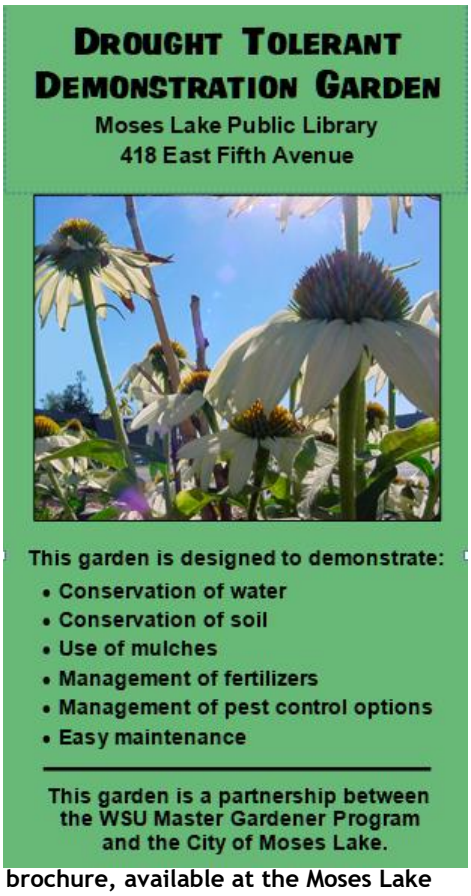
Water shortages are becoming more apparent in many central Washington communities. The cities of Moses Lake in Grant County and Othello in Adams County, for example, are starting to see a shortage of water for domestic use. These municipalities now require residents to cut water use by irrigating less frequently on alternate days and/or skipping days during the heat of the summer. Each city has begun using water allocated from the Bureau of Reclamation as supplemental irrigation water for its parks to offset domestic water usage.

Deep well water is being depleted, and recharge is not occurring very quickly, if at all. If the deep well sources are contaminated, they may not be available at all for household use. These factors, in combination with rising populations and industrial demands, mean that water as a commodity needs to be used more judiciously because it is not nearly as renewable as it used to be.

Fortunately, there are opportunities for homeowners to convert their yards to use less or zero water by incorporating native plants in their landscapes, and the WSU Extension Grant-Adams Master Gardeners can advise residents on how to do just that to not only conserve water usage, but to also save homeowners money. Native plants require much less water, fertilizer, and pesticides than non-native plants. In fact, they can prevent water run-off and improve air quality. Native plants can help decrease pollution because they eliminate the need for mowers and other equipment. Long-term upkeep of native plants can be dramatically less costly than turf grass and take less time to upkeep.

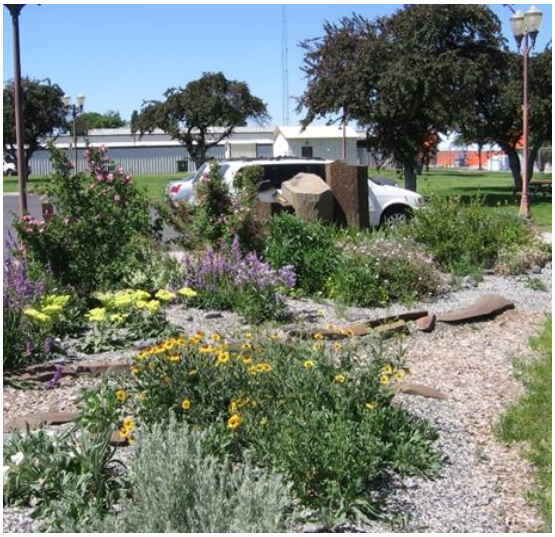
Master Gardeners have established demonstration gardens for public view in Othello and Moses Lake using native and drought-tolerant plants that are well adapted to the area. The Othello garden is located at the Old Hotel at 33 Larch St; the Moses Lake garden is located by the Moses Lake Public Library at 418 E 5th Avenue.

