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# MASTER GARDENER Gazette

Spring is here... and it's everything we have been waiting for. Trees are blooming, flowers have come up, and veggies are sprouting! What are we as Master Gardeners doing? We attended and/or volunteered for the Whidbey Gardening Workshop. We are readying plants for the plant sale. Camano Island volunteers are answering gardeners' questions at Ace Hardware. Read about all this and more in the "Master Gardeners Around Island County" column.

At the WSU Extension office in Coupeville, we are gathering to help answer questions from clients as well as bringing our own for discussion. There is always much to do in our own gardens, the community gardens, and school gardens, not to mention many volunteer opportunities at the Education Garden at Greenbank Farm.

And, when we read about all that Don Lee contributed to the Island County Master Gardener program during his life, we will be even more inspired to be role models for all Island County gardeners.



The newsletter team invites all Master Gardeners to contribute, whether through information on relevant events or suggestions for future articles. Please contact me with your ideas. Happy Spring!

*Carol Ann Leonessa, Editor, Master Gardener Gazette*  
[icmgf.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:icmgf.newsletter@gmail.com)



Master Gardeners show what it takes to get ready for the Whidbey Gardening Workshop

## Plant Clinic Detectives: Resources

by Loren Imes

I'm sure most of you have read an article that concludes with "Contact your local Extension Office or Master Gardener program for more information." Don't you love that the Master Gardeners are recognized as an authoritative source of gardening information? That reputation is due to [50 years](#) of thoughtful and research-based advice shared by our many volunteers – thank you!

Giving an accurate and unbiased answer is what sets Master Gardeners apart. Anyone can Google a question, but the top results of many searches are filled with paid product placements, home remedies, gardening myths, or advice for geographic areas other than ours.

Knowing which resources to use, mastering the basics of the diagnostic process, and obtaining some regular practice will give you the confidence to answer questions on most gardening subjects. As clinic season gets underway, let's review the three main research-based WSU Extension resources with which all WSU Extension Master Gardeners should be familiar.

[WSU Extension Hortsense](#) contains information on common problems for common plants in our region. Each Hortsense fact sheet describes a common pest or disease, its biology, and recommended non-chemical and chemical methods for management. Non-chemical methods include planting resistant varieties, attending to cultural needs, and timing care appropriately. Chemical controls often include organic and synthetic products that WSU updates on a regular basis. Master Gardeners are required to endorse the use of only WSU-approved chemical management options.

The Hortsense website has been recently redesigned to be better accessible on mobile devices. Try it out on your phone and familiarize yourself with this primary Master Gardener resource.

The [PNW Pest Management Handbooks](#) are divided into three sections and contain information similar to Hortsense but the handbooks cover more plants, plant problems and detail. Using the PNW Handbooks can be most useful when you have started with Hortsense and need additional information. The PNW Handbooks have a few limitations, including no spell check when searching, and chemical management recommendations only available to licensed pesticide applicators.

[Gardening in Washington State](#) features peer-reviewed WSU Extension gardening publications. These publications provide in-depth information on a wide range of gardening topics, including cultural information that is not contained in either of the two previous resources. Clicking on a publication link will take you to the WSU catalog where it can be downloaded for free.

I encourage you to become more familiar with each of these resources by using them regularly. Master Gardeners are not walking encyclopedias who have memorized the identification characteristics, cultural needs, and common problems of thousands of plants. Knowing that WSU has a number of different resources on a specific topic like "roses" and knowing where to find them, is much more practical than becoming a rose expert.

If you would like a refresher on researching and answering clinic questions, come to the weekly office clinic any Thursday morning between 10-12 and work with the team answering questions that have come into the office. [You can register here](#), or [contact me](#).

Thank you for your help in making Master Gardener Volunteers the go-to resource for gardeners seeking relevant, research-based solutions for their ever-changing horticulture and environmental stewardship needs!

### Master Gardener Training

Training for new Master Gardeners will start on September 16 and continue for fifteen weeks through January 27, 2024.

Tell your friends and other interested people to contact Loren or visit the [WSU Extension website](#) for details and an application.

