



2015 Master Gardener Program Summary

The Washington State University Extension Master Gardener program grew out of the need for County Extension agents to respond to the growing interest in home gardening over 40 years ago. Today, Master Gardener (MG) Volunteer Community Educators promote scientifically based landscaping practices that yield environmental, economic, and aesthetic benefits. MGs provide information, classes, and demonstrations throughout Snohomish County that emphasize home grown produce, sustainable gardening practices, integrated pest management, water conservation, storm water management, and overall low environmental impact. In 2015, 351 WSU Snohomish County Extension Master Gardeners donated over 30,000 hours of volunteer time, including training a new class of 46 volunteers, who participated in approximately 150 hours of classroom and online instruction before qualifying as a MG Intern.

Plant Diagnosis Clinics: In 2015, the MG program operated Plant Diagnosis Clinics at more than 25 locations around the county, many once a week during the growing season, plus a year-around, weekday clinic at the Extension Office for a total of approximately 2300 hours when 2-3 MGs were available to the public to answer questions. Typical questions included plant and pest identification, soil testing, general plant care, disease solutions, and low impact landscape practices. In 2015 they answered questions from more than 6200 Snohomish County citizens. Previous survey results showed that intended pesticide use was reduced by three-quarters by those who consulted a Master Gardener.

Community Outreach: The MG program provided workshops, classes, lectures, demonstrations, and mentoring to the adults and youth of Snohomish County, to include the 10-part Growing Groceries Lecture Series, and the 8-part Sustainable Gardening Winter Lecture Series. The MG Demonstration Gardens at Jennings Park in Marysville, McCollum Park in south Everett, and Legion Park in north Everett demonstrate a wide variety of sustainable garden techniques and are always open to the public. In addition, Jennings focuses on edible landscaping practices with the produce donated to local food banks, which totaled more than 3,000 lbs. in 2015. MGs also provide education and mentoring services to community, food bank, school, and church gardens throughout Snohomish County, which donated more than 30,000 lbs. of fresh produce to local food banks in 2015. In addition, MGs work with local schools and the 4-H program to mentor the youth of our county.

Snohomish County Master Gardener Foundation: The MG program works closely with the Snohomish County Master Gardener Foundation (SCMGF), an independent 501(c)3 Corporation whose mission is to provide committed support for the MG Program through community service, educational outreach, and fundraising. The Foundation sponsors two major fundraisers, the annual MG Plant Sale and the Sustainable Gardening Winter Lecture Series, whose proceeds go to support the MG program.

Partnerships: By partnering with Snohomish County Solid Waste, Snohomish County Surface Water Management and The Snohomish County Conservation District, Master Gardeners are able to leverage limited resources in joint efforts to reduce solid waste by the increased recycling of organic waste and the proper use of compost; reduce storm-water run-off pollution of our lakes, streams, rivers and the Sound through education about rain gardens and natural yard care; and the proper use and disposal of pesticides.

Invasive Species Monitoring: MGs are designated as first responders and are trained to identify, detect and report new invasive species, such as the Brown Marmorated Stinkbug, and then they help the public cope with these new threats as well as the return of old problems, such as bed bugs.