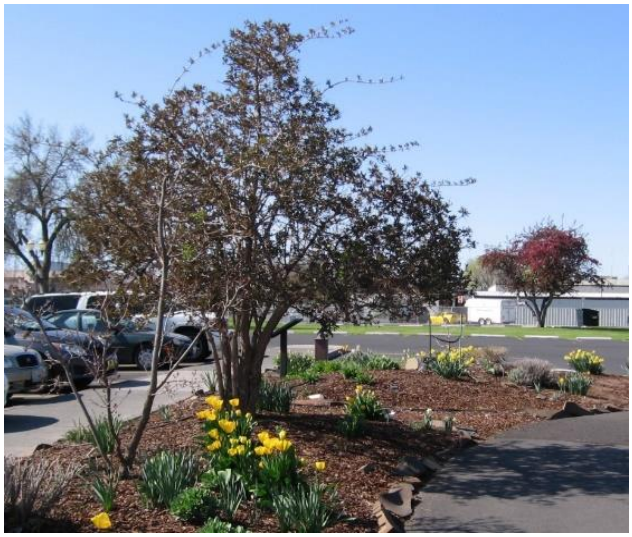
Master Gardeners can help with plant selection based on soil type, location, and resident interest. Urban and rural residents may consider border, pollinator, or small-space plantings to see how successful the process can be to work with.



brochure, available at the Moses Lake Public Library, identifies plants that do well in reduced water environments.

Alternatively, new residential construction should consider planning and planting with only native and/or drought-tolerant plantings. For established homes, taking out unused lawn or other areas can be done incrementally or for an entire yard. Planting recommendations can be tailored to the goals of the individual yard, and Master Gardeners can direct people to reliable credible sources of locally adapted plant materials. Site preparation, weed control, and designing the area for low-water use are needed ahead of any new plantings. Many plants can be planted either as dormant plantings late in the fall or early spring. Some plants will survive without any supplemental irrigation. However, providing water during the first 1-3 years of planting helps to establish grasses, trees and shrubs and then water can be reduced. These types of planting plans can help save water resources, save the resident money, and create landscapes that better reflect the climate of the area.





The Moses Lake Native Plant and Drought-Tolerant Demonstration Garden blooms throughout the summer with reduced water at the Public Library. Photo credits: Barbara Guilland

***Editor's Note: The following publication was modified from Landscaping with Native Plants in the Inland Northwest by Toni Fitzgerald*. Native Plants of Eastern Washington. Washington Native Plant Society, Columbia Basin Chapter. No date.**

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Saving Seeds/Saving Money/Preserving Genetic Diversity . . . *By Diane Escure*

Saving heirloom or open-pollinated seeds from your garden or flower bed each year has many rewards. Besides being fun to do, here are more reasons to try this:

- Cost-savings: Buying seeds can be expensive, especially for heirloom or rare varieties. By saving seeds, you can eliminate the need to purchase seeds every year, saving money in the long run.
- Preserving genetic diversity: Saving seeds allows you to preserve and propagate certain varieties of flowers or vegetables that may not be readily available in seed catalogs or nurseries. This helps maintain genetic diversity in plants, which is crucial for their long-term health and adaptation to changing environments.
- Adapting to local conditions: Over time, saved seeds become adapted to the specific growing conditions of a particular area, such as climate, soil, and pests. By saving seeds from plants that have thrived in your garden, you can grow varieties that are better adapted to your specific microclimate or growing conditions.
- Control over quality and traits: Saving seeds allows you to have control over the quality and traits of the plants you grow. You can choose seeds from the strongest and healthiest plants with desirable characteristics, such as flavor, color, size, or disease resistance, ensuring that future generations of plants will exhibit these traits.
- Sustainability and self-sufficiency: By saving seeds, you contribute to a more sustainable and self-sufficient lifestyle. You reduce your reliance on external sources for seeds and become more self-reliant in producing your own food or creating beautiful flower gardens.
- Educational and historical significance: Saving seeds can be a way to connect with nature, learn about plant life cycles, and explore the cultural and historical significance of various plants. It can be a valuable educational experience for children and a way to preserve heirloom varieties that have significance in certain communities or regions.

The Ephrata Library will hold a seed-saving talk free to the public on Thursday, September 14, from 7 to 8:30 PM presented by WSU Grant-Adams Master Gardeners. Anyone interested in learning more about how and why to save seeds is encouraged to attend.

