



GROUNDDED

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<http://county.wsu.edu/grant-adams/Pages/default.aspx> · ga.mgvolunteers@wsu.edu

8th Annual Eco-Gardening Symposium Offers Sustainable Home Garden Design Solutions . . . *By Sharon Hastings*

Local gardeners will gather on Saturday, April 5th for the 8th Annual Columbia Basin Eco-Gardening Symposium, an event designed to provide attractive, science-based solutions for eco-friendly gardening. The symposium will feature expert-led presentations, demonstrations, and interactive discussions at Big Bend Community College (1800 ATEC Building) from 9 am-1 pm. The Grant-Adams Washington State University (WSU) Master Gardener Program and the Columbia Basin Conservation District will co-host this event.

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This year’s theme, “Build Your Own Adventure,” focuses on helping home gardeners acquire the tools and knowledge to design attractive and resilient landscapes that support local biodiversity. This FREE event is open to the public and includes access to all sessions, materials, and refreshments.

“Our goal is to inspire and educate new and experienced gardeners about how to design beautiful, personalized gardens that promote healthy soils, conserve water, and preserve habitats,” said Diane Escure, a Master Gardener and event coordinator. “Attendees will leave with practical strategies to apply in their own gardens, whether they’re growing vegetables, maintaining a pollinator-friendly yard, or managing urban landscapes.”

Speakers include Austin Little, a WSU horticulture professor, who will provide creative water-efficient landscape design ideas to add to yards and gardens. Jenna Medlar, Chelan County noxious weed field supervisor, will challenge participants about their weed knowledge and offer ways to control and manage weeds in their landscapes. Noted wildfire management expert Al Murphy will discuss how the right plant in the right place can ensure fire wise properties.

In addition to expert-led talks, attendees can participate in interactive workshops and demonstrations. A panel of local gardeners will share their experiences in adding drought-tolerant plants to their gardens. From the many mini-demos, gardeners will learn how to grow colorful and sustainable pots and planters; how to attract beautiful pollinators, and how to be eligible for technical/financial assistance for sustainable gardening. Vendors and community organizations will also be present with native/heirloom plants and seed, soil testing, winter sowing ideas, pollinator information, irrigation, and much more.

“Gardeners of all experience levels will find valuable insights and practical applications at this symposium,” said Mark Amara, a long-time Master Gardener. “The event is a great opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and learn how small changes in gardening practices can have a significant environmental impact.”

The Grant-Adams WSU Master Gardener Program and the Columbia Basin Conservation District have been at the forefront of sustainable gardening education for decades. The annual Eco-Gardening Symposium is a cornerstone event that continues to grow in popularity, attracting home gardeners, landscapers, and conservation advocates from across the region.

Advance registration is encouraged, as space is limited. For more information or to register, visit https://extension.wsu.edu/grant/gardening/master_gardeners/ or contact the Columbia Basin Conservation District: (509) 765-9618.



8TH ANNUAL
WSU Master Gardeners
Eco-Gardening Symposium
"GROW YOUR OWN ADVENTURE"

FREE EVENT!

Dreams Do Come True!
 Fireproof Your Property
 Banish Pesky Weeds
 Design YOUR Sustainable Dream Garden

REGISTER NOW!
 SCAN THE QR CODE, VISIT
 EXTENSION.WSU.EDU/GRANT/GARDENING/
 MASTER_GARDENERS, OR CALL THE CBCD
 OFFICE AT (509) 765-9618

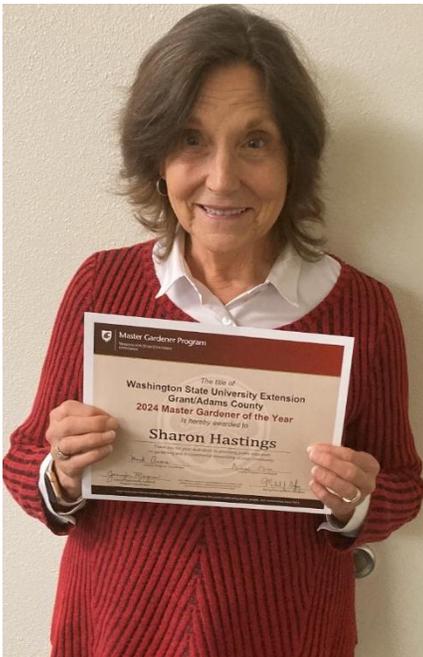
SATURDAY
APRIL 5, 2025
9 AM - 1 PM
 ATEC BLDG #1800, 7611 BOLLING ST NE
 BIG BEND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
 MOSES LAKE

