

Garden Thymes



Yellow Woolly Caterpillar Found in Groundcover Garden at the Discovery Garden. Photo by Virgene Link

WSU SKAGIT COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENERS • Spring 2013

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Upcoming MG Plant Fair Provides Opportunities to Volunteer

Karen Stephens

Most marketing departments would give their eye teeth for the most potent public relations tool that best advertises the WSU/Skagit County Master Gardener (MG) Plant Fair: **People who talk!**

It's true; word of mouth is the best advertisement, especially in our small communities. Who wouldn't believe the advice of a trusted friend or neighbor? So, "Bravo!" to you, master gardeners, and to you, satisfied customers, for being the backbone of a PR campaign that works.

With the MG Plant Fair right around the corner, our outreach work is intensifying, and you can continue to contribute by supersizing your fair "talk." Examples of favorite MG outreach strategies: distributing bookmarks to members of your book and garden clubs, stocking bookmarks in an art gallery, leaving a supply of bookmarks in the staff room of local schools, offering to drive a neighbor to the fair, telling a friend "I know where you can get that" when she pines for an eye-catching perennial for a corner of her garden.

As you talk to your contacts, please pitch customer favorites that are the core of our offerings: the 2,000+ tomato plants, flower and vegetable starts, perennials, herbs, shrubs, trees and native plants. Tell them that MGs have also responded to popular demand by including such additions as:

- herb and salsa baskets
- ornamental shade and sun baskets,
- vining tomato baskets
- salad bowls
- succulent gardens in attractive planters
- terrariums

—See Plant Fair, page 2

—Plant Fair, from page 1

In the unusual category, we're offering four-year-old wine grape plants donated by Gary and Sue Moulton. (You can check out these vigorous specimens in the propagation area of the Discovery Garden.) The Varieties—Agria and Pinot Noir—are well suited to our cool Northwest climate and ripen early.

A striking 6-foot tall Blue Sequoia tree is another unusual donation—this one from Urban Forestry Nursery. It has a dramatic presence, growing quickly to a stately height.

Another valued gift to the Fair is eight lovely roses donated by Christianson's Nursery.

More new-ish items: Those not-your-mother's hand-crafted scarecrows that MGs created to sell at the fair, along with gently read cookbooks, gardening books/magazines and bird books.

Our plant fair vendors will provide an array of enticing wares: garden art, hanging baskets, flower tubers, garden furniture, bouquets, unusual annuals, perennials and trees, garden tools, rain barrels, flavored honeys, and hot food, snacks and coffee.

Vital to the whole fair are the free MG education services. MGs will be circulating through the aisles, happy to offer advice about plant choices. We are also staffing a mini-plant clinic to answer customer questions about gardening problems. Tell your friends to bring samples or detailed pictures of any ailing plants, as well as descriptions of sun exposure, soil type, wind patterns and other environmental impacts.

Given the ambitious scope of this MG event, the fair still has some work slots to fill. Please consider volunteering for one of these specific areas:

- set-up
- help customers
- help vendors
- parking
- pot recycling
- break-down

You can sign up on sheets in the Discovery Garden shed or by contacting the following members of the Fair Planning Team:

—continued in column 2

—From column 1

Cashiers and Pullers—Virgene Link
(linkerwan@yahoo.com)

Parking—Jerry Sells (cjsells@msn.com)

Vendors—Barbara Cretzler (bcgardens@gmail.com)
or Madelyn Case (mpcase@earthlink.net)

Book & Scarecrow Sales—Dawn Greenfield
(dgreenfield1234@gmail.com)

All other areas—Kathy Wolfe
(wolfekh@wavecable.com) or Deborah Smeltzer
(das@dkingsbu.net)

Thank you so much for your ideas, outreach and elbow grease. This could be our best fair ever!

Now will one of you please arrange for sunny skies on May 11th? ☺



**International Master Gardener's Conference
Alaskan Cruise
September 7-14, 2013**

For more information, visit the Website at:
<http://www.uaex.edu/imgc2013/default.htm>

2013 WSU Master Gardener
Advanced Education Conference

40 Years of Growing ... Together

September 26-28, 2013

Edward D Hansen Conference Center
At Comcast Arena
2000 Hewitt Avenue
Everett, Washington

<http://www.wa-mg-conf.org>

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**Sacha Buller, MG Program
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**Jane Billinghamurst, SCMGFB
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Diana Wisen, Public Outreach

**Michael Bonacci, Publicity and
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**Molly Dight, MG Landscape
Specialist**

**Justin Hayton, Commercial Farmer/
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**Julianne Ash, Educational
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**Cindy Bjorklund, Community
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Don McMoran

Sacha Buller

From the President of the MG Founda- tion Board

Hello Master Gardeners,

On behalf of your Master Gardener Foundation Board, may I wish all of you hardworking Skagit County master gardeners and interns “Happy Spring.”