In the meantime, below are some general tips on how to save seeds this summer:

- Choose open-pollinated or heirloom varieties: These types of plants produce seeds that are true to their parent plant, allowing you to save and replant them successfully. Just be sure to save seeds

from typical fruits; for example, if your tomato variety should be round, dark red, and the size of a baseball, do not save seeds from fruits that are pale, elongated, or undersized. Don't save F1 hybrid seeds, which are products of crosses between two different varieties and combine traits of two different parents. Seeds collected from F1 hybrids will produce a mixture of plant types, most of which will be inferior to the parent plants.

- Allow plants to fully mature: Let the plants reach their full growth and seed-ripening stage before collecting the seeds. This ensures that the seeds are mature and viable for saving.
- On plants you normally dead head, set aside a few blossoms for later seed collection.
- If seed pods are growing along a stalk, harvest from the bottom up. If this is too time consuming, harvest the entire stalk when most pods are mature. ·
- Only mature seeds should be collected. If seeds aren't mature, they will not germinate. Signs of maturity: brown and dry. Petals have dropped from flower heads. Harvest when seeds are mature but before seeds disperse or are eaten by birds or other animals. You can put paper or cloth (not plastic) bags around pods if they are close to bursting.
- Biennials should be mulched the first winter and seed collected the second season.
- Harvest and dry seeds properly: Harvest seeds when they are completely dry on the plant. Remove the seeds from the plant and spread them out in a single layer to dry further in a well-ventilated, cool, and dry location.
- Clean and remove debris: After drying, clean the seeds by removing any plant debris, chaff, or other unwanted materials. This can be done by gently rubbing the seeds between your hands or using a fine mesh sieve.
- Store seeds in airtight containers: Place the cleaned and dried seeds in airtight containers such as glass jars or seed envelopes to prevent moisture and pests from damaging them. Make sure to label the containers with the plant variety and the date of collection.
- Store seeds in a cool and dark location: Seeds should be stored in a cool, dry, and dark location, such as a refrigerator or a basement, to maintain their viability for a longer period.
- Test seed viability: Periodically check the viability of stored seeds by performing a germination test. Plant a small sample of seeds and evaluate the germination rate to determine if the stored seeds remain viable.
- Rotate seed stock: To ensure the freshness and viability of your saved seeds, it's a good practice to use and replace them regularly. Rotate your seed stock every few years to keep a fresh supply of viable seeds.
- Share seeds with others: Encourage seed-saving and the exchange of seeds among gardeners and local communities. Sharing seeds not only helps preserve plant diversity but also fosters a sense of community and sustainability.
- Learn from experience and document: Keep a gardening journal to record your seed-saving experiences, including specific techniques, success rates, and any lessons learned. This will help you refine your seed-saving skills and improve future harvests.

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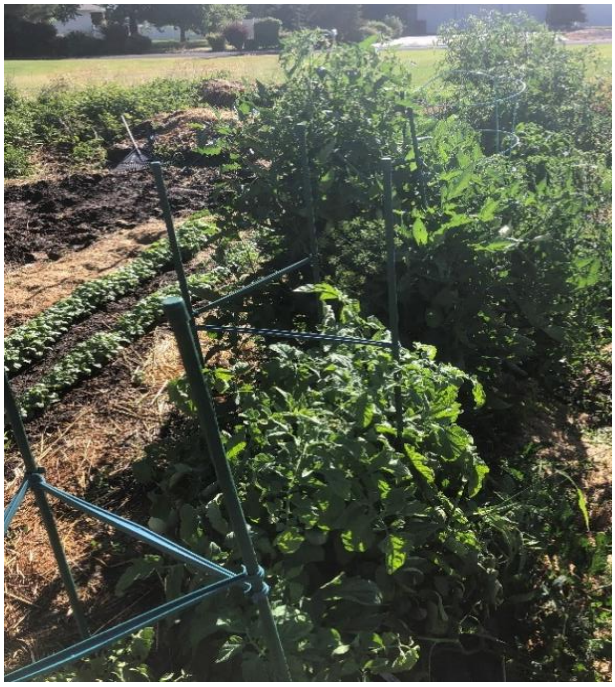
***Editor's Note**: The following article was originally prepared by WSU Extension Grant-Adams Master Gardener, Duane Pitts, and has been updated with more current information by Mark Amara.*

Are Your Tomatoes Still Green?