## Master Gardeners Around Island County

*This column is a regular feature of the newsletter, highlighting key activities by our volunteers during the months since the previous issue. We depend on you to tell us what's going on, so please contact Carol Ann Leonessa with your news from around Island County.*

In mid-February, the Island County Master Gardener Foundation joined other State Foundation Chapters and the Statewide Master Gardener Program to sponsor a booth at the Northwest Flower and Garden Festival at the Seattle Convention Center.

Volunteers from Island County helped staff the booth to greet over 3,000 booth attendees and to spread the word about the Master Gardener program, the 50th Anniversary of the program, and the Endowed Faculty Chair fundraising campaign. Even new WSU CAHNRS Dean Wendy Powers helped share the Master Gardener mission.



Jim Peskuric was one of many Island County MGs who helped to spread the word at the Festival

**The Whidbey Gardening Workshop** was held on March 3 and 4 and, once again, was a huge success! Over 60 Master Gardeners and friends volunteered at the onsite Workshop, which included 34 instructors from Western Washington and Canada providing classes on a broad array of topics ranging from tool sharpening to dahlias, to propagating peonies and the health benefits of gardening.



We had 211 people buying onsite Workshop tickets, 191 online tickets, and 53 practical sessions, for a grand total of 455 tickets purchased across the various options.

Comments from the post-Workshop survey highlighted what brings people back every year: an excellent program of classes, outstanding and helpful volunteers, and impressive coordination. As one attendee put it: "ICMGF does a great job each year. I have attended for many years. I shall attend as long as you present!" Cathy Lofton-Day conveys her sincere thanks to all the volunteers who did such an awesome job of making the event a success.

**The Coupeville Community Garden team** kicked off the 2023 season on March 18. The team was pleased with its decision to do a soil test, since the results indicated they needed to add a 20-0-0 fertilizer mixture. It's not unusual at this time of year for soils to be short on nitrogen. Many thanks to Melissa Evans for supplying the wood and to Tom Lucido for building the beautiful trellises.



Holly Grason, Line Goulet, and Jim Peskuric enjoy the sun. Also attending the kick-off were Martha and Ed Hollis.

**Deer-Resistant Gardening.** Three Master Gardeners from the class of 2023 — Dawn Hawkins, Susan Wilcox, and Tom Lucido — prepared a proposal to create a Deer-Resistant Display Garden outside the WSU Extension office where delinquent deer are known to hang out. Thank you to the membership for supporting this work with funds to purchase the plants and educate visitors on plants that deer will (hopefully) avoid.

**April Library Display.** Sally Howard has assembled a lovely, informational Master Gardener display at the Coupeville Library. The display features information about our clinics, Education Garden, 50th Anniversary, Plant Sale, Master Gardener training classes, WSU Extension publications, gardening books, and more.

**Making a Difference.** Tricia Heimer co-wrote an article for our regular column in the March 16-22 issue of the *Whidbey Weekly*, "Growing Gardens with Kids: Still Growing and Making a Difference!" The article describes the benefits of the SNAP-Ed program, including the support provided by Master Gardener volunteers in gardens at the Navy base, Crescent Harbor Elementary, and Olympic View Elementary.

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**Master Gardener Plant Sale — Saturday, May 13** from 9 am to 1 pm. Many of you are already propagating and nurturing new plants such as perennials, shrubs, veggie starts and more. As in previous years, we will also have garden art for sale.

Something new is a **Seed Swap**. People may bring seeds they won't use that were packaged in 2018 or more recent. A basket will be available with seeds for free.



Barb Douglas, Lisa Phillips, Gretchen Schlomann, and Raissa DeArmond dig, divide, and pot up plants for the Plant Sale from the soon to be redesigned Education Garden mound.

Raissa DeArmond, our Plant Sale chair, will be calling for volunteer help on the day of the sale, but contact her anytime to volunteer or if you have any questions about suitability of plants for the sale. A team of Camano Island Master Gardeners will be coordinating the Camano site for the Plant Sale, working with Raissa to create a successful event on both our Island County plant sale sites.

**Greenbank Native Plants.** Gary Ketcheson and Nancy Hindes were awarded a \$1,150 grant from the Meerkerk Gardens Native Plants in the Landscape Grant program. The project is for restoring the Greenbank Farm marsh wetland at the Education Garden with native plants. Congratulations to Gary and Nancy for the award of this competitive grant! Anyone interested in helping with the project should contact Gary or Nancy.

