

Garden Thymes



The new Plant House arch at Discovery Garden.

WSU SKAGIT COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENERS • Winter 2013/2014

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Meet the 2014 Interns

On January 7th, Skagit County master gardeners welcomed the 2014 crop of 16 master gardener interns with an abundantly varied potluck lunch at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center. This was the interns' first taste of what it means to be a master gardener. The subtext of any MG function is: Nobody goes hungry.

Members of the MG intern class of 2013 planned and deftly executed the day's agenda, and facilitator Catherine Sherman kept the program marching along in a timely fashion.

The highlight of the morning was the introduction of the Class of 2014 by their mentors. In the following photos, the mentors are standing behind their intern(s).



Patricia Flores hails from Orcas Island. She has harvested olives in Italy and actually helped stomp them into oil. Her mentor is Sandy Fielden.

Sarah Wagstaff is a landscape designer who loves to cook. She raises chickens and geese on her hobby farm. Laurence McCulloch is her mentor.



Carla Glassman is a member of the Native Plant Society, and for her, the MG program is a natural path to expand her vegetative interests. Her mentor is Bryn Kremling.

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Charity Payne is a wine maker and the assistant manager of the Anacortes Farmers' Market. Her mentor is Cindee Juel.

Amye Webster is a Texas transplant who has a graduate degree in Health Education and Promotion. She is fluent in Cub Scout-ese thanks to her sons who are 9 and 5. Her mentor is also Cindee Juel.



Fran Hunter was raised on a small farm, then went to work for Uncle Sam. She's now retired and dotes on seven blended grandkids. She's looking for some "me" time in gardening. Edie Gamble is her mentor.

Lee Stuber and his mentor, Gloria Williams, have known each other for years. He went to school with Gloria's kids; his mother and Gloria were best friends. He loves the cycle of life and harvest.



Merle Green retired the end of December. She lives on 30 acres at the base of White Horse Mountain. Her passions include storytelling and weeding. (*She's an ideal*

MG candidate.) Her mentor is Glee Blank.

Bill and Janine Prichard are bicycling, kayaking and more recently, geo-caching enthusiasts. He is a retired firefighter and she is recently retired from her second career of massage therapy. Bob Bryan, their mentor, has crossed paths with them during his own outdoorsy pursuits.



Kathy Anderson, a resident of Anacortes, is a world traveler who has taught in China. She loves growing vegetables. Carol Butz is her mentor.

Janet Fowler grew up in Iowa. The self-described "cat whisperer" lives on her farm, Cats Spa, with 11 felines. She runs Lazy Feather, a rest home for geriatric chickens. Her mentor is Marsha Goller.



Garth Sather runs a yard maintenance and handy man business. He discovered horticulture in high school. He now lives on 5 acres and wants to live sustainably. Bob O'Brien is his mentor.

Cedar Wyatt is a citizen scientist and a lifelong gardener who collects houseplants—some of which are 15-25 years old. Deborah Smeltzer is her mentor.



Linda Bachmann is a theater arts major from the UW. Over the years, she has shared her life with a number of standard poodles. She recently closed her popular boutique, My Favorite Things, in Mount Vernon. She and her mentor, Ruth Sutton, have known each other for more than 30 years.

Trisha Varrelman is a lifelong avid gardener who lives in Bellingham. Her mentor is Madelyn Case.



This eclectic group of gardening enthusiasts will add a welcomed infusion of energy, curiosity and wonder to the master gardener rolls. We look forward to getting to know them and learning with them. ☐

Skagit County Master Gardener Foundation Board Members

Al Call, *President*

Cindee Juel, *Vice President*

Carol Taylor, *Secretary*

Gail Messett, *Treasurer*

Bob Bryan

Kayleen Farley

Lynn Heagney

Lin Hoisington

Deborah Smeltzer

Jane Billinghamurst, *State Foundation
Representative*

Ex-officio Members

Don McMoran

Sacha Buller

Help Needed

Plant Fair Team Has Vacancies

Deborah Smeltzer

We have two team member roles we need to fill immediately.

- **Marketing Chair:** Responsible for publicity and marketing of the Plant Fair. This is a great opportunity to interface with our local Skagit County community and determine how we can effectively promote our MG program.
- **Vendor Chair:** Responsible for finding and closing vendor prospects as well as arranging logistics for vendor booths at the Plant Fair.

Please let me know if you are interested in joining the team!