Can you believe it? It's another hot year, similar to last summer's heat! This year I've got 25 tomato plants which seem to be maturing awfully slowly and are putting out lots of tomatoes, but 99% are still green! I'm getting impatient and want ripe tomatoes sooner rather than later. We all assume they are coming, but what are the reasons they are so slow?

The picture at the right shows the relative size and length of the tomato patch, which is dozens of feet long. Tomatoes were all meticulously planted as transplants, covered with paper mulch to help control weeds, and trellised using plastic or metal frames. Some of the trellised plants have reached over 5 feet! Tomatoes hang all over them.



Trellised tomatoes of various sizes, front to back. Photo credit: Mark Amara

What are the options to get better results?

By researching various University Extension websites, the same recommendations keep cropping up. The basic messages are to prune the lower branches and top off some of the higher ones to allow more air circulation and sunlight in. While you probably already knew to do this, some of us still need to be reminded.

Tomato plants seem to grow best in temperatures that range from 70°-75°F during the day and between 60°-65°F at night. This explains a great deal. Many plants shut down when temperatures rise over 90°F. We have had many, many days of temperatures of 90°F and higher.

No wonder tomatoes don't want to ripen; conditions that are less than ideal with the heat have caused them to slow down and some seem to have shut down completely. Some of your tomatoes probably did the same as mine: shut down. It is the beginning of August for all practical purposes, and the tomatoes are green, except for just a few.

What is a home gardener to do, then?

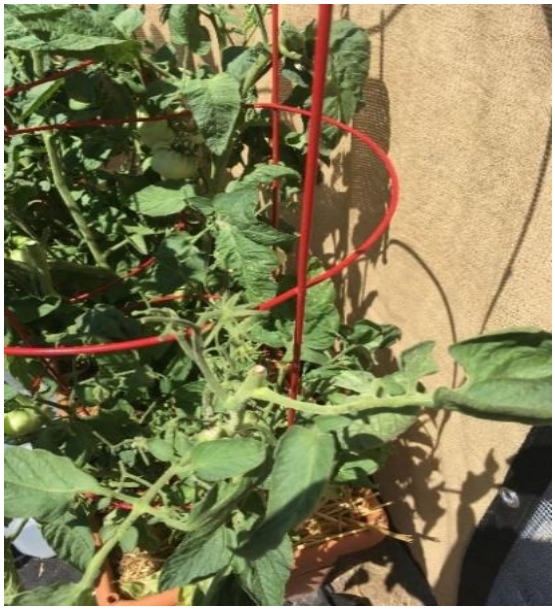
Fertilizing is not a good option as it would only add nitrogen for leaf growth, not ripening. Given the four Pozzano, four Little Napoli, four Siletz, four Burbank, four San Marzano, and five beefsteak bush tomatoes, plenty of water is necessary to produce fruit but can't be expected to ripen them alone. The temperatures have to be just right and for that to happen, one must be patient!

So, what to do?

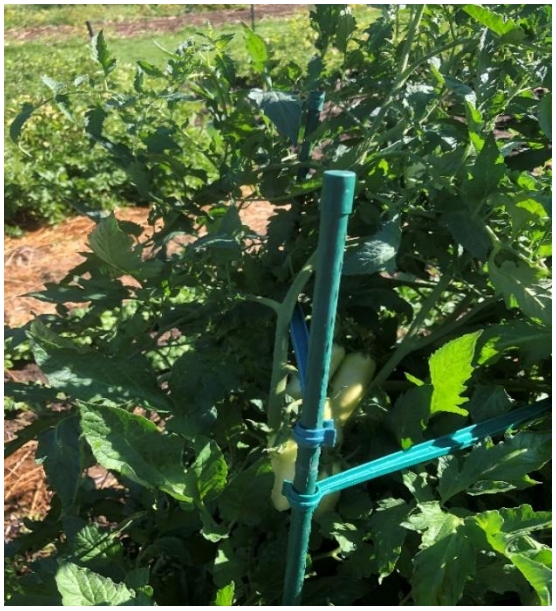
First, make sure the plants are opened up for good air circulation and sunlight. They will not ripen any faster, but the air keeps away fungus and allows the plants to "breathe" freely and bask in the sun more.