PRESENTED BY WSU GRANT-ADAMS MASTER GARDENERS & THE COLUMBIA BASIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Master Gardener of the Year Awarded

Sharon Hastings recently received the 2024 Master Gardener of the Year award. Sharon was honored for her leadership and program support in several key rating categories: community involvement, educational impact within the program or community, promotion of the WSU Master Gardener program and its goals, leadership role, commitment, and legacy.

Among her accomplishments, Sharon led efforts to advance activities of the Ephrata Seed Library. She ordered seeds for it, worked with library staff to promote its use, and encouraged borrowers to bring back heirloom seeds to help perpetuate it. Through Sharon's efforts, the Seed Library was a vendor at the 7th annual eco-gardening symposium to educate the public on the importance of seed saving and it will again be a participant at this year's symposium.



Sharon Hastings. Photo credit: D. Escure

Sharon was a major contributor to the success of the 2024 eco-gardening symposium. She helped ensure that attendance doubled from the previous year due largely to her outstanding marketing skills. Her accomplishments included developing marketing strategies and content for the event through various mediums, helping to set up Eventbrite registration, contacting potential speakers for the event, designing specialty magnets that gave information on how to access the Master Gardener online clinic, contacting stores for discounts on food for the symposium and obtaining financial support from businesses, the City of Moses Lake and Grant County Tourism. And, she was a wonderful Master of Ceremonies for last year’s symposium.

MGs are required to volunteer at least 35 hours per year and Sharon greatly exceeded that by logging 183 hours in 2024. Sharon has made outstanding efforts to connect with innumerable contacts throughout Washington to promote the eco-gardening symposium and to help expand its reach. Her goals are to help educate the public on sustainable gardening practices now and in the future.

Master Gardener Trainees on Road to Certification . . . *By Mark Amara*

Last December 2024, Amy Dinco, Susan Franck, Leyla Lyman, Anjie Rieman, Rabbit Howard-Stevens, and Joyce Stauffenberg finished an intensive series of in-person fall training sessions, successfully completed Washington State University online training for Master Gardeners, and are now on their way to becoming certified Master Gardeners this year. Their online training covered 25 chapters of science-based gardening topics and included successfully passing chapter quizzes and a final exam.

To obtain certification status, the six Master Gardener trainees are now volunteering throughout 2025 in a variety of activities that include staffing plant clinics, working at demonstration gardens, working on the annual gardening symposium committee, helping at the MG greenhouse and plant sale, writing articles for newsletters or other news media, and helping with fundraising or grant writing efforts. During each phase of this training, MG mentors are paired with each trainee to provide additional advice, encouragement, and guidance to help enable successful completion.

Training to Become a Master Gardener

Training community members as certified Master Gardeners is one of WSU’s most important contributions to the community and environmental health. Certified Master Gardeners are dedicated and committed to becoming volunteer educators for WSU Extension in Grant and Adams Counties. Primary responsibilities include teaching and serving as resource persons on horticulture and gardening topics, staffing exhibits or the annual gardening symposium, holding plant clinics, and working in demonstration gardens.

The next scheduled training for anyone interested in becoming a WSU Extension Grant-Adams Master Gardener volunteer will begin in September 2026. Those interested in learning more about the MG program may visit the WSU Master Gardener Grant-Adams website:

https://extension.wsu.edu/grant/gardening/master_gardeners/

Requirements for Master Gardener candidates:

- Have a strong volunteer ethic
- Commit to become a volunteer educator for WSU Extension
- Pass federal background screening
- Complete on-line WSU education classes
- Abide by WSU Master Gardener regulations
- Be willing to take additional required training annually and participate in volunteer activities.

