



GROUNDDED

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Master Gardeners Hosted Successful April Community Event

WSU Extension Grant-Adams Master Gardeners (MGs) co-sponsored another successful Eco-Gardening symposium with the Columbia Basin Conservation District (CBCD) on Saturday, April 5, 2025, at Big Bend Community College. Over 200 people signed up for this 8th annual free event “Build Your Own Adventure” to learn about designing attractive and resilient landscapes that promote healthy soils, conserve water, and preserve habitats.

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Speakers Austin Little, horticulture professor at Washington State University in Pullman, presented water-efficient landscape design ideas; Jenna Medlar, Chelan County noxious weed field supervisor, offered ways to identify, control and manage weeds in a landscape; and wildfire management expert Al Murphy, discussed planting the right plant in the right place to ensure safe fire-resistant properties. In addition, Dinah Rouleau, CBCD conservation director, led a panel discussion on growing drought-tolerant plants in the Columbia Basin. Panelists Cindi Rang, property owner of a Soap Lake retreat property, MG Marylou Krautscheid, volunteer on City of George beautification project; and MG George Roper, private property owner, discussed their experiences in converting their water guzzling landscapes into water-conserving drought tolerant plantings.

In addition, mini presentations for attendees were held during several breaks that demonstrated how to grow colorful drought-tolerant plants in pots, how to attract beautiful pollinators to gardens, what to plant in riparian areas, and how to be eligible for technical and financial assistance for sustainable gardening.

Vendors answered attendees’ questions and provided handouts during the event:

- Best Test Analytical Services, LLC
- BFI Native Seeds
- City of Moses Lake Water Conservation
- Columbia Basin Conservation District
- Columbia River Basin Seed
- Ephrata Seed Library
- Girl Scout Troop #1903 - Winter Sowing Project
- Grant County Noxious Weed Board
- Grant-Adams Master Gardeners and Foundation
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Seasons Horticulture and Design
- Seed Cupboard Nursery
- Washington Native Bee Society

In addition, drought-tolerant and landscape plants were available for sale, refreshments were served, and several door prizes were awarded at the event.



Drought tolerant plant panel discussion. Left right: Marylou Krautscheid, Cindi Rang, and George Roper, and moderator Dinah Rouleau.

Keynote speaker Austin Little discussed xeriscape landscaping and other water-wise concepts.



During a break, WA Native Bee Society member, Lisa Robinson, discussed benefits of attracting bees to a garden.



Master Gardener Glenn Martin asked gardening questions of George and Carol Roper at the Master Gardener plant clinic table.



Master Gardeners Marylou Krautscheid, Mary Love, and Linda Crosier assist attendees interested in buying plants grown at the MG greenhouse.



Fifteen vendors participated in the event. Shown here, left to right, are the Columbia Basin Conservation District, BFI Native Seeds, and the Grant County Noxious Weed Board tables. Symposium photo credits: Don McGraw

Spring Master Gardener Plant Sales

Over the past winter and spring, Grant-Adams Master Gardeners planted and tended over 1600 drought-tolerant flowers and grasses and a large variety of heirloom vegetables, herbs and forbs at the Quincy greenhouse. The plants were sold at the 8th annual Eco-Gardening Symposium and on opening day of the Moses Lake Farmers Market on May 3rd as well as sold to Quincy Lamb Weston, Quincy Beautification Committee, and the Port of Quincy. Over 250 of these plants were also donated to support the Columbia Basin Job Corps, Boys and Girls Club of the Columbia Basin, City of George Beautification Project, and the Moses Lake Community Garden. Plant sale proceeds go to help support Master Gardener educational activities provided to the community throughout the year.

Greenhouse operations relied heavily on volunteer support from a core group of Master Gardeners: Marylou Krautscheid, Patience Harris, Marta Tredway, Glenn Martin, Maria Reimers, Diane Escure, and Don McGraw and MG interns Susan Franck, Joyce Stauffenberg, and Angie Rieman.



Master Gardeners donated vegetables and herbs grown at the MG greenhouse to the Moses Lake Community Garden (left) and to the Boys and Girls Club of the Columbia Basin (left pictured with Jessie Pelham, Child Nutrition Coordinator). Photo credit: Janelle Todaro.



