



Seeds For Thought

February 2020 Volume 20, Issue 1

A newsletter of the
Master Gardener
Foundation of
Washington State

From the President

~~Don Enstrom, MGFWS President

In This Issue

From the President 1

From the Program
Coordinator 2

Master Gardener of
the year 3

Media Award 4

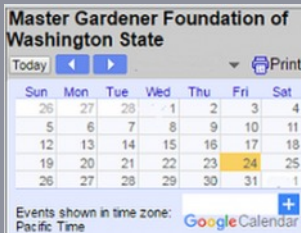
Leaving Leaves 5

OSU MG Origins 6

AEC 2020 7

Visit our website:

[MGFWS](http://MGFWS.org)



We now have a
calendar! Please
check the [calendar](#) for
deadlines, meetings,
and events in various
counties.

Iris photo by Erin
Landon Grays Harbor
County Master
Gardener



In our last newsletter I quoted Mary Cantwell's declaration that "Gardeners, I think, dream bigger dreams than emperors." Several years ago, Washington Master Gardeners began to dream of a state foundation committed to hosting our annual Advanced Education Conferences (AEC) and building a two-million-dollar endowment dedicated to supporting Advanced MG Education in the state of Washington. It is a big dream, and there have been some bumps in the road along the way. We missed having a conference in 2019 and we've experienced

growing pains transitioning from rotating county foundation hosted conferences to an annual conference perpetually hosted by the state foundation. But each time we stumble we recover, and we greatly appreciate the help and advice we're receiving from the organizers of the recent Yakima and Wenatchee Conferences. We're learning how to staff the conference team and the critical role the local county foundation still plays in staging a successful conference. With patience and persistence, we continue to make progress.

We've had the good fortune of being guided through the planning stage and beyond by Island County Master Gardener C-J Nielsen. C-J received her training in King County (2006), then transferred to Island County where she has made major contributions to the success of the Whidbey Gardening Workshops. Future AEC chairs will receive a tremendous boost from the conference framework C-J is building and the myriad of policies, procedures and forms she is compiling to guide us. And her enthusiasm and positive attitude have been pivotal in getting us over the rough spots - thank you, C-J!

So where are we at with the conference? We have assembled an AMAZING slate of speakers, instructors, panelists and moderators. Our renown keynote and plenary speakers will address topics of keen interest and our instructors will deliver advanced education that will feed our personal growth and provide us with new ideas to take back to our county programs. Our website (MGlearns.org) is being updated regularly - be sure to visit it often to review the classes offered, learn about the speakers & instructors, see the tours offered by the Jefferson County Foundation, research the CE credits available, and learn about the area entertainment and lodging options. On-site housing reservations are open and going fast. Conference registration (with early bird discounts!) opens April 1st.

It's not too late to get on board with the AEC 2020 team - we are starting to fill day-of-conference positions, and volunteers for leadership and support positions are most welcome! And we are already forming the AEC 2021 launch team. Contact C-J (AEC 2020) or me (AEC 2021) for more information on how you, too, can join in the fun and camaraderie of working on the conferences.

Shifting gears, our endowment continues to grow. Development Director Patty Dion is eager to build momentum into the campaign but is stymied by a lack of resources available for this long-term effort. In the meantime, we remain deeply grateful for your
(Continued on [page 8](#))

WSU Master Gardener Program Update

~~Jennifer Marquis, Statewide Program Leader



There is big news from the WSU Master Gardener program that I am very excited to share. As you all know, five teams are working on various tasks within our program. One of those teams is the Telling Our Story team. The overall goal of this team is to improve the ability of program faculty, staff and volunteers to effectively and concisely share the successes and impacts of the WSU Master Gardener program. There are several steps involved in this big goal. A few have been accomplished. We reviewed and revised our vision and mission statements. We created values statements that describe what is important to the WSU Master Gardener program. I have shared these with you before and they can be found on our [WSU Master Gardener program website](#)

The next step in achieving the goal was recently completed. For decades the WSU Master Gardener program explains volunteers as community educators who address critical issues in local communities by teaching research-based, sustainable landscaping for the protection of our natural resources. Personally, I wonder what the critical issues are; I know that they ebb and flow and change over time, but it is important to identify the current issues that WSU Master Gardener program volunteers address. To that end, the team surveyed program coordinators and faculty who in turn solicited feedback from volunteers. Now, we have ten program priorities or critical issues the WSU Master Gardener Program addresses statewide.