A lot is going on in our gardening world. In January, we started our year with a brand new group of students out at Padilla Bay studying to be master gardeners. Under the gentle but firm guidance of Diana Wisen and Cherry Dennis, the students completed their course work in March. Congratulations to each of you and welcome!

In early March, we held our Kick Off to outline the dozens of annual MG activities to sign up volunteers—veterans and interns alike. (This was the first time the MG students were introduced to the varied opportunities by which they could fulfill their intern hours.)

At our MG Recognition Lunch the end of March, we honored all those who worked so hard to make 2012 a great success. A highlight of the lunch was naming Lin Hoisington as the Master Gardener of the Year and Deborah Smeltzer as Master Gardener Intern of the year. Well done!

The luncheon was nicely run by our new Master Gardener Coordinator, Sacha Buller. Sacha was selected for that position late in 2012 and is already fully up to speed. Sacha recently defined her duties as “not your policeman but your coordinator.” That seems a pretty good summary.

We are now all involved in the many activities that occupy the MG year. Plant clinics are up and running, Tulip Tours have concluded and the Discovery Garden is busy with its many volunteers. By the way, it seems to me the Discovery Garden has never looked better. All that effort last summer, fall and this spring has really made a difference. Signage in the Discovery Garden is much improved with lots of work done by Kaylene Farley and her crew.

In addition, much is being done to prepare for the MG Plant Fair. You remember the Plant Fair, do you not? Of course you do! It is our most important fund raiser and is a great opportunity for all to come together in a common cause. Please volunteer your time this year to help make it

—See MG Plant Fair, page 4

—From MG Plant Fair, page 3

our best fair ever. Under Deborah Smeltzer's leadership, I am sure it will be. Please read the article on page 1 by Karen Stevens in this issue for further details.

Your Foundation Board will soon be preparing the new budget for the 2013/2014 fiscal year. Treasurer, Gail Messett, is collecting all the budget requests from the various committees and garden coordinators. If you have not yet submitted your request, please do so now. The Board's message on this process is fairly clear: If you don't ask for it, you won't get it.

Finally, a tip of my old gardening hat to all of you. I thoroughly enjoy working with you and know that together we will have another successful year. As always, please contact any board member with your ideas and feedback.

Al Call ☐

A Message from the Master Gardener Coordinator

Sacha Buller



Greetings, MGs!

The first months of 2013 have kept me on my toes. I've been busy keeping up with you all and helping to plan and organize MG intern training, the Spring Kick-Off and the Recognition Lunch. Thank you to everyone who helped out and made each of these events a success.

2013 training was a great success! Please take some time to introduce yourself to the 14 master gardener interns who successfully completed training. They will be helping out frequently in the Discovery Garden, plant clinics and community outreach events as part of their 60-hour internship. We have a great group of interns joining the program this year.

One note on program logistics: After some discussion with Don McMoran and the Skagit County Master Gardener Foundation board, we have decided to eliminate the Pro Hort certificate from our program. The certification was confusing to everyone, so we have

—See MG Coordinator, page 5



Know & Grow

Diana Wisen

Know and Grow workshops help us fulfill our mission to provide outreach and education to the gardening public as well as continuing education for Master Gardeners. These popular seminars are held monthly on a Tuesday afternoon from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the NWREC auditorium adjacent to the Discovery Gardens. Upcoming topics are:

May 14, Gardening in Raised Beds and Containers, with Gloria Ellsworth and Dave Buchan. Your imagination is the only limitation on what to plant in those raised beds you been thinking about installing and/or those containers that need some freshening up.

June 11, Ikebana, with Mary Kay Branch. This is an opportunity for anyone wishing to learn the art of Japanese-style flower arrangement. **Registration is required for this class. Send an e-mail to: dmwisen@fdalgo.net** A \$5 fee will be collected to cover the cost of flowers and incidentals. Bring your own shallow container, needle frog and clippers.

July—No Know and Grow

August 13, Diagnosing Plant Diseases, with Gloria Williams. This is a crash course in assessing what's ailing that special plant of yours and what steps to take to make you both feel much better.

For more information, visit the Master Gardener Website: www.skagit.wsu.edu/mg ☐

Skagit Talks

Skagit Master Gardeners can be heard on Skagit Valley Community Radio out of

Skagit Valley College

KSVR-FM 91.7

5:00—5:30 p.m.