MGs donated six varieties of heirloom tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, cabbage, and herbs to the Columbia Basin Job Corps for its culinary garden. Pictured, Donald Key, Job Corps Culinary Director. Photo credit: D. Escure



MGs donated a variety of drought-tolerant plants for the City of George beautification project. Pictured here are Fleabane (foreground) and Blanket Flower behind it. Photo credit: D. Escure



MGs grew, planted and sold 209 red, orange, and white geraniums for Lamb Weston Quincy's landscaping. Photo credit: D. Escure

BFI Offers Varied Plant Natives . . . *By Mark Amara*

Matt Benson, BFI Native Seeds Co-Owner, and Linda Duran, Forb Management Specialist, accompanied by Michael Gimmetstad, Agronomist, led a Master Gardener tour of the native seeds plant-growing operations near Warden in late May to showcase some of the varied regionally adapted native plantings and services available. Seven Master Gardeners and/or trainees from the Grant-Adams Master Gardener program attended the tour including Susan Franck, Mary Love, Marylou Krautscheid, Glenn Martin, Deb Russell, Rabbit Howard-Stevens, and Mark Amara attended the tour.



Matt Benson (with cap and light-colored shirt, left) and Linda Duran explain the seed propagation processes used at BFI. Photo credit: Mark Amara

Matt Benson explained that BFI Native Seeds specializes in preserving local genetics and keeping native grasses and forbs sources identified, which is vitally important in habitat management activities. Using these principles, the organization grows native plants for restoration, revegetation, mitigation or conversion activities, erosion control, and riparian enhancements that assist pollination and increase endangered or threatened species plant and animal populations. The plants grown are all source-identified native grasses, forbs and shrubs for landscaping in major habitat establishment projects. BFI has a full range of services from site evaluation, consultation, wild collection, propagation, seed cleaning, mixing, and delivery to site preparation, weed management, planting and monitoring. Master Gardeners work with urban and rural non-commercial yards and gardens, and since many of the plants grown are adapted to our climate, the May 2025 tour was an opportunity to see what grows well here.



Penstemon, Evening Primrose, and Scarlet Gilia were flowering. Photo credits: Mark Amara

The tour began with a walkthrough of the plant propagation area where plugs are started in greenhouses and then transferred to outdoor growing areas. In 2025 alone, an estimated 200,000 plugs have been planted at the BFI farm with another 200,000 being nurtured in outdoor facilities. After viewing the plug establishment area, the group viewed as many as 40 or more plot plantings on about 100 acres and got detailed explanations of each planting.

The tour then moved to the seed blending facility where Matt Benson and Mike Huntley, Seed Blending Manager, explained how the collected seeds are cleaned, mixed or blended, and bagged for distribution and sale. The processes to clean the wide variety of seeds that BFI grows are complicated and precise to separate and clean them to remove weeds, inert material, and maximize seed quality and percent seed.



Matt Benson explained how seeds are dried, sorted, cleaned, blended and packaged.
Photo credits: Mark Amara

A combination of methods separates materials using an assortment of seed cleaning equipment. This

equipment precisely cleans according to size, shape, density and even color, using screens, rotating drums, and an electronic color sorter. Last year at least 600 different mixes were created from the available materials that consisted of custom blends and vendor-ordered mixes. Additionally, other commercial orders or blends are created on an as-requested basis, which adds to the diversity of this unique operation.

BFI began in 1993 when Jerry and son, Matt Benson, planted an experimental planting of one grass species on a small field. In 2025, there are now 286 separate plantings of native forbs, grasses, and shrubs on spaces less than 1/10 acre to 25 acres or more covering about 2,200 acres of the 3,000-acre farm.

Genetic specie bio-typing is keyed to soils, location, and climate so that the plantings mimic/mirror the natural environment in which they will be planted to ensure the highest plant survival rate possible. Plantings are done to generate/grow native seed which is sourced genetically from places all over the west from New Mexico to British Columbia. Homogenous grows and/or mixes are assembled usually for mostly government agencies and other organizations. Retail operations are limited to surplus availability. BFI grows mostly grasses and forbs, herbaceous non-woody plants, although a few woody plants like bitterbrush, sagebrush and rabbitbrush are also grown.