- **Local Food:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program promotes the use of sustainable techniques for growing local food to improve individual and community health and wellness.
- **Pollinators:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program teaches ways to help native bees and other pollinators thrive in home and community landscapes.
- **Clean Water:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program promotes integrated pest management to minimize polluted runoff.
- **Water Conservation:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program promotes water-wise gardening and landscaping practices to conserve water.
- **Nearby Nature:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program seeks to increase access to plants, green spaces, and public landscapes to benefit the health and well-being of all members of our communities.
- **Climate Change:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program teaches ways to create resilient landscapes that are adapted to our changing climate.
- **Plant Biodiversity:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program promotes stewardship of diverse ecosystems through invasive species management, native species conservation and restoration in landscapes.
- **Wildfire Preparedness:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program teaches firewise landscaping principles to reduce the risk of loss due to wildfire.
- **Soil Health:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program encourages the building of healthy soils to prevent depletion and ensure the long-term viability of local food security and natural resources.
- **Horticulture Skills:** The Master Gardener Volunteer Program teaches research-based horticulture principles and practices for the development of healthy landscapes and to protect our natural resources.

(Continued on [page 8](#))

Master Gardener of the Year!



MaryJo Christensen, Lewis County Master Gardener and 2019 WSU Master Gardener of the year.

MaryJo Christensen has been an active WSU Master Gardener in Lewis County MG Since 2000, averaging over 450 volunteer hours each year.

Shortly after completing her WSU Master Gardener training MaryJo Christensen immersed herself within the WSU MG Extension and Lewis County Master Gardener program volunteering for leadership roles with various committees and as an officer. As a volunteer at the Providence Place Demonstration Garden she designed and maintained a Hummingbird area garden for 16 years.

MaryJo has continuously held an officer position for Master Gardener Foundation of Lewis County (MGFLC) beginning in 2004 as VP of Programs, obtaining speakers for membership meetings, and sought after guest speakers for the public such as Cisco Morris, Ed Hume, and Maryanne Binetti for the Lewis County Home and Garden Show working with the local Chamber of Commerce. She has also given numerous informative public speaking presentations throughout her past 19 years as a WSU Master Gardener. In 2005 MaryJo spent three years as

MGFLC President followed by one year as Past President.

MaryJo was recognized by her peers and honored as Lewis County's Master Gardener of the Year in 2006. In 2009 she again volunteered as an officer as VP of Educational Outreach.

From 2010 to present, MaryJo has taken the responsibility as both Treasurer and Historian for the MGFLC; she has been the perfect person for these positions with her keen attention to detail. During 2012-2018 she was also our SWW Region VP for the State Foundation. Her involvement in various committees through the years has been The Lewis County Home and Garden Show, Plant Sale coordinator, Gardening for Everyone, Southwest WA. Fair MG displays, Christmas tree recycling, MGFLC 33-year reunion celebration,, Youth Outreach, and LCMG cook book project.

In 2016 she secured land at Southwest Washington Fairgrounds for an educational Demonstration Garden, designing it, recruiting volunteers to help build the plantings and hardscape, installing signage and maintaining the education materials. This Demo garden engages the public year-round. She again took the task of the volunteer scheduler in 2018, this time on line.

MaryJo Christensen has been a steadfast, diligent member of the WSU Lewis County Master Gardeners for nineteen years. During that time, she has been committed to advocating the local Master Gardener Program and the ongoing education for the local community. Her participation within the Master Gardeners has played a vital role on both State and local County levels of the Master Gardeners program. She is well known and loved in our community through her volunteerism and public involvement. Her commitment, passion, honesty and integrity come into play in all she does. MaryJo has held a deep dedication towards the WSU Master Gardeners program and its continued success. The State MGoY selection committee agrees MaryJo Christensen's involvement has been beneficial on both State and local levels, earning the acknowledgement and appreciation as a valued member.

For the complete article visit the [MGFWS website](#).

Congratulations MaryJo!

Media Award Winners



Dana Courtright
2019 Media Award Winner

In making their selections, the Awards Committee noted that these two Master Gardeners, using differing media forms over many years, have brought a positive message about our program to their communities and their fellow MGs.

