



Seeds For Thought

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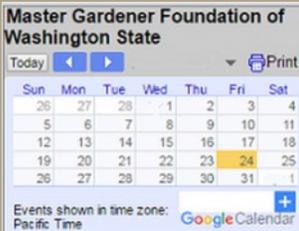
A newsletter of the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State

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Visit our website:

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



From the President

~~Don Enstrom, MGFWS President



As my second term in office comes to an end, I have of late been reflecting on the history of our state foundation and the direction we are taking as we head into the future. Wanting to ensure my imperfect memory was not re-writing history, I have been rereading the "From the President" articles written since our 2016 transformation to a flat organizational structure focused on delivering the annual AEC Conference,

stabilizing our finances, sharing best practices, and recognizing the contributions of our WSU Master Gardener Program volunteers and supporters. In addressing these goals, the quarterly articles have followed four clear themes: re-building the foundation's leadership team; assuming full state foundation responsibility for organizing, financing, and producing the annual advanced education conference (AEC); building long-term financial strength and stability, and delivering against our mission in the time of COVID. We can be proud of the tremendous progress we've made in stabilizing and strengthening our state foundation's structure, leadership, and finances. This progress has earned us the opportunity to look at how we can best deliver on our mission to support the WSU Master Gardener Program now and in the future.

Not wanting to further re-hash the topics of past articles, I'll get straight to my point. Whether their interest is driven by environmental, climate, food security, or other concerns, our Master Gardener program is gaining interest from a wider segment of our state's population. With the strengthening of the Master Gardener Program within WSU Extension and the attention the program is gaining as we approach the 50th anniversary of our founding here in Washington, we can be optimistic that the gardening community will grow and our efforts in supporting that community will grow with it. And this growth will open up more

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WSU Master Gardener Program Update

~~Jennifer Marquis, Statewide Program Leader



“Branding is about much more than logos, colors, and typefaces. The WSU brand consists of the feelings, memories, and expectations that come to mind when people hear or read the word “Washington State University”. We want our audiences to associate those words with a mental picture of a dynamic, engaged, and forward-looking organization dedicated to making the world a better place.” (brand.wsu.edu).

So, what does this mean for the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program? Branding links the Master Gardener program to WSU, creates a consistent impression across the entire organization, enhances credibility and validity of information, helps guide random or rogue directions, and makes every contributor responsible for building a shared reputation. Branding plays a major

role in our efforts to build a cohesive statewide program of highly-trained, competent, and engaged volunteers who know and can explain their connection to WSU, who can tell a compelling and impactful story, who are a go-to resource, and who are empowered to plan, implement and evaluate mission and vision achieving programming. When Whatcom County residents travel to Walla Walla County and go to the Farmers’ Market we want those travelers to be able to spot the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program through imagery that is shared across our state.

To be highly recognized, diverse and fully supported, and known as the go-to resource for communities seeking research-based, innovative solutions to their ever-changing horticulture and environmental stewardship needs we must use the branding tools provided and we must have program coordinators and volunteers ready and willing to jump on the wagon to use the tools. All the tools can be found on our [WSU Extension Master Gardener Program website](#) on the [For Program Volunteers page](#).

Guidelines and requirements for using official logos and secondary/spirit marks, social media templates, appropriately branded templates that you can download and make your own, and much more can all be found on the For Program Volunteer page. Event flyers, letterhead, poster templates, presentation materials (working on updating these to the new brand), program priority icons, program priority posters, and graphics are just a few tools you can tap into.

Please update all your digital materials as soon as you have time. All your GivePulse pages, Facebook pages, electronic newsletters, etc need to be updated to incorporate the new brand requirements. Physical items such as tablecloths and posters can be updated as finances allow and as they become shopworn. Brand questions should be directed to [Jennifer Marquis](mailto:jgmarquis@wsu.edu) jgmarquis@wsu.edu or [Debra Benbow](mailto:debra.benbow@wsu.edu) at debra.benbow@wsu.edu.

2022 WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference Update

~~ Melody Westmoreland, Conference Chair, Yakima County Master Gardener

IT'S ALMOST HERE!!

I can't believe that, by the time this article publishes, we will be just weeks out from our AEC 2022. The past year of planning has flown by. We've still got a bit of work to do to finalize everything, but the bulk of the event is ready and waiting for you to arrive.