BFI Native Seeds has made generous contributions to the Master Gardener Program of locally adapted plants, which have been propagated in our greenhouse operations to be sold to the public during its spring plant sales or planted in the Othello and Moses Lake demonstration gardens.

The tour gave attendees insights into the diverse operation. The conservation efforts by BFI Native Seeds are applauded and the Master Gardeners will continue to take advantage of BFI knowledge, planting recommendations, and expertise in the years to come.

LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE & DROUGHT-TOLERANT PLANTS . . . *By George Roper*

Last year I wrote an article for the Grant Adams Master Gardener *Grounded* newsletter (November 2024 issue) on converting our front yard in Othello from a grass lawn to a drought tolerant, native plant garden. Over the winter of 2024-25, we selected plants and contacted Tapteal Nursery in West Richland with our order.



March 2025 new plantings



Sand Penstemon



Firecracker Penstemon



Globemallow



Blue Columbine



BCC students installing drip irrigation system.

Twenty-two more plants were picked up in March 2025 and immediately planted. With the plant plot map provided by the Columbia Basin Conservation District last year, my wife Carol and I put the new plants in and watered them, marking them with both the tags given us with the seedlings and our own markers made of cut up plastic venetian blinds.

Last year's plants started growing again as the weather got warmer. The first to flower was the Sand Penstemon which sent up a stalk of purplish flowers. It was followed by the Firecracker Penstemon with its red flowers and the Munro Globemallow with its small round orange flowers.

Carol and I then designed our drip irrigation system with the goal of providing at least a gallon a week in the early part of the season and twice that a week during the summer.

After speaking as a panelist at the 2025 eco-gardening symposium about my new drought tolerant garden, I was contacted by Karen Lewis, tree fruit specialist at the WSU Grant Extension Office, who offered the use of two young BCC students to put in the irrigation system for us. We gratefully accepted. The two young people, Jackson & Ingrid Mohs, went right to work, once I showed them what I wanted. It took them less than 45 minutes to do what it would have taken me hours. Each plant has a dripper at its base, as you can see in the photo above of the Blue Columbine.

Many of the plants are still small, like this Sulfur Buckwheat; we wait to see what they will look like fully grown. Then we'll see if we want to put more plants in. With the total number of plants reaching 60, we found that we only lost about 8 plants total from both fall and spring plantings.



Sulfur Buckwheat



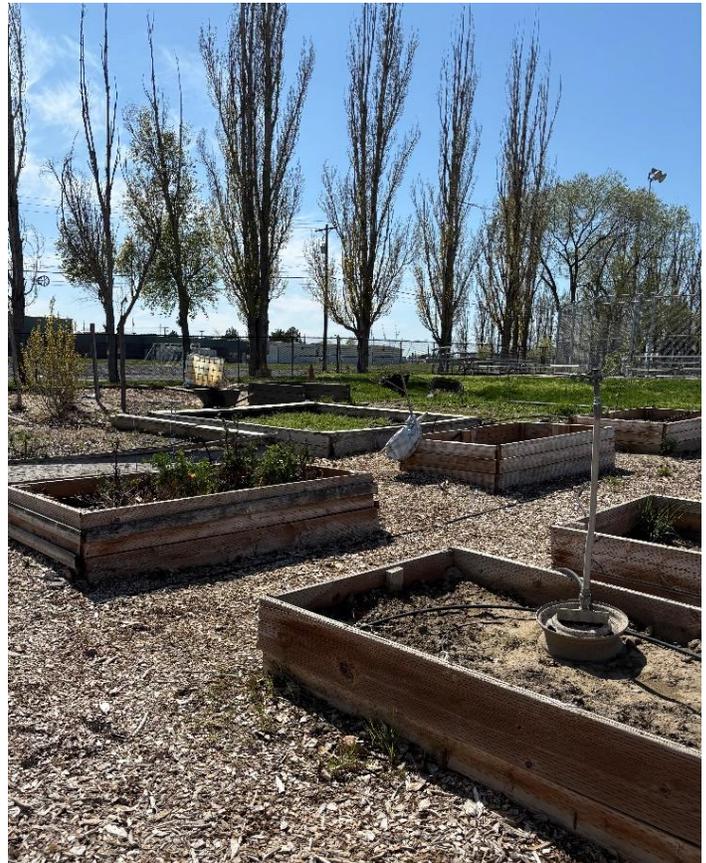
Dinah Rouleau, Columbia Basin Conservation District, evaluated our progress. Our garden was just presented with a Heritage Garden sign, one of two in Othello; the other being at the Old Hotel.