Washington Green School

Over the past 50+ years, Washington State University Extension has provided guidance and instruction to the gardening public along with training to those who have been certified as Master Gardeners. Starting in 2025, WSU has developed new options for anyone who wants to learn gardening principles through the Master Gardener program or for anyone who wants to take gardening classes.



Training may apply to those who want to learn more about gardening in Washington but may not want to serve as Master Gardener volunteers. Some gardening professionals may be only seeking a gardening endorsement for their resumes but might not want to be obligated to volunteer annually, which is a requirement for all Master Gardeners. The new program is called Washington Green School and it offers lots of options to explore. The attached website link explains the program, options, schedules, and fees and is quite comprehensive: It is <https://greenschool.extension.wsu.edu>.

Sign-ups for these classes will take place until September 30 of every year. If a student is interested in training for the Grant-Adams Master Gardener program, being accepted into the program and finishing the online course work is an integral part of that training. However, since classroom training/labs are only offered every other year in Grant-Adams Counties, those who finish the Green School training will wait to participate in the next round of formal Master Gardener training that will begin in September 2026. Go to the Grant-Adams Master Gardener website for details, to download a leaflet and application. https://extension.wsu.edu/grant/gardening/master_gardeners/

Need a Small “Survival Garden”? . . . *By Duane Pitts, Retired Grant-Adams Master Gardener*

I have found that growing my own fruit, both berries and tree fruit, and veggies is relaxing for me and puts me more in touch with nature. Not everyone, though, has the time or energy for a large garden. Mine is 60 feet long by 10 feet wide.

However, given that fresh vegetable prices keep rising and some may become harder to find, maybe those of you without a lot of space can grow your own veggies in what is called a “survival garden” at home to help offset some of your food costs. The suggestions below are just that . . . suggestions. Plant the veggies you like with the space you have and the watering system you have whether it’s from a kitchen sink or outside faucet.

Thus, this article is for those who have a small yard space, a balcony, an outside wall facing south, or a patio that can be used for a survival garden.

For a **small garden**, like 10 x 10 feet or smaller, for example, plant lettuce, bush beans, or a compact variety of zucchini. In corners or along the inner edges, try garlic, green onions, radishes, or even strawberries. And some other veggies could grow there as well, depending on what you want most. Some veggies or other arrangements shown below could grow in a small garden quite well.

If you have a **balcony or small patio**, then these plants could work in small to large pots and grow bags: mild to hot peppers, potatoes, cherry tomatoes, spinach, kale, radishes, broccoli, herbs (basil, parsley, cilantro), strawberries. If you want mint, plant it in a small to medium pot (depends on how much you want), but do not plant in a regular garden space of any size. **It spreads!**



Photo source: balconygardenweb.com



Photo source: countryliving.com

A **south-facing wall** or a **wall trellis** would be a good place for these plants: peas, cucumbers, strawberries in small containers attached to the wall or trellis. Herbs in small containers grow nicely on a wall trellis, too.



Photo source: [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com)



Photo source: alamy.com

Window boxes are great for herbs, strawberries, garlic, Swiss chard, mint, radishes.



Photo source: alamy.com

Window spaces inside can be used for herbs in small plastic trays or small to medium pots (depending on the sill width, of course). Shallow trays with water are good places to grow bok choy and celery bottoms (which will grow repeatedly if you do not discard them).



Photo source: herbgardendesigns.dolyan.com



Photo source: [wayfair](http://wayfair.com)

Inside the house, garage or workshop space, mushrooms are best grown with a mushroom kit.



gardeningmaven.com



dreamtime.com

For outside veggie plants, flowers can be added for color and to attract pollinators.



The Spruce



pininterest.ca

Generally speaking,

1. Start small and build up so you get comfortable with growing your own veggies.
2. Pick and choose the veggies you want.
3. Look at the space you have and your closest water source.
4. Decide where you want to start and what type of containers you will need for those veggies.
5. Buy potting soil or garden soil if you are using grow bags, pots, containers, or a window box.

Happy gardening, no matter the location or type of your “survival garden!”

