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MASTER GARDENER Gazette

I'm excited to report that the *MG Gazette* is one year old! We appreciate all the positive comments from you during the last year. As we begin our second year, Master Gardeners have many other celebratory events. This year, Master Gardeners celebrated 50 years of answering the public's questions, learning, and teaching others. Whenever I tell people that I am a Master Gardener, they respond so positively and say what a wonderful organization it is. Invariably they relate a story of a hort call or question that we answered for them.

Another notable event is the Whidbey Gardening Workshop, which will be celebrating 35 years. The Workshop is going "Back to Our Roots," both as a theme of next year's event and reflecting a return to our traditional, one-day, in-person format. Jessi Bloom will give the keynote, speaking on "Re-Wilding" and how it relates to our landscapes. The Content Development team has already confirmed over 40 classes on topics related to ornamentals, garden design, maintenance and sustainability, vegetables and fruits, and garden basics. For the first time, the WGW will include hands-on, "make and take" classes as well as traditional lecture sessions.



Through volunteering and helping others, Master Gardeners are making Island County and our world a more beautiful and bountiful place! If you are interested in joining the newsletter team to help document the great work we do in Island County, let me know.

Carol Ann Leonessa, Editor, Master Gardener Gazette
icmgf.newsletter@gmail.com



Another fun summer picnic, thanks to our hosts and to all who attended to share the bounty of our gardens – and our friendships

Plant Detectives

by Loren Imes

Island County gardeners were able to get their questions answered with ease this year at Ask a Master Gardener Clinics in four locations across Island County – Camano Plaza Ace Hardware, Mailliard’s Landing Nursery in Oak Harbor, Rain Shadow Nursery in Coupeville, and South Whidbey Tilth Farmers Market. A big thank you to everyone who volunteered to staff these clinics and answer questions from the public.

The weekly Thursday office clinic will close for the rest of the season, but the office continues to receive questions from the public through the Master Gardener Hotline number, emails, and office calls and visits. To help you answer those questions, we created the WSU Extension Island County **Master Gardener Plant Problem Blog**.

The blog was developed to do two things: first, to collect questions sent to the office and make them available for volunteers to answer, and second, as a learning tool for trainees, interns, and volunteers to see how questions have been answered and the resources that were used.

The blog is accessible at icmgclinic.blogspot.com. It is an internal tool not meant for the public. All conversations with the person asking the question are done by email or phone. Blog posts are listed in chronological order, with the most recent question at the top under a permanently “pinned” post on how to answer a question.

Each blog post contains the question asked with contact information. A volunteer who is interested in answering the question “comments” on the post saying they will answer it. After researching the problem, the volunteer posts their response and resources used. Follow-up or discussion is via additional concise comments.

The blog includes handy templates for answering questions, links to WSU Extension approved resources, and reminders on the diagnostic process. There is even a list of Master Gardeners who are knowledgeable in various subject areas and have offered to help discuss and review your research before sending your answer.

Take a look and browse through the previous posts. If you are interested in answering questions, let me know and I will add you to the list for notifying when there is a new question to answer.

Master Gardeners Around Island County

Janet Richards wrote an informative article on Rain Gardens and Anza Muenchow wrote about Summer in the Vegetable Garden for the [Summer 2023 South Whidbey Tilth Newsletter](#).

Anza Muenchow also gave a well-attended presentation on **Gardening for a Second Planting Season** as part of the Master Gardener Education Series at the Education Garden at Greenbank Farm.



In 2023, **Ask a Master Gardener Clinics** were held in four locations on Camano and Whidbey. In addition to the South Whidbey clinic at Tilth and the Camano clinic at Camano Plaza Ace Hardware, two new clinics were held at

Rain Shadow Nursery in Coupeville and Mailliard’s Landing Nursery in Oak Harbor. Thank you everyone who helped answer questions from the public.

On July 13, Island County Master Gardeners participated in a regional celebration of the **50th anniversary** of the Master Gardener program at the NW Washington Research and Extension Center. Dave Thomas gave an inspiring talk on teaching Junior Master Gardeners. Thanks to all who worked so hard to put together the festive and educational Island County booth – Carole Matthews, Melissa Evans, Sheri Gerhard, Jim Peskuric, Ilze Zigurs, and Loren Imes.