All photo credits: All photographs were taken by George Roper who received permission from the two Mohs adults to use their pictures in this article.

Columbia Basin Job Corps Kitchen Garden takes Shape . . . *By Mark Amara*

Master Gardeners, Diane Escore and Mark Amara, WSU Extension SNAP Education Nutritionists, Janelle Todaro and Paige Kessler, and Columbia Basin Job Corps (CBJC) Civilian Conservation Center staff, Donald Key and Katrina Reeder, supported by JC Liaison Specialist, Susan Mann, have been cooperating to organize and make improvements to a kitchen garden on raised beds at the Columbia Basin Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center in Moses Lake.

Initially discussions started in the fall of 2024 with Glenn Acheson, Job Corps Culinary Director, who has since left the program. Early this spring, there was follow up with the aforementioned newer players where recommendations on improving the garden were made to sustain the CBJC facility. Diane Escore and Mark Amara met Donald Key at the garden to make site-specific recommendations on repairing the raised beds, soil testing to determine fertilizer needs and add organic matter, improving the irrigation system, discussions on season extenders, types of compost and organic matter to use, pruning suggestions for the fruit trees, and control methods for minimizing pest impacts.



Raised beds at the Job Corps Kitchen Garden, Moses Lake. Photo Credit: Mark Amara

Plans for the 2025 growing season at the Kitchen Garden are on track. In late April, students pulled weeds and removed them offsite. In late April, Mark Amara conducted soil sample testing submitted to Best Test Analytical to determine fertilizer needs. The Grant-Adams Master Gardener Foundation paid for the soil testing. Mark Amara reviewed the soil test results from Best Test Analytical, Moses Lake, with Donald Key. Based on the recommendations, straw bales were acquired, pulled apart and incorporated into the beds to help improve organic matter. Ammonium sulfate, gypsum, Happy Frog Soil Conditioner (which consists of organic matter, guano, mycorrhizal fungi, worm casting, and microbes) and fish emulsion were also added. Repairs were made to the existing raised bed boxes.



Donald Key talks about the goals of the kitchen garden to (left to right) Janelle Todaro, Paige Kessler, Katrina Reeder, and Diane Escure (seated). Photo credit: Mark Amara.



Students amended soil in raised beds in preparation for planting. In addition to chemical and natural soil supplements, straw was mixed in to increase organic matter in the soil. Photo credit: Donald Key.

A core group of 12 student leaders have been instrumental in leading the charge to help establish and work in the garden under Donald Key's expert direction. All told, a total of 37 students have spent between 2 and 15 days on the project.

Students removed all the drip tubing and emitters associated with the irrigation system and helped redesign the new system with replacement parts. Then, a new drip tape system and a timer were installed both in the beds and along the perimeter.

A portion of the perimeter beds have some 2-year-old dwarf fruit tree saplings, while the remainder of the perimeter edge has been planted to 60 feet of blackberries and raspberry canes. On other unused raised beds, cover crops like white mustard and arugula are being planted to improve organic matter content and as green manures.



Matt and Tyler measuring and cutting PVC pipe to rehab the irrigation to the garden boxes. Photo credit: Donald Key



Jovial, Mayson and Gloria planting lemon, slicing, and pickling cucumbers. Armenian cucumbers are planted in a different raised bed. Photo credit: Donald Key.

Beds have been planted and were supplemented with plants from the Job Corps grounds and plant donations from the Grant-Adams Master Gardener greenhouse. Preferred vegetables are planted and will be weeded, maintained, watered and harvested. Vegetable dishes will complement efforts of students and be offered to staff and the public. Students are brainstorming humanitarian ways to keep the resident rabbit population from becoming too well fed by their efforts.