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Plant Clinics Are Ways to Connect . . . *By Mark Amara*

The WSU Extension Grant-Adams Master Gardeners (MGs) offer the public free online plant and insect advice that's available 365 days/24 hours per day/7 days per week. A dedicated MG is always on call to provide answers for urban and rural gardening questions, pest management, and other horticultural issues of concern. Our answers follow science-based research produced by Washington State University or other university extension programs.

The public can email their gardening questions for the online plant clinic service to ga.mgvolunteers@wsu.edu and are encouraged to describe their issues in detail and provide photographs when appropriate. MGs respond usually by email or phone although less often they may respond by text or in person. Plants or insects that we cannot identify are sent to WSU or Washington State Department of Agriculture specialists for further analysis, diagnosis, and identification.

The public may also leave messages for MGs at the WSU Grant County Extension Office by calling (509) 754-2011 x 4301 or drop off their samples at the Grant County Extension Office at 1525 E. Wheeler Road, Moses Lake, Monday to Friday from 8-5 pm. Additional resources and opportunities for the public to investigate their gardening issues are available on our website:

https://extension.wsu.edu/grant/gardening/master_gardeners/

MGs are also available to answer questions in person at plant clinics held at the Moses Lake Farmers Market on Saturdays at McCosh Park from May-October, at the August Grant County Fair and September Othello Fair, and at other venues announced throughout the year.

MGs provide information on common sense science-based gardening and pest management principles that include conserving and protecting water quality, composting kitchen and yard waste, and identifying and providing solutions to plant and pest problems. Our volunteers also inform and encourage the public to serve as an 'early warning system' for identified new threats to home and gardening and commercial agriculture as they arise.

Our MG volunteers are also available to serve Grant County and Adams County communities through gardening workshops, field demonstrations, and an annual eco-gardening symposium held in April that draws hundreds of people interested in gardening issues and sustainable gardening methods. The public is always welcome to visit one of the MG demonstration gardens located in Moses Lake and Othello. These serve as teaching tools, showcase plants that do well in our area, and illustrate sustainable gardening practices and plantings. MGs maintain both native and drought-tolerant plants at the two demonstration gardens, which are located at the Old Hotel in Othello and on the edge of Civic Park by the Moses Lake Public Library. On request, Master Gardeners also speak at public events or to individual groups.

Take the Time to Soil Test . . . *By Mark Amara*

Testing soils can be a quick and fun way to legitimately play in the dirt and get a grip on figuring out fertilizer needs for yards and gardens. And now is a good time of the year to do just that prior to planting annual crops or to assess needs for perennial plants. Taking a soil test about once every three to five years in the spring or fall is a way to learn about how much fertilizer to add. Rather than get an off-the-shelf test from a box store, it is recommended to have laboratory tests done by a professional firm that specializes in doing them. It is best though to sample correctly, preferably at the same time of the year each time and to maintain records for comparison. It is important to understand that testing is done to see what nutrients are expected to be available to plants rather than to show the total amounts of nutrients in the soil.

Lab tests run on a standard sample should include organic matter, pH (acidity or alkalinity), nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, and micro nutrients, like calcium, boron, magnesium, zinc, iron, manganese, and sodium. Several soil testing firms are found throughout Washington, although using local sources is probably most practical for home gardeners in Grant and Adams Counties.

Soil testing firms will provide soil sample bags with instructions on how to collect soil and should be picked up ahead of time before collecting samples. Each bag holds about a quart of soil. It is recommended to fill out paperwork and pick up sample bags at the testing firm before soil sampling to help determine what tests to run and to estimate testing costs.

- Take samples from the area planned for planting or in other desired areas, like where established perennial plants are located.
- Avoid lanes or paths, between beds (unless those areas will be planted), edges, wet areas, or areas previously used for holding animals (e.g., chickens, horses, goats or cows or other livestock), compost heaps, or manure piles.
- Try to sample areas that are typical of the entire planting area.
- Take samples between 0 to 12 inches from several areas in the yard or garden or deeper, depending on the rooting depths of preferred crops. Sampling deeper is also a possibility for deeper rooted plants.
- If you think you have distinctly different conditions, consider having tests completed on different areas.
- Sample using clean shovels, trowels or augers and thoroughly mix soil in a clean bucket. Soil collected for testing should be devoid of undecomposed organic matter (manure, leaves, or grass) and rock (of any size) that can contaminate a sample. All collected soil should be in sufficient quantity to fill the sample bag.