**Camano Island Master Gardeners** are alive and well! February and March were filled with exciting activities and plans. Monthly meetings at Camano member homes are proceeding nicely. February was *Gardening Tools Sharpening 101* at Carole Matthews' house and March was hosted by Adena Ray with Loren Imes presenting on *How to do Clinics*.

Adena, Camano Rep on the ICMGF Board, arranged to kick off the 2023 clinic season with an *Ask a Master Gardener Plant Clinic* at Camano Ace Hardware.

In February, Carol Anne Ebert arranged for a work party at the Matzke Sculpture Park, to prepare for the Practical Session taught there for the Whidbey Gardening Workshop. Carol Anne is exploring additional volunteer opportunities for Camano MGs, including creating an educational water-wise garden at Freedom Park and smaller projects at Camano Center such as pruning or creating plant ID signs for the Center Trail. The plan is to develop choices and have Camano MGs agree on the projects they want to support.

Idonna Pieper Nelson is creating a card deck for trail tour guides for the Camano Center. The deck focuses on native plants and habitat, with plant identification text and Idonna's beautiful artwork. The deck will be appropriate for either a docent-guided tour or a self-guided tour.



Preparing Matzke Sculpture Park for the Workshop tour

The Camano Master Gardener group is relatively small, but they are working hard to make themselves known on the island. In the process, they are becoming better connected with each other and strengthening their Master Gardener skills and relationships. Kudos to the group and we can't wait to see what comes next.

If you live on Whidbey Island, don't forget that you too can volunteer on Camano and engage with this lively team.

## Remembering Don Lee

Don Lee, Island County Master Gardener since 1989, passed away on January 2, 2023. We remember this outstanding member of our community with reflections from two of our own.

*from Re McClung, Master Gardener, 2008 to 2022*

“ [Don] was named Master Gardener of the Year by the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State in 2009. The first Island County Master Gardener to receive that recognition, he had been teaching classes about native plants for over 17 years. His classes were the favorites for his students because he brought samples of everything he spoke about for them to touch and smell and for many years every new Master Gardener was in one of his training classes.



“But when Don spoke about what he liked doing best as a Master Gardener, it was always home hort calls— anywhere on the island, north to south. There was nothing that gave him more joy than going out to meet a homeowner, walk around the property and answer the myriad of questions from ‘what is it’ to ‘why is it dying’.”

*from Martha Hollis, Master Gardener, 2013 - present*

“I feel he was a powerful force for good in the world. I did not know him very well, but he had a big impact on me, and almost all Whidbey Islanders, even if they had never met him. He taught hundreds of people about Pacific Northwest native plants. In turn, many of his students continue to pass along his message of gardening in harmony with nature.

“Don was an honest-to-goodness rocket scientist who worked at the Pasadena Jet Propulsion Laboratory, making significant contributions to the USA space program. Upon retiring and moving to Whidbey, he turned his considerable intelligence to making our Island a sustainable place of beauty. He served as a visionary leader of the Master Gardeners, the Friends of Meerkerk Gardens, the Island County Water Board, and the American Rhododendron Society for many years.

“He was a teacher whose programs were always interesting, funny, and carried a strong message of peaceful coexistence with nature. So many of us have benefitted from his caring guidance over the years.”

## From the President

It’s spring and hopefully we are all getting outside and keeping up with our yards and gardens. I for one am perennially behind in my weed management. With a very successful Whidbey Gardening Workshop behind us, I am happy to be tending to the plants that I am nurturing for our May plant sale. I hope you all are as well. Thanks to all of you who volunteer your time to our Foundation fundraisers. Without you, we could not fulfill our mission to educate the public and support the program.



We are making good headway in our effort to collaborate with other local non-profit organizations. The south area has arranged to set up plant clinics at the Tilth Sunday Markets. Master Gardeners volunteered at the Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) plant sale and WICD responded by donating all plants that were not picked up for us to sell at our plant sale. Many thanks to WICD!

The Lord's Garden in Oak Harbor and the MG garden plots at the Coupeville Community Garden are back in business so we can continue to donate our yields to local food banks.

Island County Master Gardeners are also teaming up with the Island County Noxious Weed Control Board, Port of Coupeville at Greenbank Farm, Pacific Rim Institute, WICD, and the Sound Water Stewards to host public education events and work parties to spread the word about noxious weeds. Our role in this effort is to teach the public about noxious weeds and the obligation landowners have to eradicate and control Class A and Class B weeds respectively.