SNAP Education Nutritionists will also offer ways to utilize produced foods that are healthy and can provide sources of food and income.

The Columbia Basin Job Corps Center kitchen garden experience has provided wonderful opportunities for students to learn how to establish and maintain gardens, to grow food, and develop conservation skills and principles they can use throughout their lives.



Jovial, Mayson, and Matt after their first ever tomatoes in the Job Corps Kitchen Garden. Photo credit: Donald Key



Kieran and Jovial planting the first rose bush that was part of a generous donation from Crab Creek Nursery in Moses Lake. Photo credit: Donald Key

Moses Lake Demonstration Garden . . . *By Mark Amara, Bobbie Bodenman, and Mary Love*

The Moses Lake Drought Tolerant/Native Plant Demo Garden that the Master Gardeners established and continue to maintain emerged from the winter bursting into a dazzling array of blossoms and new growth. There have been repeated pruning, weeding, and clean up sessions by Mary Love, Bobbie Bodenman, and Mark Amara.

Among some of the significant activities performed were pruning cliff rose, golden currant, sagebrush, smoke bush, yarrow, buckwheat, and Oregon grape. The group removed black medic clover from paths, cut and removed sedum stems, took out grasses from around Caryopteris, and removed aggressive salvia, pulled and raked dead foliage wherever it was found, thinned nodding onion, poppies, bachelor button and milkweed and completed extensive deadheading throughout the garden.

Intensive weeding of annual grasses and other invasives was done around many of the new plugs planted last fall in the native plant section. In addition, a few new plant name tags were reinstalled and others repaired and returned to the garden. Many huge garbage bags full of removed plant materials have been filled and



Moses Lake Drought Tolerant Demonstration Garden in bloom. Photo credit: Mark Amara.



Left and middle pictures photo credits: Mark Amara; Middle picture, Mary Love and Bobbie Bodenman at work in the garden. Right picture - photo credit: Bobbie Bodenman

taken away for disposal by the City of Moses Lake Parks Maintenance staff. The public can view the gardens at any time and pick up a colorful pamphlet on planting options from the staff at the ML Public Library.

In addition, a new area next to the public library is being prepared for planting. A cooperative effort by the City of Moses Lake and the Grant-Adams Master Gardeners will transform the area into a new drought tolerant planting display area. To date, the juniper bushes and their stumps were removed. An effort has begun to remove persistent morning glory which has been sprayed this spring. To ensure that the morning glory is eliminated, additional herbicide spraying is required. The irrigation system is being developed to allow a drip system to be installed once plants are in the ground. Imported soil will be brought in to create mounds. The mounds will serve as the planting medium for native plants. Paths will be built to direct visitors around plantings and laid with bark or wood chips. Planting may occur in fall or spring. This is a work in progress.

New Life at the Othello Demonstration Garden

The Grant-Adams Master Gardeners Drought Tolerant Garden at the Old Hotel in Othello has gotten some nice new additions this spring. Last fall small plant plugs donated to the Master Gardener program from BFI Native Seeds were nurtured in Terry Rice's raised beds and greenhouse at her Othello residence. This spring the plants had grown to sufficient sizes that their success at the garden seems assured. In the previous year, very small plants planted in the fall failed to survive the winter. Having larger plants to start with and planting them in the spring seems like an approach that works well.

New plants to check out at the garden include Idaho fescue, showy fleabane, shaggy fleabane, Oregon sunshine, Venus penstemon, sulfur buckwheat, common yarrow, and bluebunch wheatgrass. Since the plants do require minimal supplemental irrigation, they are being watered intermittently with a drip irrigation system.



Variety of plants growing in Terry Rice's raised beds. Photo credit: Terry Rice.

The public is encouraged to check out the new plants, many of which are labeled or any of the other perennials there. All these plants are adapted to our Columbia Basin climate and are recommended by the Grant-Adams Master Gardeners. The Old Hotel is located at 33 E. Larch Street in Othello. Questions can be sent to ga.mgvolunteers@wsu.edu about the garden or to ask about any other gardening issues.