Master Gardeners continued to support this summer’s series on **noxious weeds** at Greenbank Farm, sponsored by Sound Water Stewards. The August workshop focused on bull and Canadian thistle.

The August class in the MG Education Series was a lively panel discussion on **Gardening as We Age**. John



Bachert, Barb Douglas, Martha Hollis, and Ed Hollis shared their wisdom on planning ahead and staying the course.



Bobbi Peskuric gave an inspirational presentation on **worm bins to the Camano Master Gardeners** during their August meeting. Many questions and much enthusiasm resulted

in several attendees deciding to create worm bins. Bobbi drew straws on who would take home the worm bin she created for the presentation and Judy Coddington won – again!

After the presentation, the group toured Amy Noel’s lovely, extensive, and well-maintained garden. Colors for all seasons was a theme. Everyone learned more about specific plants and got good ideas for their own gardens.

August ended with our annual **summer social**, hosted once again by Dave Thomas in his peaceful garden. Many thanks to Dave for hosting and Carolyn Lancet for helping organize the event. We shared delicious food, great raffle prizes, and stimulating company.

Greenbank Farm brought back their popular **Harvest Faire** this year, and Master Gardeners were there to participate and showcase the Education Garden. The weather was perfect, and the turnout was impressive. Many thanks to Gretchen Schломann and Holly Grason, who prepared a set of info cards for docents to use during tours of the garden. Thanks to Jim for organizing everyone and to all the volunteers who helped staff the MG booth and clinic table and hosted visitors in the Education Garden.

The last Master Gardener Education class of the season was held in September, with a presentation on **Wild Fall Color in the Garden** by Tobey Nelson. Tobey always shares inspiring



principles, for example, that we should design the components or décor elements of our gardening spaces so that they all “speak the same language” and are in sync with the surrounding environment.

Many thanks to Susan Dakis for putting together another rewarding **Master Gardener Education series** this year. If you would like to give a talk next year or have suggestions for topics, please contact Susan. The series is a great educational component of the MG program, and your participation is much appreciated.

Camano Master Gardeners are making great progress on the **Camano Center Trail project**. Four teams are working on different aspects of the project: identifying native plants on the trail; developing plant labels for each plant; compiling detailed information accessible via a QR code on the label; and identifying noxious plants to be removed by the Camano Center. Cathy Lofton-Day is developing the labels, and Carol Anne Ebert is validating the plants. The Camano team invites you to see their hard work on this significant community outreach program.

The **Crevice Garden** team has been lifting rocks and shoveling planting material at the site of the new crevice garden at the Education Garden at Greenbank. The team consists of Kim Baxter, Cathy Lofton-



Day, Lisa Phillips, Carol Russo, Gretchen Schломann, and Ilze Zigungs. They are especially pleased that so many drivers going in and out of the farm have stopped to wonder just what is emerging from those stacked rocks. Watch for a presentation on this project at the October member meeting.

The **Coupeville Community Garden** team increased its yields and donations of produce to the Coupeville Gifts From The Heart Food Bank, doubling their donations to date compared to all of last year. Regular members of the team include Holly Grason, Jim Peskuric, Line Goulet, and Dawn Hawkins.

This year a colony of voles moved into the garden and decimated entire garden plots. The team researched management options to control voles without rodenticides and shared them with the rest of the gardeners. Thanks to Tom Lucido for recruiting the team to harvest the fruits and vegetables from his personal garden for donation to the Food Bank, with more than 100 pounds already donated and hundreds more to come.

From the President

The leaves are turning as we approach the end of the Island County Master Gardener Foundation 2023 season. We had a productive year and accomplished much. You all deserve recognition for your parts in our successes. We had a great fundraising year, all of the area reps organized Master Gardener clinics for the community, and we had some fun at our social events. All in all, it has been a good year... But wait, the year is not over yet!



On Sunday October 15, we will be hosting another Orca Recovery Day at Greenbank Farm, partnering with the Whidbey Island Conservation District. The purpose of this event is for Island County Master Gardeners to teach the community and each other that our actions in our own yards impact the southern resident orcas and the salmon that they feed on. We will discuss the importance of good soil for water quality, native plants for pollinators, and ways to control diseases and pests without using chemicals. Please join us! See the [Conservation District website](#) for details on the event.