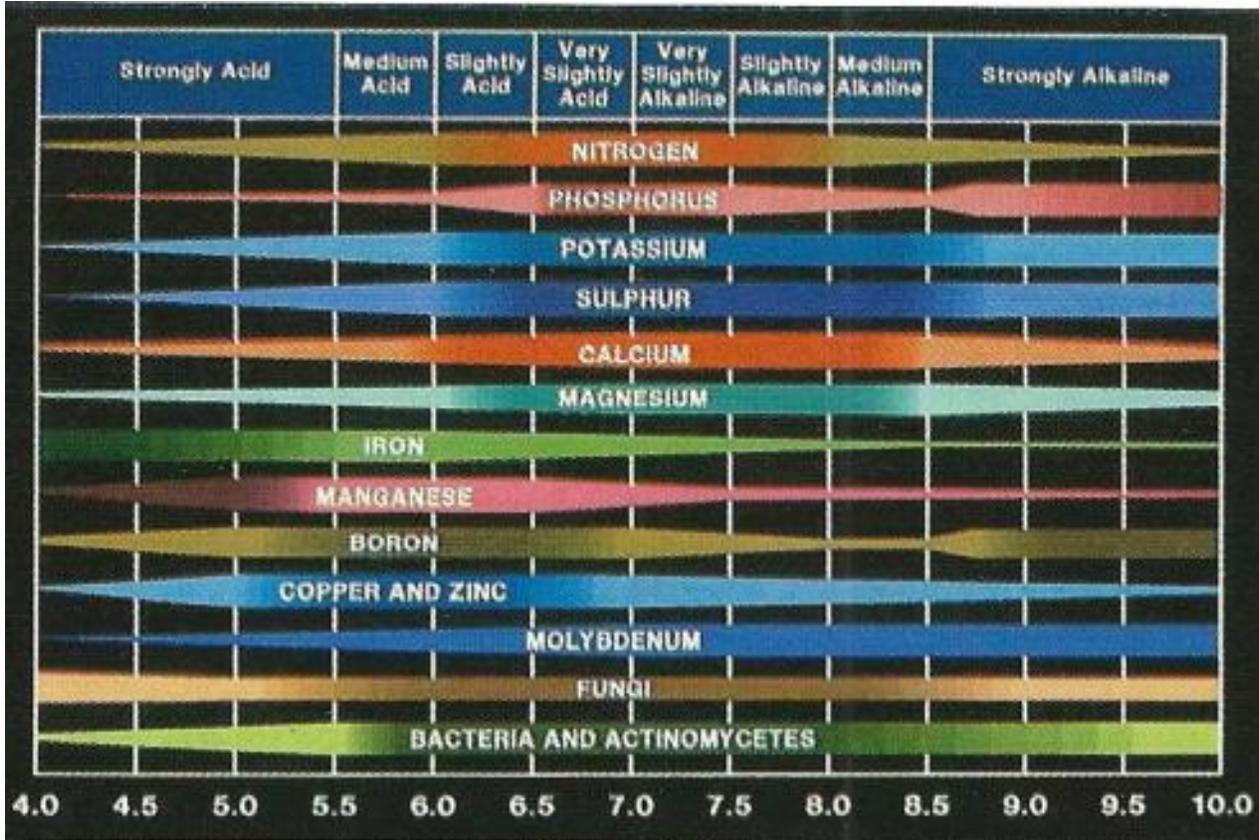


Soiltest sample bag

Best-Test Analytical Services
Sample Bag

Soil test results are often available in a few days and will provide how many pounds of fertilizer are needed to amend the soil. If additional interpretation of results is desired, contact the testing firm to talk to a soils expert for further clarification. Soil testing specialists can provide ways to fertilize, frequency of application, fertilizer types, or application methods to help determine how much and what kind of fertilizer to apply. Note that recommended applications are for a full season. However, making small additions incrementally through the season is recommended to avoid problems later rather than amending soils with fertilizer all at once.