Second, watering them about 1 inch a week allows them to grow fruit at a steady pace.

Third, whether you grow them in the garden, in a raised bed, or in a pot matters very little if the daytime temperatures hit 90ºF or higher. Pollinators quit visiting flowers when temperature hit 85º or higher, so it makes sense that plants shut down around those temperatures as well. Unless you can control the temperature (globally, regionally, or in your own yard, which realistically ain't going to happen), tomatoes will ripen when conditions are better for them. I just hope they ripen before temperatures drop off.



Pruned tomato plant. Photo credit: Duane Pitts



There are tons of green tomatoes. Photo credit: Mark Amara

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Keeping Lawns Green . . . *By Mark Amara*

Lawns in the Columbia Basin can stay green despite the hot weather. Whether we think about them or not, lawns depend on soil type, weather, and timing/length of watering and irrigation system output. Summer is the time that lawns get watered more often than other times. Most of our Grant County soils are sandy loams and silt loams, although some of us have sandy soil. The water-holding capacities of sandy loams and silt loams are higher than those of sands. They do not need to be watered as often as soils that consist entirely of sand. To find out what the soils are on your property, check out the Soil Survey of Grant County, Washington, available through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or the public library, or go to Web Soil Survey http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm, or Soil Web http://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/soilweb-apps/.

Maintaining lawn quality depends on several soil and grass characteristics. By knowing the turf grass type, rooting depth, amount of thatch, structure and texture of the soil, slope, exposure and by tracking the weather can help determine how much and how often to water.

Consider these tips:

- Water on alternate days or every third day unless it is hot for sustained periods. Watering every day for short periods can create unhealthy lawn conditions and reduce drought-tolerant effectiveness. Light sprinkling encourages root development near the surface, which means lawns have to be watered more often and also favors the development of more weeds and diseases. A shallow root system may also be due to compacted soil, thick thatch, past watering practices or something else. Watering less often for longer periods still keeps lawns green, conditions the roots, and can help keep fertilizer and pesticides from leaching. This method encourages deeper root growth, maximizes the lawn quality and watering efficiency.
- Lawns with deep root systems can use a higher volume of soil for water and nutrients and are much less subject to drought stress or other stressors.
- If there is a choice, early morning (4-8 AM) are the best times to water because wind and evaporation losses are typically low and application efficiency is the greatest. Midday watering is not very efficient. Early evening or night watering is not encouraged because it leaves the grass blades and thatch wet going into the evening and creates a greater potential for diseases.
- Dividing the yard into areas that use a lot of water vs. less water can be effective.
- Utilizing a designed irrigation system with separate circuits for lawns, trees, and planting beds may work better in watering according to plant needs. This is because the lawn has relatively shallow roots while trees and shrubs have much deeper roots.
- Reducing the amount of lawn by planting more perennial ground covers, native and drought-tolerant plants can be a way to minimize water use since turf generally requires more frequent watering than established trees, shrubs or groundcovers.
- Following good soil management practices like regularly aerating, dethatching, soil testing and applying fertilizer at recommended intervals, and mowing can help improve a lawn's drought tolerance. Follow pesticide and fertilizer labels.
- Adjust sprinklers to minimize runoff.
- Try not to water lawn and landscape trees at the same time. Trees and shrubs require a different method of watering than lawns.

For anyone who wants to know a little more about watering, try this method to figure out how often to water.

- Start by measuring how much water is put on the lawn in an hour.
- To do this, set a few straight-sided tin cans like soup or tuna cans or rain gauges at varying distances on the sprinklers path.
- After running the sprinklers for 15 minutes, measure the depth of water collected in inches.
- Calculate the average, total these amounts, and divide by the number of cans used. As a check, repeat for each station. When you finish, you should know the average amount of water delivered in 15 minutes.
- Multiply this average by 4 to give you the amount of water that is applied in 1 hour.

Now by knowing how much water is applied within a set amount of time, you can figure out how to efficiently replace water being lost from the soil. You do this by monitoring the atmospheric demand on water loss. The U.S. Weather Bureau monitors (Pan) evaporation rates and usually publishes this information.