We will be holding our ICMGF board elections at this month's member meeting. I hope that you all attend the meeting to cast your vote for Vice President, Treasurer, and the Central and Camano Area Representatives. We will be saying goodbye to outgoing board members who have done so much for us and welcoming new members with much to contribute to our organization.

I am very pleased to report that this year's holiday party will be on a Sunday afternoon. No more driving at night during a heavy December rain or snowstorm. I hope to see you all there. Watch for the announcement by email as we get closer to the date.

Lastly, on State Foundation news, the Advanced Education Conference took place at the end of September, with the theme of "50 Years and Counting: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow." With our 50th anniversary year nearing an end, let's look to the future and continue to volunteer our time for the community and for fundraising while at the same time having fun, not stressing ourselves out, and being proud of what we are capable of as Master Gardeners in Island County.

Thanks – *Jim Peskuric, ICMGF President*

From the Program Coordinator

Fifty years ago, the Master Gardener Program was created here in Washington State by WSU Extension faculty to enlist community volunteers to help answer gardening questions from the public.



When I reflect on all the wonderful work that you do in our community, I feel proud to be part of this flagship program and fortunate to be able to work together with you to help others learn how to protect our precious natural resources and create a stronger community through gardening.

As we embark on the next 50 years, another forward-looking effort is underway to help strengthen and prepare volunteers for new challenges that lie ahead and to elevate the MG program. The WSU Extension Master Gardener Program is raising \$1.5 million to establish the first ever faculty Horticultural professor fully dedicated to the Program and to volunteers. A faculty chair will:

- Create a strong science-based horticulture and environmental stewardship curriculum for teaching new and existing WSU Extension Master Gardeners,
- Develop fact sheets and tools that support volunteer outreach,
- Represent the program locally, statewide, and nationally and within WSU to foster collaborations that explore new areas for growth, and
- Leverage program strengths and develop innovative solutions that address challenges like climate change.

We understand as volunteers that the gardening advice we give individually adds up to meaningful change when adopted by many gardeners. Likewise, each individual contribution to this funding campaign when combined with contributions from others across Washington State can help us reach our goal. If all 4000 volunteers were to give \$5/month for five years, we would have \$1.2 million invested in our Program.

To help the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program remain a leader in environmental stewardship education, please consider a contribution to the WSU Extension Endowed Chair Fund and visit mastergardener.wsu.edu/how-to-donate. Thank you!

Loren Imes, Program Coordinator

From the Education Garden

Have you ever wondered why the Shade Garden at the Master Gardener Education Garden at Greenbank Farm is so sunny? Gary Ketcheson has the answer to this question, and much more, in his role as lead of the Shade Garden.

The Class of 2007 designed the original layout of the Shade Garden, including plantings, a sitting area, and a partially developed rain garden. Ample shade was provided by a variety of mature trees, including cherry, willow, Douglas fir, and Sitka spruce.



Gary Ketcheson next to the stump of a former shade provider, now a home for abundant cavity wildlife

Challenges arose, however. Maintenance was hard to sustain and the dreaded cherry bark tortrix invaded. More than twenty cherry trees had to be removed. The curly willow was over 60 percent dead, and it was also removed.

When Gary assumed leadership in 2017, new trees were planted with support of a grant from the Whidbey Island Garden Tour and the rain garden was refocused as a wetland viewing platform.

The goal of the Shade Garden is to demonstrate what can be grown in shady areas of our climate while also providing an inviting place to sit and visit. Furniture in the seating area was made by a local couple (Joe and Vanca Lumsden) using wood from the curly willow.

The wetland project is the most recent effort for enhancing the educational value of the Shade Garden. Invasive plants are being removed to prepare for new plantings. The first round of plant purchases was funded by a grant from Meerkerk to support native planting projects.

How can you get involved in the Shade Garden? There is much to learn with the wetland project – not only for the public, but for Master Gardener volunteers who want to help in the process. Learn what native plants grow best in this environment, how to identify and remove invasive plants, what wildlife and amphibians live in a wetland, and how to improve wetland habitat.