In Pierce County, Dana Courtright has developed and maintains an internal Facebook page for MGs, and an external Facebook page for the public, as well as an Instagram page. Nearly 3500 followers on the public Facebook page demonstrates the reach of her communications across the community, while the internal page ensures volunteer opportunities, announcements, reminders, etc., are readily available to the large base of active MGs. The combined impacts of these social media platforms provide a highly effective communications strategy for Pierce County.

Meanwhile, in Spokane County, Susan Mulvihill has been writing, speaking and interviewing about gardening over several decades. Her contributions range from Master Gardener booklets, newspaper articles, guides and videos, to interviews, teaching, lectures, seminars, and radio & TV appearances. Also of note is the fact that her Northwest Gardener's Handbook is a top 10 PNW region gardening seller on Amazon, receiving many positive reviews.

These outstanding colleagues of ours provide a welcoming message to current and future gardeners and positive exposure for the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program, and for this we thank them!



Susan Mulvihill
2019 Media Award Winner

Congratulations Dana and Susan!

Leaving Leaves

~~Mark Amara - Grant/Adams County Master Gardener

The WSU Grant-Adams Master Gardeners received several clinic questions concerning using leaves, including maple and cottonwood leaves, as mulch.

As the days got shorter and the days and nights turned colder, leaves and needles dropped everywhere out of the trees and shrubs around the area. Rather than sweeping or raking them up to put in the garbage, take to the dump, burn, or let blow away, consider using them as mulch. Leaves (or wood chips, yard waste like grass, brush, or clippings, or even crop residues) used as mulch (compost or cover) are an excellent way of reducing landfills, and leaves are actually a valuable annual renewable resource. I even have an arrangement to get unlimited piles of (untreated) shredded leaves from a neighbor, but more on that later.

Collecting and spreading leaves on or around the garden and yard can help to retain soil moisture and conserve water, minimize weeds, improve soil quality and health, reduce compaction, add nutrients to the soil, and even help promote plant growth. As cover, leaves (or other materials) that are spread on the surface are called mulch. Adding leaves also improves soil texture, stabilizes soil temperature, and reduces evaporation during dry spells.

Starting in the fall and continuing through winter, many of us have mountains of leaves to deal with. Collecting leaves is sometimes a challenge, but there are many benefits to keeping and using them. Spreading leaf mulch helps smother weeds, reduces soil and water runoff, and increases water retention the following year. Using leaves in walkways or between plant rows is also an effective way to control weeds and add organic nutrients.

All plant mulches have some nutrient value in terms of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, and magnesium and can provide 50-80% of the fertilizer that plants need each season. It is always best to soil-test at least every few years unless specific fertilizer needs are known. Adding biodegradable plant mulches stimulates microbial activity that, in turn, helps with rooting, decomposition, residue breakdown, which ultimately releases nutrients into the soil. As leaves break down, they also provide food for earthworms, which helps aerate the soil. Most leaves are a good source of potassium and often have a pH from 6-7.5. The potential for increased biological activity in the soil can help improve biodiversity and help prevent plant diseases.

Some mulch precautions to think about:

- Do not use leaves or other treated organic materials as the pesticide residues can affect subsequent plant growth.
- Avoid using leaves or other organic materials that have diseases or insect problems as these can spread to other parts of the yard or garden.
- Maple leaves can add as much as 2-3% nitrogen and don't seem to have any drawbacks.
- Like oak, cottonwood leaves are higher in tannins than most tree leaves, but adding small quantities of shredded cottonwood leaves mixed with other materials as mulch should not be a problem.



This leaf catcher is pulled behind a lawn mower that picks up and shreds them for easy removal.

Photo by Mark Amara

(Continued on [page 9](#))

Origins of Oregon State University MG Program

~~Don Enstrom, Lewis County Master Gardener

We've all learned that the Master Gardener program was founded in 1973 by David Gibby and Bill Scheer of Washington State University Cooperative Extension. But do you know who founded the Master Gardener program in our neighboring state to the south?