A productive and well-attended meeting on March 11 kicked off this series of events. The next noxious weed event is on April 14 and all Master Gardeners are invited to attend. See the [Sound Waters website](#) for details of the event and to register to volunteer.

Thanks – *Jim Peskuric, ICMGF President*

## From the Program Coordinator

### Finding Solutions for Today's Challenges

The WSU Extension Master Gardener Program has nine program priorities that help volunteers address important environmental challenges faced by residents of Washington State. These priorities help guide our educational efforts and emphasize that everyone has a role to play in creating and sustaining healthy and resilient communities.



You might ask how these priorities fit with our regular activities like plant clinics, the Education Garden and community gardens, and plant sales? Good question!

Here are a few examples:

- When educating on the use of IPM methods to control noxious and invasive weeds, we help protect [Pollinators](#), promote [Clean Water](#), and increase [Plant Biodiversity](#).
- When you grow vegetables at the Lord's Garden and at school and community gardens, you help improve individual and community health and wellness through increased [Local Food](#) consumption.
- Sharing practices that help to "slow the flow" of stormwater and ways to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides teaches ways to improve water quality that help protect salmon and marine life that depend on [Clean Water](#).
- Gardeners are familiar with fickle weather, but encouraging them to examine ways to reduce their emissions in how they care for their landscape, plant trees that provide shade and reduce household energy consumption, grow more of their own food, and incorporate practices that build [Soil Health](#) all help create resiliency in the face of uncertain [Climate Change](#).
- When you maintain the Education Garden, or lead educational walks in community gardens, you help provide access to gardens and [Nearby Nature](#) that benefit the health and well-being of all.

- The plants you provide at our plant sale encourage people to grow more of their own [Local Food](#), and to try plants well suited to our climate.

For more information on incorporating the Program Priorities into your work, take a look at the [WSU Extension Master Gardener Program Priority Tool Kit](#) for graphics, templates, and more. Thank you for your help in addressing these important issues and making a difference in the communities we serve.

*Loren Imes, Program Coordinator*

## From the Education Garden

Spring brings welcome growth to our gardens, and the Wednesday work parties at the Education Garden at Greenbank welcome you to enjoy that growth and lend a hand in managing it. Native prairie plants are a special part of spring, as they begin to bloom and show their natural beauty. In this column, we tell the story of how the Prairie Garden came to be, and how you can enjoy and participate in its beauty.

A few years ago, the class of 2019 was seeking an intern project. During a field trip to the Pacific Rim Institute, they found their focus. Jim Peskuric wrote a plan for a Prairie Garden to be placed on the edge of the Native Plant Garden, in the sunniest spot available. Other members of the class of 2019 who helped install the garden were Gail Guthrie, Elaine Koper, Barb Moore, Janet Richards, and Gretchen Schломann. Other Master Gardeners who helped included Nancy Hindes, Bobbi Peskuric, Steve Stansberry, and Mark Walljasper.

The Prairie Garden represents a unique and endangered ecosystem – the native Northwest prairie, which is down to 3% of its original range. Native prairies were plowed under for construction, roads, farming, and ranching, but conservation efforts have started to return some areas to their once natural state. The Prairie Garden shows how even a small piece of land can be used to participate in these efforts.

Establishing the Prairie Garden first required moving the lilac shrubs and Nootka roses that were growing there. Those plants are now thriving on the edge of the new Prairie Garden in what Jim Peskuric calls the wildlife shelter area. The abundant blooms of May and June make that an especially lovely time to visit while also providing food and shelter for the local rabbit population.

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A special challenge in native prairies is that they do not look “manicured” or appealing year-round. A visitor once commented: “Oh my goodness, they really need to weed this,” when in fact those were the dormant prairie plants and not weeds. So, the Prairie Garden seeks to show a different version of beauty in nature and challenges visitors not to be single-minded in their idea of what a garden is “supposed” to look like.

The area around the Prairie Garden used to be thistle, horsetail, and blackberries, and it was ignored for years. Jim and the team would like to expand into that area and enlarge the Prairie and include pathways that people can stroll through. Enhanced signage is also part of the plans for continuing improvement.