The idea is to replace the water lost through evaporation from the soil and from transpiration through the grass. To determine how often to water, start with a lawn that is watered well enough so that the soil is moist to a depth of 8 to 12 inches. Yes, you will have to check the moisture of the soil. Monitor the evaporation rate each day. When the accumulative amount of pan evaporation reaches one inch, it's time to apply ¾ to 1 inch of irrigation water to replace the water lost from the lawn. You'll know how long to

run your system based on the little test and math exercises you did earlier. However, since the amount of stored water in the soil depends on the depth, structure and soil texture, frequency of watering will depend on how sandy or clayey it is. A sandy soil won't store as much or as long as a clayey soil but since all our soils in Grant County are sand, sandy loam or silt loam, that won't be an issue.

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Leave Lawns Longer in the Heat . . . *By Mark Amara*

Proper timing of lawn maintenance practices are important indicators to having a nice green yard. Now that summer is in full swing and the days are hotter than hot, consider the following reminders to keeping the lawn as healthy as possible.

We are in that part of the year at least through September when lawns grow at a fast clip. Mowing seems to have the biggest impact on the life and quality of the turf than almost any other practice. How high or low the lawn is cut varies with different turf grass species. So, knowing what grass is in the lawn can help determine cutting height. Traditional lawn plantings often consist of 75% Kentucky blue grass and 25% fine fescue or perennial ryegrass though knowing exactly what is there is the ideal. Traditional lawns do best when mowed at a height of 1.5 - 2.5 inches.

In addition, this type of lawn seems to be able to withstand heavy foot traffic and fills in well after being damaged. However, these grasses also require weekly, if not more frequent irrigations. Knowing whether your soil is sand, sandy loam or silt loam should be used to help determine frequency of irrigation. Turf-type tall fescues require less frequent irrigations and may tolerate the heat better than ryegrass or the bluegrass.

Weekly mowing works best to maintain good quality grass during the greater part of the year. Mowing less frequently than once per week may tend to produce lower quality turf. Regular mowing at the proper height takes less time and effort than infrequent mowing and produces a healthier, dense and more vigorously growing turf that potentially is prone to fewer maintenance challenges.

In the heat of the summer, however, consider cutting the grass a little higher. What this means, is that now and at least for the next 10 days to 2 weeks or longer if the heat persists (typically through August), leave it longer each week. If it is cut shorter, then the recommended height, it will become stressed more quickly which will weaken the grasses. Longer turf helps to shade the soil, keeps it relatively cooler and uses less water to stay green. And, keeping the grass a little taller, especially now, can help reduce weeds because the thicker canopy cover keeps seeds from germinating.

References

Goss, Roy L., Gwen K. Stahnke, and Eric D. Miltner. Saving Water: Lawns and Other Turf. Washington State University Extension. EB0684E. October 2006. https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/saving-water-lawns-and-other-turf

Lawn Care Basics. Washington State University. Spokane County Extension. C067. C067-Lawn-Care-Basics-16.pdf (wsu.edu)

Plant Clinic Schedule & Workshops

WSU Master Gardener volunteers are available to address your home gardening questions 365 days/24/7 throughout the year. Contact a WSU Master Gardener volunteer with your home gardening questions using the following e-mail address: ga.mgvolunteers@wsu.edu .

You may also call (509) 754-2011, extension 4313, or bring questions or samples to the WSU Grant Extension Office at 1525 E Wheeler Road, Moses Lake, Monday-Friday, 8 AM – 5 PM. For face-to-face contact, or if you have a plant or insect sample that you would like to have identified, please see the Master Gardener volunteers at one of the following locations:

Moses Lake Farmers Market Plant Clinic: McCosh Park, Saturdays, May – October 2023, 8 AM–1 PM

Grant County Fair Plant Clinic: 3953 Airway Dr NE, Moses Lake, Agricultural Building, 12-4 PM, Tuesday-Friday, August 15-18, 2023

Seed Library Seed Saving Benefits Talk: Ephrata Public Library, 45 Alder NW, September 14, 2023. 7-8:30 PM

Othello Fair Plant Clinic: 831 S Reynolds Rd, Othello, Exhibitor's Bldg. September 13-16, 2023

For help with diagnosis and identification, plant and insect samples can be dropped off at the WSU Extension Office Monday through Friday 8 AM – 5 PM