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From the President of the MG Foundation Board

Al Call

Your Foundation Board is off to a strong start this year. We welcomed two new board members, Lin Hoisington and Deborah Smeltzer, at our December meeting. Lin was our 2012 Master Gardener of the Year, and Deborah, our 2012 MG Intern of the Year. We expect great things from both of them. Their arrival meant the departure of outgoing Board members, Dawn Greenfield and Madelyn Case, whose advice and guidance were integral to all Board decisions. Also retiring from the Board was Ruth Sutton, president from 2011-2012. She worked in an ex-officio capacity with the Board in 2013 and always managed to have the right reference document available when we needed it. Thanks for all your help!

The Foundation begins 2014 in good financial shape. All activities are within their allotted budgets and Foundation funds available exceed \$19K. MG Pat Hoover completed an audit of our accounts for 2011 and 2012 and found no significant discrepancies. She is now focused on the 2013 audit.

Once again we are fortunate to have Deborah Smeltzer in charge of Plant Fair. As noted above, our financial situation is good, but it can only stay that way if we have successful plant fairs. Deborah is in need of volunteers for key positions, so please contact her. Scheduled for Saturday, May 10th, Plant Fair will require help from all master gardeners. Much, much more Plant Fair information will be coming to you in the weeks ahead.

MG intern training at Padilla Bay is going very well. We have a strong, involved intern class of 16. When you have the opportunity, please give them a warm welcome. Many thanks to all who have worked hard to organize the program this year. We have some new instructors from WSU, a dedicated group of teaching assistants and mentors and a large support staff. As always, Diana Wisen and Cherry Dennis are there to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Mark your calendars for Kick Off on March 11th and Recognition Lunch April 1st. At Kick Off we highlight the volunteer opportunities available this year and renew friendships with master gardeners not seen since Fall. The Recognition Lunch honors all those who have made the Skagit County Master Gardener Program one of the best in Washington. I look forward to seeing you there!

Finally, I would like to thank the staff at WSU Extension for their support of the Foundation. Don McMoran, Sacha Buller, Valerie DeKok and Sue Moulton have been excellent partners. We appreciate all you do for us. ☐

From the MG Coordinator

Sacha Buller

Happy New Year! We're off into a new growing season for the WSU Skagit County Master Gardeners. It was just over a year ago that I took on the master gardener program coordinator position. This has been a year of tremendous learning: from the ins and outs of WSU Extension and its programs and events to the names and faces of over 100 master gardener volunteers.

The time, energy and enthusiasm that each of you gave the Master Gardener Program in 2013 is invaluable. Thanks to each and every one of you!

My focus in my short 17-hour work week has been on improving specific areas of our program: WSU compliance and continuing education (CE). Working with Ruth Sutton and the Skagit County Master Gardener Foundation (SCMGF), I updated and submitted for Board approval the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the SCMGF and WSU Skagit County Extension.

I arranged for Catherine Daniels, PhD, Pesticide Coordinator and Director at WSU, to speak about WSU's pesticide policy for master gardeners. This was filmed and uploaded to YouTube for MGs to who were not able to attend the live presentation. To assist MGs to more easily accrue their CE credits, I started a weekly CE e-newsletter that has been well received.

I continue to cultivate the relationship between MGs and the WSU Northwest Research and Extension Center (NWREC) adjacent to the Discovery Garden. I hope most of you were able to take part in the tours of the NWREC labs, especially the new bread lab of Steve Jones, PhD, director of NWREC. Plant scientists Carol Miles, PhD, and Tim Miller, PhD, as well as WSU graduate students will be presenting topical segments during the 2014 MG intern training.

In 2014, my focus will be to increase community outreach and improve communication within the MG program. We got a jump start on this goal last Fall with the very successful Skagit Valley College gardening class, which filled beyond capacity. A second session will be taking place this February at Skagit Valley College. MG Valerie Rose will likewise be offering free evening gardening classes at the Mount Vernon Library. Stay tuned!

Also in 2014, we will be launching an outreach plant clinic. This clinic will provide basic gardening information in public locations including local farmers markets and the Discovery Garden. Currently, most of our public education programs occur midday during the week, and therefore, do not reach much of the Skagit County community. Because our MG mission is focused on public education, these clinics will help increase our community outreach. Details are being tweaked and will be finalized soon.

Lastly, I will be issuing a monthly program e-newsletter. This will differ from the weekly CE messages I've been sending in that I will highlight ongoing volunteer opportunities, current issues and policy changes. It will differ from the quarterly MG newsletter, *Garden Thymes*, by providing more timely discussion of program concerns. My goal is to bring everyone together on the same page and reduce the quantity of e-mails in your mailbox. Expect the first issue in your e-mail inbox soon! ☐

Sacha's Baby

Sacha and Pat Buller's baby girl Phoebe arrived almost a month early on January 2nd. She is already one month old!