Third Friday of the Month

—From MG Coordinator, page 4

changed our policy. All participants in the 10-week training course will receive certificates of completion for “Horticulture Basics Training.”

If these participants then go on to complete their 60-hour internship, they will be certified as master gardeners and will be eligible for a \$100.00 refund. The new policy essentially renames the certificate without any change to the training program structure, course fees or volunteer hour commitment. We are hoping that this new designation will eliminate the confusion that was involved in the “Pro Hort” certification.

In putting together the certificates for the 2012 recognition lunch, I was impressed by the number of hours, amount of energy and overall enthusiasm that you all bring to this program. Thank you to those of you who volunteer hundreds of hours each year to the WSU Skagit County Master Gardener Program.

Congratulations to Lin Hoisington who was named 2012 Master Gardener of the Year and to Deborah Smeltzer, named 2012 Master Gardener Intern of the Year!

I feel lucky to be in my position, both because you make my job much easier and because you are a joy to work with. With the spring events behind me, I’m ready to focus on new goals for the coming year. First, I’m going to work on organizing the MG files at the extension office. I’m also looking into coordinating more advanced training for the MGs and the public. If you have any ideas for advanced training, I’d love to hear them.

Sincerely,

Sacha Buller 

Not being able to do everything

is no excuse for not doing everything you can.

—Ashleigh Brilliant

Rain Gardens

Jane Billingham



Jane Billingham

This spring was a busy one for our new Rain Garden Mentor Program. Along with other counties in the Puget Sound area, as part of the 12,000 Rain Gardens program, we received a grant of \$5000 for 2012/13 to create a rain garden public education program. 12,000 Rain Gardens is a partnership between WSU Extension and Stewardship Partners with the goal of installing 12,000 rain gardens around Puget Sound by 2016 to soak up 160 million gallons of storm water that would otherwise enter Puget Sound. More information can be found at www.12000raingardens.org.



Aaron Clark of Stewardship Partners points out the finer points of the Ballard rain gardens.

The first thing to do was to train the trainers. Rain Gardens 101 at intern training covered the basics and was followed by a bus trip to Seattle to tour rain gardens in Ballard and Everett.

Here at home, master gardeners make quarterly visits to the David Brookings Rain Garden outside the County Commissioners building on Continental Place in Mount Vernon to check out the progress of a mature, well-functioning rain garden. This spring, we partnered with the County to install a rain garden scavenger hunt in the garden to help people interact with the different elements of a rain garden.



Jane Billingham and Michael See, Stormwater Coordinator for Skagit County at the David Brookings Rain Garden

We also visited the middle school students in La Conner schools to hear about the rain garden they installed in the parking lot a couple of years ago. It was inspiring to hear the questions they asked and their interest in caring for the rain garden in the future.

At the Home and Garden Show, the grant helped pay for a master gardener booth where we showed off our new banner promoting rain gardens and handed out

—See Rain Gardens, page 6

—From Rain Gardens, page 5

free bags of rain garden coffee to those who partook in our rain garden quiz. Jane Billinghamurst also gave a presentation on designing rain gardens on that Sunday.

We have made presentations to the Anacortes chapter of the Association of University Women and Skagit Home Trust, who are planning a bio-swale at Channel Cove in La Conner. We are currently part of Stormwater U, a public information event co-sponsored by the Washington Department of Ecology, the City of Bellingham, and Re-Sources for Sustainable Communities. Ann Brooking will be giving the rain garden presentation at the Stormwater U to be held at Skagit Valley College on Saturday, May 18th (details at: www.re-sources.org).

On Friday and Saturday, May 17th and 18th, Brenda Cunningham will be giving a presentation at the City of Burlington's Spring Garden and Craft Show (details at: www.ci.burlington.wa.us).

On Thursday, May 30th, from 5:30 p.m.—7 p.m., in partnership with the Skagit Conservation District, Jane Billinghamurst will be giving a rain garden workshop followed by a rain garden walk to show off new rain garden installations in the city (details on the calendar at www.skagitcd.org).

Interns Emma Davis and Shannon Good are monitoring rain gardens in Mount Vernon and taking photographs, so we can learn more about which plants do well in rain gardens here in Skagit County and what maintenance issues there might be with these gardens. Thank you, Emma and Shannon.

We are excited about our spring activities and are compiling a list of MGs who are particularly interested in learning more about rain gardens, finding rain gardens to monitor, and learning about upcoming educational events.

If you'd like your name added to the list, do please let Jane Billinghamurst know (jane.billinghurst@gmail.com).



