

MASTER GARDENER Gazette

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“Is this a weed?” “When do I prune my apple tree?” “Why do my strawberries look like they are dying?”

I have been asked all these questions by friends and family, and they are surprised when I don’t automatically know the answer, since I am a Master Gardener. I tell them that Master Gardeners do not *know* all the answers but rather know *where to look* for those answers. Resources such as WSU Extension Hortsense, PNW Pest Management Handbooks, and the Gardening in Washington State website are all valuable and well-used parts of our toolbox.

In this issue, you will find many other ways to gather information. Whether it is from plant clinics, the Whidbey Gardening Workshop, Home Hort calls by experienced Master Gardeners, or reviewing the classes we took during training, we can find answers to a myriad of questions. Read about our Continuing Education opportunities that are also open to the public. Our interns bring new ideas too, as reflected in Leif’s opinion piece in our most recent addition to the *Gazette*—The Intern Experience. And, last but not least, enjoy all the wonderful pictures from WGW2024... we all had a blast!



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
newsletter@icmgf.org



Learning from Workshop authors

Plant Clinic Detectives

by Loren Imes

Plant clinics are underway in Island County. Thanks to our Foundation Area Representatives, we will have four regular locations again this year. There will also be a weekly office clinic to review and respond to questions that come into the Extension office. Click on the links below to register for available slots on GivePulse.

[Camano: Fourth Saturday of the month from 11-1 at Ace Hardware](#)

[Oak Harbor: First Sunday of the month from 10-12 at the Country Store](#)

Coupeville: Details TBD

[South Whidbey: Sundays from 11-2:30 at South Whidbey Tilth Farmers Market](#)

[Extension Office: Thursdays from 10-12 at the Extension Office](#)

In 2023, clients asked over 270 questions and I thank everyone for your efforts to answer with research-based information from WSU Extension and other resources found in the clinic boxes. The boxes have been designed to help you answer many common questions, but to be effective, it is important to familiarize yourself with the resources inside and how to use them. Take time to review the laminated references on answering questions inside the clinic folders. They will help you to feel more confident and learn to demonstrate the professionalism expected with being a WSU Extension Master Gardener.

The amount of inaccurate information on the internet has made it more important than ever for Master Gardeners to give research-based answers and to show the client the source from which you are basing your answer. You may know the answers to many common questions from years of experience but backing it up by *showing* the answer in one of WSU's publications or a clinic book like the Sunset Western Gardening Book is what sets the Master Gardener program apart from others that give gardening advice. It is better to say that you do not know the answer than it is to give inaccurate information that damages our credibility. Ask for contact information and get back to them when you have time to do a thoughtful and thorough search.

The May 30 ICMGF member meeting will include a CE presentation on honing your diagnostic and clinic skills. You won't want to miss it!

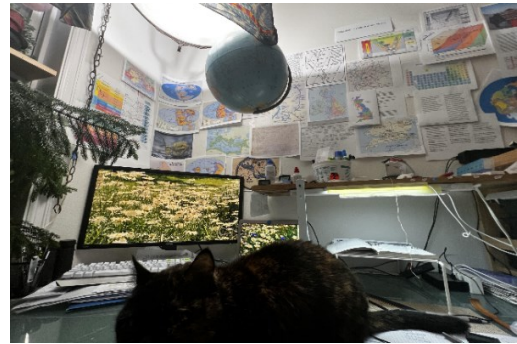
The Intern Experience

by Leif, Class of 2024

Editor's Note: The Intern Experience is a new feature where we ask interns for their perspective on training and interning. We hope you enjoy the variety of impressions you will get from our newest colleagues.

"If you have a garden and a library, you lack nothing."
- Cicero.*

Sienna, sitting on my knee right now and my companion throughout the training, liked the training very much, thank you. She might tell you that it was nice having the room heat on all of the time... and begging free scratches, because 'Dad' was at the desk all day!



If a picture is worth 1000 words, perhaps this one is worth, say 250? But I'd choose just one: connections. The training has allowed me to explore resources, to dive into the ocean of connections I'd not made before.