Phoebe is pictured here with big sister Vashti who turned two in December.☐



What's New in the Garden?

While change is a constant in our lives, it is no less a constant in the Discovery Garden as evidenced by the following photos.

In the **Children's Garden**, a hopscotch game has replaced the Yellow Brick Road. Molly Dight coordinated the painting and placement of the new pavers.



A cardboard cottage next to the peonies in the Children's Garden provided much entertainment last summer to our "shorter" visitors. Virgene Link is the "architect of record."

The **Herb Garden** is undergoing a major facelift under the labors of Judy Callahan and Lynne Poling.



The Medicinal Plants section has been totally revamped as seen in this photo to the right. Lynne's goal is to grow only non-toxic medicinal plants.

Debbie Martin is now coordinating the Dye Plants section.

The **Rose Garden** continues to evolve after the master gardeners took over maintenance from the Rosarians.



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New drip irrigation system in the Rose Garden is shown in the photos below.



This multi-year renovation project is being organized and installed by Molly Dight and Virgene Link and their crew.



Photos by Sandra Swarbrick

More recently, Herta Kurp put the finishing touches on the new arch at entrance to the Plant House this past January. Later that same day, she and her hearty crew raised and braced the arch in place.

Lastly, Dave Buchan (MG Class of 2012), shown here with Garden Manager, Sandra Swarbrick, has stepped into the role of Assistant Garden Manager.



Like Sandra, Dave will be a visible constant when the Discovery Garden opens for weekly work parties in April. ☐

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Important Upcoming Dates

- Tuesday, February 18, **Know and Grow**. MG Deborah Smeltzer discusses “Lichens, Moss, Mold and Mildew,” 1 p.m. at the NWREC auditorium.
- Saturday, March 8, **Whidbey Island MG Workshop**, at Oak Harbor High School.
Note: The corrected Web link is:
<http://whidbeygardeningworkshop.org>
- Tuesday, March 11, **MG Spring Kick Off**, NWREC auditorium.
- Tuesday, March 18, **Know and Grow**. “Starting Seeds,” by Kevin Jones of Jordan Greenhouses, 1 p.m. at the NWREC auditorium.
- Tuesday, April 1, **Discovery Garden Opening Day** (no foolin’), 9 a.m.—12 noon, followed by **Recognition Lunch**, NWREC auditorium.
- Friday, May 9, **MG Plant Fair Setup**, Discovery Garden and Skagit County Fairgrounds.
- Saturday, May 10, **MG Plant Fair**, Skagit County Fair Grounds, 8 a.m.—2 p.m.

2014 Country Living Expo

It was a bitterly cold, sunny day, that saw a better than expected turnout of life-long learners showing up in late January to take part in WSU’s Ag Extension Country Living Expo and Cattlemen’s Winter School.

Besides the cattlemen-oriented classes, a slew of non-livestock related classes were offered, many targeting the home gardener/cook/artist/musician. And a number of MGs were spotted throughout the day soaking up good information.

Class offerings were numerous and varied: beekeeping, native trees, yogurt making, soil management, pesticide use, growing giant pumpkins, solar powered

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Island County Master Gardener Foundation presents:

2014 Whidbey Gardening Workshop

“It’s all about gardening!”

March 8, 2014
Oak Harbor High School
9:00am to 4:00pm
Keynote Speaker:
Marty Wingate



Informative classes for every level of gardening, vendors with must have stuff for your garden, and books to educate and inspire.

Online registration begins Tuesday, February 4, 2014 at www.whidbeygardeningworkshop.org or call **360-240-5527** to request a registration packet by mail.

2014 Sponsors: Bayview Farm and Garden, Diamond Rentals Honeymoon Bay Cafe, Mailliard’s Landing Nursery, Popsies Skagit Farmers Supply, Whidbey Weekly, Whidbey Island Bank, Whidbey Telecom, Windermere Real Estate



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electrics, flower arranging, lefse making, playing the spoons, arc welding, leather crafting, canning basics, natural dyeing, greenhouse growing, raising backyard poultry, aquaponics, herbal therapy, beneficial organisms, container gardening, greenhouse construction and birding basics, to name just a few.

Said one enthusiastic MG, “If you have not experienced the

Country Living Expo, you are missing a sure bet—and continuing education hours as well!”

Next year’s Expo—January 31, 2015! ☺



Lynne Poling (L) and Diane Erickson were two of the master gardeners staffing the MG Information table at the Country Living Expo.