You can bury a lot of troubles digging in the dirt.

— Author Unknown

Wise Words To Live By

Author Unknown

1. Your fences need to be horse-high, pig-tight and bull-strong.
2. Keep skunks and bankers at a distance. 
3. Life is simpler when you plow around the stump.
4. A bumble bee is considerably faster than a John Deere tractor.
5. Words that soak into your ears are whispered |not yelled.
6. Meanness don't just happen overnight.
7. Forgive your enemies; it messes up their heads.
8. Do not corner something that you know is meaner than you.
9. It don't take a very big person to carry a grudge.
10. You cannot unsay a cruel word.
11. Every path has a few puddles.
12. When you wallow with pigs, expect to get dirty. 
13. The best sermons are lived, not preached.
14. Most of the stuff people worry about, ain't never gonna happen anyway.
15. Don't judge folks by their relatives.
16. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
17. Live a good and honorable life, then when you get older and think back, you'll enjoy it a second time.
18. Don't interfere with somethin' that ain't bothering you none.
19. Timin' has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.
20. If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin'.
21. Sometimes you get, and sometimes you get got. 
22. The biggest troublemaker you'll probably ever have to deal with, watches you from the mirror every mornin'.
23. Always drink upstream from the herd.
24. Good judgment comes from experience, and a lotta that comes from bad judgment.
25. Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier than puttin' it back in.
26. If you get to thinkin' you're a person of some influence, try orderin' somebody else's dog around. 

Hopeful Gardening

Anne Greenia

Dear Gardening Friends,

Last year I took a class on growing organic potatoes. Now, at last, I had the formula.

I bought compost, since I couldn't make it where I live: peat moss, manure, perlite and top soil—mixed them all together. Then I bought boxes of Whitney Farms® organic meals and mixed them together for a natural organic fertilizer.

I bought two huge field pots and cut the bottoms off because at the class they stressed the fact that potatoes did not like to be too wet. Then I bought a bale of straw and started layering straw with the mixed soils and the potatoes.

I also used the same soil in huge field pots where I grew green pole beans, bunch onions, a pepper and four different varieties of tomatoes. I got a kiddie-sized wading pool and put vining veggies in it.

The pots all sat on decks. Our slugs here are so big that you can saddle and ride them, so every day I did what I called, Snipe Hunting. I went out dressed for battle with my trusty salt shaker. I thought that if by chance they had a collective intelligence the dead bodies of their comrades would keep them away.

I used the organic fertilizer on all plants. Both potato bins had vigorous growth. As they grew taller, I added more straw and soil and fertilizer. The green beans climbed about to 8-feet tall with strikingly beautiful green leaves. I harvested the greens off the onions as they grew and used them in my cooking.

At the end of the year at harvest time one pot of potatoes was empty—no potatoes. The other had about 8—one large, the others small.

I picked and ate 8 green beans. One onion pot was empty the other onion pot had a few mushy ones. The vining plants just sat and never vined.

Every pot had a layer of straw on the bottom for drainage—I watered sparingly.



—From previous column

I figure, not counting the running around to find all this stuff and the labor to load it onto a flat cart and unload it at home and cart it to the shed, each veggie I grew and ate cost me about \$9.00.

However, because I know me, the gardener, will never say die, I saved the soil mixed with the straw in the kiddies wading pool and covered it with a tarp for this summer's use.

Maybe this year will be the year! Have a drink for me cause I'm gonna get one now myself.

Your woodsy friend,

AnnieGee ☐

**I have no idea what I am doing,
but incompetence
has never prevented me
from plunging in with enthusiasm."**

— Woody Allen



With the right hat, no one will notice the whiskers.

—Continued in next column

The State of Washington



Proclamation

WHEREAS, the Washington State University Master Gardener volunteer program is celebrating 40 years of service to the citizens of our state; and

WHEREAS, this model of volunteer service, emulated in all fifty states and numerous foreign countries, was founded by Washington State University in 1973; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 3,800 Washington State University Master Gardener volunteers serving more than 500,000 Washington residents each year; and

WHEREAS, these dedicated volunteer educators use their love of gardening to enhance natural resources and environmental stewardship, improve health and wellness of Washington residents, and create and sustain vibrant communities and urban neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the Master Gardener program sets a remarkable example of voluntary community service by returning to Washington citizens over 10 times the funds expended on the program's maintenance;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, Governor of the state of Washington, do hereby proclaim May 13-19, 2013, as

Washington State University Master Gardener Volunteer Week

in Washington State, and I urge all citizens to join me in this special observance.

Signed this 1st day of May, 2013

Governor Jay Inslee