Typically, soils in Grant and Adams Counties test low for nitrogen and sulfur, both of which are soluble in water. This means that these nutrients will leach away rather quickly with normal watering practices (and even more quickly with overwatering). Some of the trace elements (micro nutrients) like boron, zinc, and copper are important for crop health on a commercial scale but may not be reflected as much in home gardens unless they are very deficient or affected by pH. Many soils in this area are also on the alkaline (high) side of the pH scale (above 8). The pH scale ranges between 1-14. If pH gets much above 8, gardeners should consider amending soils (with sulfur) to bring the pH closer to 7, which is considered neutral. Low pH (below 5) soils are considered on the acid side of the scale and can tie up nutrients making them unavailable to plants. So it is important to monitor and find ways to maintain or improve soil conditions often.



Soil reaction influence on availability of plant nutrients (National Soil Survey Center in cooperation with the Soil Quality Institute, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA, and the National Soil Tilth Laboratory, Agricultural Research Service, USDA 1996.

Our soils are also typically low in organic matter. In the native condition, soil organic matter is at 1% or less. Ideally, the higher the organic matter (2-4%), the more healthy and productive soils can become.

It is recommended to improve your soils constantly by adding copious amounts of organic matter, such as annually incorporating crop residues, adding straw or alfalfa or other untreated (unsprayed) materials like leaves and (pesticide-free) grass clippings, or planting cover or green manure crops.

Adding manures of one kind or another over time should be watched as they can accumulate nutrients to excessive levels. For example, when cow manure is added year after year to build organic matter, phosphorous, which is one of its primary components, can reach levels that may be too high for many crops to endure. Then, it may be necessary to find ways to neutralize these conditions, like growing crops that help utilize the nutrients and help moderate its levels or avoid fertilizers with phosphorus. Similarly, growing crops on high pH soils can be done without amending it if you know what will tolerate higher pH. More people are planting blueberries in eastern Washington. For that crop, soils must be amended to bring the pH down into the acid range because the plants will not produce well otherwise.

Extension Master Gardeners do not recommend one soil testing service over another. It is up to gardeners to check them out and determine which one works best for their needs. Some of the labs close to us include:

Soil Test Farm Consultants, Inc.

2925 Driggs Drive W
Moses Lake, WA 98837
(509) 765-1622
www.soiltestlab.com

Kuo Testing Labs Inc

337 S 1st Ave
Othello, WA 99344
(509) 488-0112
www.kuotesting.com/

USAG Analytical Laboratories

1320 E. Spokane St.
Pasco, WA 99301
(800) 244-0573
<http://www.emswcd.org/conservation-directory/soil-and-water-testing/usag-analytical-services-inc>

Best-Test Analytical Services LLC

3394 Bell Road NE
Moses Lake, WA 98837
(509) 766-7701
besttest@scml.us or www.besttestlabs.co

Cascade Analytical Environmental Agricultural Laboratory

3019 G. S. Center Road
Wenatchee, WA 98801
(509) 662-1888
info@cascadeanalytical.com

Analytical Sciences Laboratory

University of Idaho
Holm Research Center
PO Box 442203
Moscow, ID 83844
(208) 885-7081
<http://www.agls.uidaho.edu/asl/>

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Home Gardener's Guide to Soils and Fertilizers. Washington State University. 2005.
<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb1971e/eb1971e.pdf>

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Soil Testing and Soil Improvement.

<http://county.wsu.edu/king/gardening/mg/factsheets/Fact%20Sheets/Soil%20Testing%20and%20Soil%20Improvement.pdf>.

Mark Your Calendar

- Annual Columbia Basin Eco-Gardening Symposium, April 5, 2025, 9 am - 1 pm, Big Bend Community College, 1800 ATEC Building in Moses Lake
- Master Gardeners of Grant-Adams Counties Annual 1-day plant sale, Saturday, May 3, 2025, 8 am to 1 pm, Farmers Market at McCosh Park in Moses Lake



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