Catching the Rain

Jane Billinghamurst

Thanks to a partnership between WSU Extension and Stewardship Partners, the Skagit County Master Gardeners now play a key role in educating the public about the benefits of rain gardens. Rain gardens remove pollutants from storm water, and the cleaner water seeping out of rain gardens recharges local groundwater systems. Recharged groundwater keeps streams flowing steadily throughout the season, avoiding the flooding that erodes stream banks in storm events and maintaining water levels for aquatic life in drier months.

The site www.12000raingardens.org documents the progress being made around Puget Sound. And thanks to hard work by Stewardship Partners, each county in the Puget Sound area has grant money from the Russell Family Foundation to help with outreach efforts.

Where do we stand in Skagit County?



A brand-new rain garden at Key Bank near the I-5 intersection in Mount Vernon, courtesy of MG Emma Davis. Skagit MGs are photographing rain gardens across the county to record their progress so we can learn more about plants choices and maintenance issues in our area. Contact Jane Billinghamurst if you'd like to document a rain garden in your area through the seasons.

(Photo by Emma Davis)



Mulch party at the David Brookings Rain Garden, January 2014. Just in time to nip late winter weeds in the bud, master gardeners Jane Billinghamurst and Becky Stinson talk about the role of mulch, and pitch in with energetic conservation district volunteers corralled by Kristi Carpenter—and County employees who left their desks and rolled up their sleeves—to spread 30 yards of mulch provided by Skagit County Public Works. Everyone was rewarded with pizza.

(Photo by Kristi Carpenter)

Skagit County MGs continue to make quarterly visit to the David Brookings Rain Garden outside the County Commissioner's building on Continental Place in Mount Vernon. Thanks to our work there, the landscaping crew no longer uses herbicides in the garden, the mulch layer has been replenished, and the county is considering removing over-exuberant plants and adopting a pruning regimen in keeping with the natural look of the garden.

Master gardener involvement with the David Brookings Rain Garden has helped raise our visibility with the county commissioners and county staff. The county is planning to add rain gardens to their parking lots, opening up more possibilities for this site as a base for public education. The rain garden scavenger hunt we installed in the garden last year was one small step in establishing this area as a venue for learning.

Master gardener involvement with the David Brookings Rain Garden has also helped create partnerships with the Skagit Conservation District and the Department of Ecology, as we tour groups through the garden. We've also had students at the La Conner Middle School talk to us about the rain garden in their parking lot, and we hope to help another neighborhood school install a rain garden to demonstrate how green infrastructures can improve the health of local ecosystems.

The grant from the Russell Family Foundation has paid for rain garden field trips, booth space at public events, and materials for public outreach. This spring, it will cover the cost of the master gardener booth at public

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events, and materials for public outreach. This spring, it will cover the cost of the master gardener booth at the SICBA Home and Garden Show, March 21-23, 2014. And, in a new venture for us, master gardeners will design and plant a rain garden around one of the six playhouses being raffled off at the show for charity. Azusa Farm and Gardens will donate materials for the garden. The playhouse is being built by Jim Spane. Raffle proceeds will go to Skagit Valley Hospital.

By 2016, rain gardens and other low-impact development (LID) techniques will be required in new Skagit County developments. By educating ourselves about plant choices and maintenance techniques for rain gardens, master gardeners can be resources for individuals who want to install these stormwater-processing facilities in their home landscapes.

If you want to know more about Skagit County master gardeners' work with rain gardens, contact Jane Billingham at jane.billinghurst@gmail.com .

Will Rogers on Growing Older



1. Eventually you will reach a point when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it.
2. The older we get, the fewer things seem worth waiting in line for.
3. Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me; I want people to know “why” I look this way. I've traveled a long way, and some of the roads weren't paved.
4. When you are dissatisfied and would like to go back to youth, think of Algebra.
5. You know you are getting old when everything either dries up or leaks.
6. I don't know how I got over the hill without getting to the top.
7. One of the many things no one tells you about aging is that it's such a nice change from being young.
8. One must wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been.
9. Being young is beautiful, but being old is comfortable and relaxed.
10. Long ago, when men cursed and beat the ground with sticks, it was called witchcraft. Today it's called golf.

Finally, if you don't learn to laugh at trouble, you won't have anything to laugh at when you're old.



Your mind is a garden,
Your thoughts are the seeds,
The harvest can be
Either flowers or weeds.

~ Unknown



I do some of my best thinking
while pulling weeds.

~ Martha Smith