Internet Resources and Web Searching for WSU Master Gardeners
By Dave Pehling, WSU Extension Snohomish County
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The Internet is an incredibly rich source of information on all sorts of subjects. Unfortunately, it is equally (or more) rich in absolute garbage! As a WSU Master Gardener Volunteer, knowing how to use the web wisely will increase your diagnosis skills and help you stay within WSU guidelines.

When a plant specimen first comes to a clinic, it is most important to know the name and variety if at all possible. After finding out all you can about the plant (how old, how long in present location, drainage, watering schedule, fertilizing, etc.) look closely at the signs and symptoms so you can formulate a logical set of key words.

Before you bring out the “Big Guns” and go to a search engine, first check out the available WSU web resources. These include:
- WSU Hort Sense http://pep.wsu.edu/hortsense/
- WSU Pest Sense http://pep.wsu.edu/pestsense/

WSU Gardening in Western Washington Library http://gardening.wsu.edu/text/libr.htm (you might also check out the “Ask an Expert” and use the “Guest Access” to search previously asked questions). There is an expanded list at the link at the bottom of this article.

If you cannot find an answer at these sites, then you might consider checking University web pages for possibilities. Remember that .COM and .ORG sites, among many others, are often not reliable sources of research-based information.

One of the best resources for learning how to use the Internet search engines efficiently is the site at http://pandia.com/goalgetter/index.html where there is an excellent tutorial. In a nutshell, what I do is to use Google in most cases.

Once you have thought of the key words in mind that you want to use, go to http://google.com and start typing in your key words. Keep in mind that if you want to search for a phrase, the phrase should be in quotation marks. For instance, a search for apple scab would bring up thousands of pages with the words apple and scab somewhere in the body. A search for “apple scab” is supposed to only show pages that have the phrase apple scab in the body. (See Google Search Tips below for more suggestions.)

To restrict your searches to University sites, you use the “site” search tool. For instance, in the above example, say we want to find out about possible research-based controls for apple scab. I might type the following into the Google search box:

“apple scab” disease control site:.edu

In the above example, if I wanted to restrict the searches to WSU web sites, I would type:

“applescab” disease control site:.wsu.edu

Note that the placement of the dots and colon (no spaces) is important.

Now, once you have a list of possible control options, if there are ANY chemicals involved, you must cross-reference those recommendations with your WSU MG references to make sure they are products you may recommend. See the web page at

http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/ApprovedPestManagement.html.

Happy Diagnosing!
GOOGLE SEARCH TIPS (www.google.com):
Adapted from the Seattle Public Library Genealogy Search Tips publication

- What is Google?
  - Google is a search engine. You can think of a search engine as an index to the Internet.

- Use quotes (e.g., “David Rusk” vs. David Rusk)
  - Using quotes will retrieve web pages with the phrase "David Rusk" (e.g. David Rusk was born in Baltimore, Maryland).
  - Without quotes, the search will retrieve web pages that have both David AND Rusk anywhere on the page (e.g. David Smith was living in Rusk County, Texas in 1930).

- Search for names forwards and backwards (e.g., “Rusk David” & “David Rusk”).
  - A search for "David Rusk" in quotes will not retrieve any web pages that have the phrase "Rusk David" unless the web page also contains the phrase "David Rusk". This is important because many web pages, particularly those that contain transcriptions of records, will list people last name first (e.g., Rusk, David, b. 1789).

- Use the OR operator (e.g., “Rusk David” OR “David Rusk”)
  - Using the OR operator will retrieve web pages that have either of the phrases, thereby retrieving more results.

- Use “*” (wildcard) operator (e.g., “David * Rusk”)
  - Using the wildcard operator in this example will retrieve web pages that contain phrases such as David Lewis Rusk, David L. Rusk, David T. Rusk, etc.

- Be specific (e.g., add county, state, town, or related surnames to query)
  - This is a good way to increase the relevance of your search results. This is particularly useful when searching for common names (e.g. John Smith), or when most of the search results do not relate to your family.

- Use the "-" (minus) operator. Placing a "-" immediately before a search term restricts the search results to Web sites that do not contain the search term. (e.g. "David Rusk" Baltimore -"Baltimore Unbound" -"Albuquerque Mayor"). Use the ".-" operator with caution as you could easily exclude relevant Web sites from your search results.

- Use as a phone book (e.g., "John Smith" Seattle Washington)
  - This will find telephone numbers and addresses for John Smith in Seattle, Washington.
  - If there is a match, you will see "Phonebook results for "John Smith" Seattle Washington" at the top of the page. Additional search results (not from the phone book) will be included directly below.

- Search for whatever it is you are looking for.
  - You never know what you’ll find.

- Remember that you will never find all the records you need in any one source. Google is only one search engine among many.