Idaho fescue was one of the two grasses that thrived. Photo credit: Terry Rice



Deb Russell and RJ Lembcke stand by some of the new plants. Photo credit: Terry Rice



Twenty-five plants of sufficient size were planted in late May by left to right by RJ Lembcke, Terry Rice, Deb Russell, and Linda Crosier. Photograph provided by Terry Rice.

Resurrection of the Master Gardener Memorial Bench . . . *By Mark Amara*

A metal Master Gardener memorial bench installed in Civic Park next to the Moses Lake Public Library was a cooperative effort by the Master Gardener Foundation of Grant and Adams Counties and the City of Moses Lake. The bench was initially installed by the City in August 2019 after pouring a cement pad, anchoring the bench via bolts to it, and even securing a memorial plaque into the cement. It seemed like not much time passed before the bench was vandalized, dislodged, and broken off from its concrete footings.



Bobbie Bodenman and Barbara Guiland stand by the refurbished bench in March 2025. Photo credit: Mark Amara

Led by Bill Aukett, Park Maintenance Supervisor, the City of Moses Lake budgeted and bought several hundred dollars of replacement parts to repair it and again secure it to its concrete base. This all happened in early 2025. So, it is again a nice place to sit and remember all Master Gardeners who have served Grant and Adams Counties and admire the handiwork of the Master Gardeners who continue to maintain the Drought Tolerant/Native Plant Demonstration Garden at the Public Library.



Memorial in the cement by the bench. Photo credit: Mark Amara

An Unconventional Potato to Consider . . . *By Mark Amara*

Most everyone is familiar with the wide variety of potatoes that do well in our climate including early potatoes, late potatoes, and fingerling potatoes, with a wide range of colorful options like reds, whites, yellows and purples. Sweet potatoes are becoming another option to consider.

The name is a misnomer. While these tubers are referred to as sweet potatoes, they are technically not a potato at all. They are in the morning glory family and share its characteristics. Indeed, they are not even started the same way as conventional potatoes.



Slips are grown from the tubers. Here Murasaki and Stokes sweet potatoes were started inside to generate slips, which are individually cut and then planted directly into the ground.

tubers mature which takes 90-120 days of warm weather.

After harvest, sweet potatoes should not be eaten right away as the sugars need to be set. This takes place by keeping them in a warm environment, like in a warm garage or climate-controlled room for a few weeks. After that, they are ready to eat. It is quite a process but one that starting to take hold in eastern Washington.



Whereas conventional potato tubers are planted directly into the soil, sweet potato tubers are not planted at all. If the tubers are planted, no “potato” forms! Instead, slips must be planted. Home gardeners can start their own plants, but it takes months of planning before they are ready to be planted outside. The tubers are planted in plastic trays inside or in a greenhouse where they grow out the shoots or slips, as the pros call them. If they sprout after 6 weeks-2 months, the optimum time for planting them is when the soil temperature is 60°-65°F, usually in mid-June in our area.

The slips can be pre-rooted by allowing them to develop minimal secondary roots by placing cut stems in water or can be directly planted after cutting them from the mother tuber. Either way, planting them 12 to 18 inches apart will provide them with sufficient space to grow. Their leaves are similar to morning glory except they are larger, and the runners can cover a large area. Some people use the greens for livestock forage or are eaten in salads though the primary goal is to wait until the

Cut slips are pre-rooted in water and planted. All photographs by Mark Amara.

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Sweetpotato Field Day August 23, 2024. WSU Northwestern Washington Research and Extension Center. Mount Vernon, Washington

WSU Mount Vernon Northwestern Washington Research Extension Center. Vegetable Research and Extension. vegetables.wsu.edu/sweetpotato

Mark Your Calendar

- ❖ August 2025 Grant County Fair Plant Clinic, Agricultural Building, Grant County Fairgrounds, Tuesday-Saturday, 12-4 pm.
- ❖ Moses Lake Farmers Market Plant Clinics, McCosh Park, Third Saturday, May – October, 8 – 1 pm.
- ❖ Quincy Farmers Market, Lauzier Park, Quincy, First and Third Saturdays, June – September, 9 am – 1 pm.
- ❖ WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference, September 26-27, Spokane County Extension Bldg, Zoom and in person.

Ask Master Gardeners questions 24/7 online. Go to ga.mgvolunteers@wsu.edu

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