### **You too can get involved in the Prairie Garden!**

Come sit in the sunniest part of the garden and become part of the team, whether for a day or for a season. Native prairies are not mulched, so ideas on maintenance without straying too far from nature are always welcome.



From left: Bobbi Peskuric, Gretchen Schlomann, Jim Peskuric, Nancy Hindes, Lisa Phillips, Steve Stansberry

Your work is welcome, as are your ideas for future development.

## **Record Your GivePulse Hours**

Volunteer hours for the first quarter of 2023 should be recorded in GivePulse. Instructions for using GivePulse are on the [county website](#) under “Resources for Master Gardeners.”

Contact Loren or stop by the office for help.

## **Meet Our Newest Master Gardeners**

### **Tom Lucido, Coupeville** *Class of 2022*



After retiring from medicine and education, Tom has been spending his time exploring interests that in the past were given little time. In addition to his professional skills, he is also an artist, sculptor, actor, and loves woodworking. This past winter, he built six garden trellises for the Coupeville Community Garden. Before moving to Whidbey, he and his wife traveled the world continuously, visiting over 100 countries and all seven continents.

They maintain a heavily forested 10 acre “city farm” with a whimsical kitchen garden full of art. For Tom, learning to garden and grow plants has been a rewarding pastime that gets him outside and his hands dirty. His focus this year will be to learn more about fruit trees and to start a cutting garden. His current greenhouse project is to deliver as many plants as possible to our May plant sale.

### **Idonna Pieper Nelson, Camano Island** *Class of 2022*



In the early 1980s, Idonna learned to garden at her Seattle P-Patch on Crown Hill, enjoying everything about it, especially the vegetable harvest and camaraderie at the site. While living in Anchorage in the 90s, she encouraged peonies, lilacs, bleeding hearts, and many more plants which grew rapidly in the land of the midnight sun surrounding her log house.

Idonna landed next on Camano Island in Island County, with a new responsibility. The 17-acre forest she moved to inspired an entirely new direction in gardening and keeping in touch with nature. Idonna completed the Forest Stewardship program and maintains the property with minimal use of chemicals. She constantly removes holly, ivy, stinky bob, and scotch broom to allow the native plants room to thrive. She also selectively adds native plants to the landscape to enhance the beauty that is already there. She is delighted to be an Island County Master Gardener!

## Upcoming Events

For details on events, go to the [Foundation website](#) or the [WSU Extension website](#) or the MG email list.

- April 20** ICMGF Board meeting
- April 30** Spring Potluck
- May 1** Registration opens for Advanced Education Conference
- May 13** Master Gardener Plant Sale
- May 18** ICMGF Board meeting
- May 21** MG Education Series at Greenbank Farm
- May 25** ICMGF member meeting
- June 11** MG Education Series at Greenbank Farm
- June 22** ICMGF Board meeting
- June 29** ICMGF member meeting

## LOOKING FARTHER AHEAD

- July 13** Regional Celebration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Master Gardener Program, Mt. Vernon
- Sept 27-30** Advanced Education Conference  
<https://mglearns.mastergardenerfoundation.org/>



The backbone of our success at the Whidbey Gardening Workshop – all of you, our MG volunteers!

## ICMGF OFFICERS

President – Jim Peskuric  
Vice President – Ilze Zigurs  
Secretary – Kim Baxter  
Treasurer – Paul Rowe

## AREA REPS

South – Christine Dimm  
Central – Holly Grason  
North – Sally Howard  
Camano – Adena Ray

State Foundation Rep — Carole Matthews

## RESOURCES LINKS

The WSU Extension Island County Master Gardener Resources website contains links to

- approved resources
- MG Roster
- GivePulse instructions
- and much more

Visit [island.wsu.edu](http://island.wsu.edu) or point your smartphone camera at the QR code. If you need the password, contact Loren.



[ICMGF Member Login](#) page of the Foundation website has:

- member picture book
- minutes of Foundation meetings
- updates on Education Garden
- more info on activities

Need the password? Contact Ilze.

[GivePulse](#) website for recording your volunteer hours

**We welcome your ideas and submissions for future articles.** Please contact the newsletter editor, Carol Ann Leonessa at [icmgf.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:icmgf.newsletter@gmail.com)