I want to mention our keynote speaker, Riz Reyes. Mr. Reyes is a horticulturist based in the Seattle area and the owner of RHR Horticulture. He is currently the assistant director at Heronswood Gardens in Kingston, WA. Growing up in the Philippines, Riz immersed himself in the diversity of plants that thrive in the maritime region – he still finds every opportunity to seek out and work with the most uncommon selections in the trade. Best of all, he generously shares his knowledge and expertise with others! I know you won't be disappointed with his presentation at our Friday night banquet. By the way, if you initially skipped the banquet when you registered, there's still time to go back and amend your choice to include Riz' talk.

I also want to bring up the need for volunteers at the event – you will soon be seeing a request coming out via your email. I ask that you strongly consider giving just a couple of hours of your time to help out. There are multiple areas where you can pitch in and lend a hand, thanks in advance for doing so.

I look forward to seeing and meeting many of you at the Conference, enjoy the dog days of summer and we'll see you in Olympia.



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opportunities for each of us to widen our involvement in initiatives outside our home counties.

I believe we all enjoy being part of an organization where everyone has a say in the decisions and willingly puts their shoulder to the wheel to get things done. Participating on the state foundation board and/or on one of the AEC committees can provide you with many opportunities to meet new people and share experiences, utilize the skills and knowledge you've gained over the years, and bolster the fun and reward you enjoy as a WSU Master Gardener volunteer.

I encourage attendees of this year's AEC to join us Thursday evening (Sept. 29th) at our annual board meeting. You'll get a chance to meet the MGFWS board members and have an opportunity to learn about opportunities to expand your Master Gardener experience and enjoyment beyond your local program. I hope to see you there!

Seed Starting

~~Erika Stewart, Mason County Master Gardener

We are moving toward that wonderful time of year when we can start our vegetable gardens. Considering the price of produce, growing your own vegetables from seed is good economy. I'll share some tips I've learned over the years to help you maximize success.

You will need containers, soilless seed starting mix or peat moss, potting soil, and seeds. The containers can be purchased or use things you have on hand; yogurt cups, cottage cheeses containers, or anything that can hold soil. Put drainage holes in your home-made containers.

Fill the potting containers 2/3 full of potting soil, then fill the top 1/3 of the container with soilless seed starting mix. The seedlings' roots will grow through the seed starting mix down into the nutrient rich potting soil and the plants can stay in these pots until time to transfer into the garden.

To increase your seed starting success, water from the bottom, not the top. This helps to avoid "damping off" where the plant's stem rots right at the soil line. To bottom water, set the plant pots into a plant tray that will hold water. Pour ½ inch of water into the tray and allow the plants to soak for about an hour, then remove them.

Your plant pots need to be in the brightest light you can provide. Using a sunny windowsill would be fine if we had enough sun in March and April. We don't. You will need to provide light. You don't need a special grow light; fluorescent shop light will work fine. If you have a wire self-unit, you can attach the shop light to the underside of a shelf with twine and put your plant starts on the next shelf down. Your plants will love it. Keep the light on 16 hour a day and turn off at night.

Finally, your plants are ready to move to a prepared garden bed when they have two sets of true leaves. The first two leaves to emerge are cotyledon and don't count as true leaves. Before planting them into the garden, harden the plants off. Set the pots outside during the day and slowly acclimate them to sun, wind, and outdoor temperatures. After a few days of this treatment, they can be moved to the garden. Choose a cloudy day or early evening for putting them into the ground. Using a transplant technique called "mudding in" will eliminate transplant shock. Dig a hole, put the plant into the hole, fill the hole with water and push the soil back around the plant even before the water has soaked in. Don't forget the slug bait. Slugs love tender seedlings.

Happy planting!



Soil Your Undies Campaign is Underway

~~Mark Amara, Grant-Adams County Master Gardener

Though it is getting to be later in the season the following campaign is being conducted to document soil health in gardens here in the Grant-Adams Counties area of Washington state. However, there is an opportunity to take it statewide and herein is the challenge. The WSU Grant-Adams Master Gardeners are sponsoring a fun and exciting campaign for anyone interested to evaluate soil health. Though it was started by farmers in Oregon in 2018 working with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to build public interest about soil health, the concept and approach can be used anywhere. We encourage the public, school groups or classes, 4H and/or FFA groups to take the challenge!