What else is there to do at the Education Garden?

Gary wants everyone to know that volunteer hours in the garden are about so much more than weeding. Consider how you might contribute – by revamping a garden area, recommending new kinds of plants to demonstrate, learning how a variety of plants behave, or becoming a better pruner. Hands-on experimenting is the best way to learn, so come to a Wednesday work party and join in this on-going experiment.



The curly willow chairs provide a great place to ponder the next great garden ideas

Background Checks

A reminder that renewals for background checks are underway.

If your background check has expired, you will receive an email from “Sterling Volunteers TheAdvocates@sterlingvolunteers.com” requesting that you renew your background check. Click the link in the email and follow the instructions on their website. Thanks to the ICMG Foundation, the \$15 fee will be covered by the Foundation and is good for another three years. On Step 4 of the process, click “Not at this time” to have the cost billed to the Foundation.

If you do not receive an email from Sterling Volunteers, **please check your junk mail folder**. If you still do not see anything, then your existing background check has not yet expired, and you do not need to do anything. This includes those of you in the classes of 2021 or 2022.

Thank you for completing this important requirement to stay in the WSU Extension Master Gardener program. Please let Loren know if you have any questions.

Master Gardener Class of 2024

The Master Gardener Class of 2024 has begun their training! Training began for fifteen new Master Gardeners on September 16 and will continue through January 27. Classes take place simultaneously on Camano and Whidbey via videoconference, with three trainees on Camano and twelve on Whidbey.

The new trainees are Moe Bowman (Coupeville), Doris Braun Newkirk (Greenbank), Heather Diamond (Langley), Rosemary Easley (Camano), Christeen Graff (Oak Harbor), Scottie Kuper (Greenbank), Julie Ann Lary (Coupeville), Tristan Levine (Freeland), Stephanie Lugo (Oak Harbor), Anita Merrill (Oak Harbor), Timm Sanford (Freeland), Charleen Snapper (Camano), Kathryn Thurber-Smith (Langley), Warren Weissman (Camano), and Leif (Coupeville). They were met by a very welcoming group of Master Gardeners in the Education Garden at a potluck following the first class.

A huge “Thank you” goes out to the many volunteers who are helping with training. Ilze Zigurs is the Training Assistant, and the Camano Island class host is Carole Matthews, with additional help from Carol Anne Ebert and Lori Fekkes. Class teachers include Barb Faville, Gary Ketcheson, Bobbi Peskuric, Martha Hollis, Dawn Hawkins, Deb Mitchell, Gretchen Schломann, Jim Peskuric, Nancy Hindes, and Don Krafft.

Sandy Penland is helping develop a mentoring plan for our class mentors who include Jaci Mach, Sarah Van Alstyne, Carole Matthews, Jim Peskuric, Don Krafft, Melissa Evans, and Christine Dimm. We could use a few more mentors. Would you be interested? Let Loren know.

Thank you to all who are helping these new Master Gardeners become valued members of our Island County team!



Meet Our Scholarship Student

Marina Slowik of Oak Harbor is this year’s recipient of our Island County Master Gardener Foundation scholarship, in the amount of \$2,000. The scholarship supports her Bachelor of Science degree program in Integrated Plant Sciences with a major in Agricultural Biotechnology at Washington State University (WSU). Marina began her first year in the program this fall.



Marina graduated from Oak Harbor High School, where she played all four years on the girls’ varsity team in golf, serving in both official and unofficial leadership roles. She organized practices and planned gatherings to help team members connect with one another. She also mentored freshmen in the LinkCrew program.

Marina was exposed to the science of plants at an early age when she visited her aunt’s lab and learned how to extract the DNA from strawberries. Growing up on Whidbey Island, she has been an avid hiker and loves being in nature – her “happy place.”

Marina has always been interested in how things work and plans to get as much as she can out of her college classes and experiences. Agricultural Biotechnology is an in-depth program that requires significant time outside of classes, which is both challenging and exciting. “The scholarship will help in so many ways,” says Marina, and she is grateful for the award.

Congratulations to Marina, and we wish her success in her work at WSU!

ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP

The Foundation Scholarship is for students studying or intending to study in horticultural programs. Preference is given to Island County students, but applications are also welcome from Snohomish, Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan County residents. Applications are available at the Washington State University Extension Office in Coupeville.

If you know of anyone who might qualify or be interested, please have them contact the Foundation President at icmgf.president@gmail.com.

Meet Our Newest Master Gardeners

Dawn Hawkins, Greenbank

Class of 2022

If I could pinpoint what started my fascination with plants and how satisfying their growth and care can be, it would be when I began making connections with Urban Gardens to obtain produce for the restaurants that



I cooked in. Getting to spend time with the gardeners and seeing their passion and love for what they were growing was inspirational and I thought someday I would learn how to grow my own garden, and now I have started to!!

I am looking forward to all that is to come, and all I can contribute to this amazing community of Master Gardeners.

Kathy King, Freeland

Class of 2021



I was born in California and have always had a passion to grow things, and I learned by trial and error. I have memories of my mom and flowers, but not of us gardening.

Everywhere I lived I planted flowers and, if feasible, tomatoes. In California, I had a huge garden with a huge strawberry patch, even though I lived in an apartment complex! It just happened there was a big space I had access to. I would be out in it until it got dark. In Las Vegas, I struggled with vegetables but had a small area for annuals. When I moved here to a rental, there was a garden area so of course I planted veggies.

Now I want to garden and learn about what I am doing and apply it. That is why I wanted to be a Master Gardener - to learn and help others learn and grow a passion for plants.

Tina Tincher, Greenbank

Class of 2021

I joined my mom, Kathy King, in taking the Master Gardener training during the pandemic and it brought us together in something we both really love. I recall her love of tending to a fruit and vegetable garden when I was a child, and her love of flowers always.



It was not until my early adult years when I bought my first home that I uncovered my love of gardening and discovered I love horticulture. I live on a large piece of property and my favorite place to be is outside creating garden spaces that are diverse and thriving natural places to enjoy, including my first large fruit and vegetable garden.

I'm honored to have met so many passionate and knowledgeable gardeners in this incredible community and look forward to many years to come cultivating these relationships with the community, along with my knowledge and passion for gardening.

Re-Applications to Begin in October

A heads-up that the annual recertification process will begin much sooner this year than in previous years.

In October, you will receive an email from GivePulse inviting you to take a short survey to recertify. It is short and simple and is similar to when you receive an email to register for an event.

For you to remain active as a Master Gardener in 2024, Loren will need three things:

- your completed survey
- a record of your hours, due Dec. 31 as always
- a current background check, if needed

We appreciate the work that you do and want you to be with us for our 51st year. So please, record your hours and respond promptly when you receive the recertification email from GivePulse.

Thank you!

Upcoming Events

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

- October 15** Orca Recovery Day at Greenbank Farm
- October 26** ICMGF annual board meeting
ICMGF member meeting & annual election
- December 3** Holiday Party at Greenbank Progressive Club

LOOKING FARTHER AHEAD

- March 2, 2024** Whidbey Gardening Workshop
- May 11, 2024** Plant Sale



Island County MGs sharing knowledge – and having fun – at the 50th anniversary celebration in Mt. Vernon

Election of 2024 Board

We will elect the open board positions for next year at the October 26 member meeting. Many thanks to the Nominating Committee – Susan Dakis, Judy Nylander, and Judy Coddington – for assembling an excellent slate of candidates, and thanks to the candidates for their willingness to serve.

The candidates are:

- Vice President – Jenni Wilson
- Treasurer – Paul Rowe
- Central Area Rep – Deb Mitchell
- Camano Rep – Carol Anne Ebert

Please attend in person or via Zoom and cast your vote.

ICMGF OFFICERS

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

AREA REPS

South – Christine Dimm
Central – Holly Grason
North – vacant
Camano – Carol Anne Ebert

State Foundation Rep —
Carol Anne Ebert

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 or point your smartphone camera at the QR code. If you need the password, contact Loren.



The Member Portal of the [Foundation website](#) has:

- member picture book
- minutes of Foundation meetings
- info on activities

Need the password? Contact Sue Gibson.

[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