The Oregon Master Gardener Program was started in 1976 by Duane Hatch, Lane County Extension agent, and Gray Thompson, Clackamas County Extension agent. Duane and Gray began by training classes in Lane and Clackamas counties, and by 1978 the Oregon program had grown to the degree that Multnomah County's Dr. Ray McNeilan was named the state Master Gardener coordinator of what was to become a nationally known model. A hands on gardener, founder Duane Hatch authored a number of popular extension bulletins and fact sheets during his years in the Oregon and Utah extension programs ("Raised Bed Gardening", "Soil Testing Guide for Home Gardeners", "Preparing Garden Soil", "Garden Mulches and Compost", etc.) as well as writing newspaper columns, consulting on popular commercial gardening guides, and hosting radio programs.



Alas, Duane was better at horticulture than he was at home design. Prior to moving to Lane County, he built a house on a one acre city lot that had the main living spaces in a rear-facing daylight basement. While a delight for enjoying the yard & gardens without road noise or prying eyes, the house had little street presence and a rather unusual set of open, exterior stairs that led down to a basement level main entry on the uphill street side. Not an easy house to show or sell, it presented a great opportunity for a young family living on a tight budget. Times were different then, and both families shared the house during the move in/out process. The new owners raised their five children in the house and four decades later sold what was by then an extensively remodeled floor plan.

How do I know this story is true? Because I, as the middle child in the family that purchased his home, met Duane Hatch in 1959 and grew up in the house he built. Quoting the phrase Paul Harvey made famous, "And now you know the rest of the story".

Seeds for Thought is a quarterly publication of the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State (MGFWS)
Published February, May, August & November

Officer	Name	County	Email address
President	Don Enstrom	Lewis	presidentmgfws@gmail.com
Executive Vice President	Paul McKenna	Island	P_mckenna@att.net
Secretary	John Strong	Yakima	secretaryMGFWS@gmail.com
Financial Officer	Alan Smith	Chelan	asmith@linderandgoetz.com
Treasurer	Margaret Morris	Yakima	Mmorriso615@hotmail.com
Conference Co-Chair	C-J Nielsen	Island	cjnielesen2@gmail.com
Conference Co-Chair	Kathy Brenberger	Benton-Franklin	kbrenberger@frontier.com
Development Director	Patty Dion	Yakima	developmentmgfws@gmail.com
Past President	Kathleen Eaton	Snohomish/AZ	kmleaton@me.com
WSU MG Program Leader	Jennifer Marquis	WSU	jgmarquis@wsu.edu

2020 Advanced Education Conference Update

~~C-J Nielsen, Conference Chair, Island County Master Gardener

Sneak Peek!

WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference

October 1-3, 2020

The 2020 WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference will offer a broad range of continuing education classes in a relaxed setting at Fort Worden Conference Center, a historic gathering place nestled in the seaport community of Port Townsend on the Olympic Peninsula.

Two highlighted Plenary Panels will ‘bookend’ the Conference: opening with a discussion about *“The Master Gardener...from Here to the Future”* and closing with a discussion on *“Climate Change and the Gardener.”* In between, registrants can choose from a selection of 30 classes offered in 6 sessions on Friday and Saturday.,all for Continuing Education (CE) credit.

Here’s a look at a just a few of the many classes offered: *“Gardening Amid Tree Roots”*with educator/author Christina Pfeiffer; *“Garden Design Makeovers”* with Sue Goetz-CPH/Eco-Pro, *“Do Plants Talk”* with Dr. James Crowder, *“Can I Plant Something Pretty on my Drainfield”* with Bob Simmons/WSU Extension, *“Soil - How it Works”* with Dr. James Cassidy/OSU, *“Right Plants for Challenging Places”* with horticulturalist Dan Hinkley... plus Composting, Community Gardens, Water-Wise Gardens, Lawns and lots more!

For a complete list of classes and profiles of the Instructors, go to mglearns.org/ and click on the “Learn” drop down menu. Lodging information is also detailed on the website, with options from on-site at the Fort Worden Conference Center to nearby at a great selection of vintage/modern B&Bs, Hotels and Inns in Port Townsend.

Early Bird Registration opens April 1, 2020. For more info go to mglearns.org



(Continued from [page 1](#))

willingness to reach out to us with your gifts. We've noticed IRA QCD tax-free donations are growing in popularity and hope you'll consider us in your planning. Gifts can be sent to us at MGFWS, PO Box 10533, Yakima WA 98909 or directly to the WSU Foundation (be sure to specify the MGFWS Endowment 7246-5035).