Healthy soil has billions upon billions of microscopic organisms in it. Though it may be hard to imagine, one teaspoon of healthy soil has more microbes than there are people on earth! Soil microbes are important because they feed on organic matter like the cotton in underwear. So, the more the cotton in a pair of undies breaks down, the healthier your soil is. Soil microbes also help soils to prevent erosion, cycle nutrients and store water. These factors are all important in helping to maintain or improve soil health and in helping to keep the soil productive not only in our lawns, yards and gardens but across the nation and the world at large! Other ways to improve soil health include avoiding soil disturbance as much as possible, maximizing soil cover with residue and living plants, and by maximizing biodiversity by growing a variety of plants.

The challenge consists of “planting” a new clean pair of men’s cotton underwear. This experiment works best in spring or summer. In fall or winter there may be little activity in the soil especially if the ground is frozen. So, now is the time to find a place where you want to study the soil. Ensure that sites are on personal property with permission granted where necessary. Bury a pair of underwear 3 inches deep in a site you are curious about, taking a picture of the “before” condition of the underwear. Mark the spot where the underwear is planted with a marker flag or stake. Wait at least 60 days. This gives soil microbes time to work their magic! Do not disturb the area in which the undies are planted. The more degraded the undies are, the greater the microbial activity there is in the soil and the healthier the soil is.



After the 60-day waiting period, dig them up. The more deteriorated they are, full of holes or barely holding together, the better (Continued on [page 7](#))

Pest Management for the Lazy Gardener

~Alice Slusher, Cowlitz County Master Gardener

I've always been a fairly lazy gardener—I grow minimal-care plants, water them once in a while, and if they live, fine. Every spring in Ohio, aphids would colonize and curl the leaves of my snowball viburnum, and every summer, the Japanese beetles would chew on my roses. The pests eventually went away, and my plants lived to bloom another year.

One year, the Japanese beetles were so destructive that they completely defoliated our clump birch tree (little did I know that birch is Japanese beetle candy). I confess that I got some Sevin (Carbaryl) and, with nary a glance at the instructions, sprayed the 30-foot tree, insecticide mist gently wafting down over my flowering bedding plants and onto my face and clothing. Miraculously, I didn't suffer any ill-effects, but I shudder to think how many bees and other pollinators I poisoned that day.

It turns out that benign neglect isn't such a bad way to garden. It takes some planning and monitoring, but you can reduce the use of pesticides in your garden and landscape by following a few simple rules. You've heard it before, but a plant that loves where it lives doesn't become lunch for pests or get sick very often. Plants have sun, soil, irrigation, nutrient, and spacing requirements—plant them where they get what they need. Proper care and watering go a long way in helping your plants resist disease and pest problems.

Water at ground level—keeping water off the leaves will help reduce plant disease. Pruning also helps open airflow to prevent fungal infections from overtaking your plants. Always clean up dead leaves and fruit—water splashing on infected plant debris keeps the disease cycle going from season to season.



Photo by Marc Pascual via [Pixabay](#)

The most crucial part of any garden care is consistently going out every few days and carefully looking at your plants. Carry a trash bag and pruners, wear gloves and look for caterpillars, rolled or puckered leaves. Your thumb and forefinger are very effective squishers. Prune off any spotted leaves or damaged stems. Keeping a close eye on things will stop a small problem from becoming a large one.

Learn to tolerate minor pest issues—no garden or landscape is pest-free. Minor infestations such as aphids will send chemical distress signals to the cavalry of beneficial insects. And once they arrive, there has to be something to eat. Don't run for a spray when you first see an insect.

Use row covers on vulnerable plants. For example, when you expect to see those little white butterflies or brown moths fluttering around your garden, cover your broccoli, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts so you won't have cabbage loopers and cabbageworm caterpillars eating your plants. It keeps the bugs out and lets the sunshine in!

Plant lots of flowers that attract tiny beneficial insects to your garden. You can't plant too many! Sweet Alyssum, catnip, Agastache sunflowers, daisies, umbel plants like parsley, cilantro, dill provide pollen for these tiny critters that work hard to keep the pesky bugs away.

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your soil health is. Alternatively, the less degraded the undies are the more unhealthy the soils are. So, having undies that are pretty much gone vs. those that are merely stained and intact, is the goal.

Share the results by taking photographs (before and after) though preferably the after condition is what we want to see, and send it to us at ga.mgvolunteers@wsu.edu, bring it to the Grant County Extension Office for the Master Gardener program or mail them to the extension office at 1525 E Wheeler Road, Moses Lake. Please identify your name, farm name if applicable, town and county, undie planting date and harvest date, how you manage the ground, amount of rain or irrigation during the challenge period, and a description of the results and thoughts on what you found. Once we receive your information and photos, we will post them on a map so you can see the results and compare them to others. If there are questions, please let us know. For those who may not have access to underwear, let us know and we can provide you with a pair free-of-charge through the Grant County Extension Office. To date, over 50 pairs of underwear have been distributed here in Grant County and we await the findings.



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Now I have to say a few words about using pesticides, even organic ones, in your garden and landscape. Chemicals also kill the tiny garden defenders, which can inadvertently worsen a pest problem. Use pesticides as a *last* resort. When you do, make sure the pest is listed on the label. Call our free Plant Clinic at the WSU Extension so we can identify it for you. The label instructions explain how to use it effectively and safely. It's essential to follow the directions to protect yourself, the environment, and our precious pollinators and other beneficials. Many pesticides should only be applied at dusk when the bees are in bed to allow the leaves to dry overnight. Never apply chemicals to a flowering plant. Spot-spray only and use cardboard to protect surrounding plants from the spray. Use a strong stream of water to knock down soft-bodied insects like spider mites and aphids prior to treating them. Don't use home remedies, such as dish soap—most of them are phytotoxic—they hurt plant tissue.

People want to know if there are specific pesticides that would be reasonable to have on hand. Avoid synthetic chemicals—they remain on the plant for a long time, killing both good and bad bugs for a long time.

Here are some lower toxicity choices: BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) products kill caterpillars (both good and bad, so get a positive ID). Products containing neem oil, insecticidal soap, pyrethrins, or spinosad are reasonable choices, but you must apply them at dusk during dry weather.

Fungicides containing copper, sulfur, and neem oil can be safely used according to directions, but avoid chlorothalonil products because of their bee toxicity. Don't use products that contain several active ingredients—usually listed as 3-way or 4-way protection. Check the label. Your goal is to target one problem and minimize danger to beneficials and pollinators.

And the last step in managing pests and disease in your garden and landscape? Get out there and monitor frequently—it's a never-ending but pleasant task—take a cup of coffee or tea and keep an eye on things. I think you'll find that keeping your plants healthy and working with nature's beneficial insects will help you reduce the use of chemical options. Enjoy the coming growing season!

Resources:

What is IPM? <https://schoolipm.wsu.edu/what-is-ipm/>

Low Risk Pesticides <http://npic.orst.edu/ingred/lowrisk.html>

Organic Fungicides for the Home Gardener (Home Garden Series) <https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/organic-fungicides-for-the-home-gardener-home-garden-series>

Beneficial Insects, Spiders, and Other Mini-Creatures in Your Garden

<http://pubs.cahnrs.wsu.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/publications/em067e.pdf>

Encouraging Beneficial Insects In Your Garden

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/pnw550.pdf>



Photo by "Myriams-Fotos" via [Pixabay](#)

Master Gardeners Foundation of Thurston County

Plant Sale: MGFTC members have been busy since May carrying on our annual plant sale in a new format. Instead of our traditional one-day blow-out sale, the nursery is open to the public on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. This has proven to be an excellent change since our MG personal shoppers have more hands-on time with each customer. We have an excellent selection of quality plants mostly raised by our own MG's in our nursery at Yaeger Park in Olympia. In addition, our Handicrafts sales are open the 2nd Wednesday and Tools sales are open the fourth Wednesday of each month.

Fall Fundraiser with Marianne Binnetti:

We are excited that Marianne will join us again for our Fall Fundraiser webinar. This event is set for Thursday evening, September 15th and is titled "The Changing Garden: Ways to Adapt to Warmer Summers, Maturing Gardens and Their Gardeners!". We look forward to another entertaining evening with nuggets of garden design and wisdom from Marianne Binnetti plus door prize drawings. At \$25 per person this webinar is a major fundraising event in support of the Master Gardener and Master Composter Recycler Programs in Thurston County. Using the webinar format enables a large audience to participate without masks or leaving their homes! Registration will be open mid-August. Look for details at mgftc.org.