And a final topic is our efforts to strengthen the bonds between the state foundation and the county foundations across the state. The process is straight forward: If you are interested in learning more about the state foundation's plans & activities, simply drop me a note. We can figure out what works best for you, from a casual conversation to a formal presentation, to your board or your full membership. And I'm happy to come to your location, if at all possible. By the end of March, 16 counties will have taken me up on the offer – thank you all for the opportunity!

Warm Regards – Don

(Continued from [page 2](#))

As a statewide program, we are still working on how the education you provide in your communities will be incorporated into these program priorities. Ideally, we will all be able to be more specific about the impact our program has. For example, we could say something like the WSU Master Gardener program protects water quality by teaching 1790 residents annually about integrated pest management and the appropriate use of pesticides and fertilizers. Or the WSU Master Gardener program improves the health and wellness of residents by teaching 2600 residents annually about how to grow their own food. Eventually, we would like to be able to know how many residents are growing, harvesting and eating their own food or how many residents put into practice what they learned about integrated pest management and appropriate use of fertilizers and pesticides.

My personal vision for my leadership of the WSU Master Gardener program is to have a cohesive statewide program of highly trained, competent and engaged volunteers who:

- Know and understand our program's purpose.
- Know, understand and can explain how what they do supports the educational mission of WSU, Extension, and the Master Gardener program.
- Support the telling of a compelling and impactful story.
- Are a household name and a go-to resource.
- Are empowered to develop, implement & evaluate mission and vision achieving programming.

To achieve my vision, each volunteer needs to be able to connect the dots from what they are teaching, demonstrating or providing a workshop on to why they're teaching that specific topic. Is it simply to teach someone how to have a green lawn; a healthy, aesthetically pleasing tree; or how to grow a vegetable garden? Yes, but there is a bigger picture. That picture is in the critical issues that Washington residents face every day. I am asking each of you to think about your reason for being a WSU Master Gardener, the mission and vision of the WSU Master Gardener program and align your reason with our purpose, the issues Washington residents struggle with and connect the dots. Make sure you know which critical issues the topics you teach fit into before you address an audience.

The Advanced Education Conference in October hosted by the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State and the WSU Master Gardener program promises to provide an exemplary cast of speakers on a variety of topics that address the critical issues defined. The big issue that will be addressed is Climate Change. The WSU Climate Change team will help attendees learn how to talk about climate change, how to find common ground and how to focus on the science and not the politics. Do not miss out on this opportunity to learn. Go to <http://mglearns.org> for more information.

(Continued from [page 5](#))



- Laying materials down 2-4 inches or more in thickness helps keep weeds from surfacing, assuming the ground is relatively weed-free to start with. If the layer is too thick, it will repel water, decompose more slowly, and can actually smother young desirable annuals.
- Always keep mulches several inches away from trunks of trees and shrubs and stems of herbaceous plants to help keep excess moisture away from these interfaces (which can deter rots and other diseases).
- Remember that mulching does not control weeds indefinitely and materials must be reapplied for continuing benefits.
- Around perennial trees and shrubs, putting leaves higher and deeper, up to 3-6 inches, helps.
- Perennial weeds like field bindweed, horsetail, or quack grass are not controlled by mulching and will have to be pulled or dug up by hand or might even require some kind of chemical removal both before and after the mulch is applied.

Adequately composting yard materials is a good way to reduce harmful impacts. Shredded leaves (or other materials) are more desirable than un-shredded materials. Shredding helps with decomposition and the increased surface area helps keep leaves in place (as they are less likely to blow away). If materials are not shredded, depending on how thick and compacted they get, they can form barriers that block water and oxygen movement in the soil. If there are

only a few trees in the yard, consider shredding leaves and leaving them in place on the lawn using a mulching mower which can be more effective than leaving the leaves in place as is.

It is interesting as I lean on my rake for the umpteenth time this fall and winter collecting and spreading leaves in my garden that I am adding a great soil building product to my soil. Alternatively, my neighbor recently purchased a machine that he drives around his yard which picks up leaves and shreds them. I can have all that I can get from him at no charge.

References:

Bell, Neil. Autumn Mulching Will Protect Soil and Prevent Spring Weed Infestations. Oregon State University. October 2007.

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/autumn-mulching-will-protect-soil-prevent-spring-weed-infestations>



[Image by Pixabay](#)