You will note a cute creature I brought home from the lecture on arthropods, *Katianna oceanica*. (No leash required.) It is a springtail found in Tasmania and a living fossil of one of the non-insect hexapods that survived the Permian extinction, back when we were joined together with those far-off lands. OK. "She" wasn't featured in the lecture. But you get a different feel for a "pest" when you know her story.

And that *Araucaria* tree: they just found its relative in a deep Australian valley. Some MG-type out for a hike just happened to recognize what they were looking at, growing protected from the geologically "new" Indian Ocean Dipole current (sister to our El Niño cycle) intensifying modern climate change. An environmentally controlled ancient rift still bears its precious Jurassic cargo. Cool!

Not in the manual either. But... Cicero knew what I'm sayin': "An ocean!" totally.

**"Si hortum in bibliotheca habes, nihil deerit."
[46BCE-To Varro, in Ad Familiares IX, 4.]*

From the President

Spring has sprung and another Whidbey Gardening Workshop has come and gone.

Congratulations to all who worked so hard to create such a well-received and successful event! So, let's all take a breath, smell the flowers, and remember why we are here.



The Workshop and all our other activities are meant to fulfill our mission of educating the public. So, let's keep up the great work, and also remember to enjoy the process and cultivate social ties to stay engaged.

Remember when you first learned about paradigm shift—the dramatic changes that alter the course of a society? Examples are when humans started farming, when Henry Ford put mass production into the mainstream, and when the television infiltrated our homes.

You may be wondering, "Where is he going with this?" In recent history, social media and smartphones, combined with the effects of the pandemic, have created another paradigm shift. People now expect flexibility in both work and learning, with online availability an everyday expectation. Because of this dramatic shift, we have an opportunity to reach out to a broader audience.

At our February member meeting, we advertised extensively on social media platforms and, as a result, we had many community members join our continuing education presentation. We can build on this success by coordinating and enhancing our advertising and social media presence. Board members, along with our Web & Social Media Committee, will be discussing how we can use these tools to spread the word on our activities. As always, your input is welcome!

Thanks – *Jim Peskuric, ICMGF President*

Whidbey Gardening Workshop – Kudos and Thanks to All

This year's Workshop, with the theme of "Back to Our Roots," was a rousing success in so many ways, from the return to in-person only, to the new Make-n-Take classes, to the Marketplace jam-packed with gardening art and supplies, beautiful and unusual plants and loads of helpful information.

Early feedback indicates that attendees, instructors, vendors, and volunteers alike had a wonderful time.



Over 300 attendees and walk-ins joined us along with 36 instructors and over 60 volunteers. Comments were overwhelmingly positive and even poetic.

- "The overall vibe was one of welcome, education, anticipation of Spring mixed with very real concepts of climate change, our role in the care of the earth and making the best use of our land before the earth tired of our irritation and shakes us all off like annoying fleas on a dog. Thank you all for your hard work. I have nothing but total respect and admiration for what you've put together."
- "...A common love of gardening is a wonderful thing to nurture. Thank you for providing this community gathering for us to take refuge in while waiting for spring to arrive!"
- "Kudos to all involved in this workshop. Everything flowed smoothly and on time. Volunteers did a great job of directing us where to go. Lunch was delicious. The Marketplace was truly enjoyable with a nice range of vendors. And the instructors for all of the workshops I attended all ranged from very good to absolutely excellent. Thank you!"

Carolyn Lancet and Cathy Lofton-Day are so grateful to all our ICMGs and friends who volunteered their time, skills and energy to make this workshop such a huge success.

And we are all grateful to Carolyn and Cathy for their leadership!

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.

The **Class of 2024** completed its training in January, to great success. Julie Lary graciously hosted a graduation party at her home after the last class. Master Gardeners turned up in force and once again showed their talent for delicious cuisine. This energetic group of interns has started their volunteer work, so please give them your welcome and the benefit of your experience as they work toward their MG certification.



Island County Master Gardeners once again provided support to the statewide booth at the **Northwest Flower and Garden Festival**, with a monetary contribution and the welcome help of a team of volunteers. Approximately 2500 people visited the booth, engaging in conversation with volunteers about Master Gardener program priorities, what Master Gardeners do, and how to become one.



The season for **Home Hort calls** has begun, with opportunities for interns as well as experienced Master Gardeners. Deb Mitchell led a recent Home Hort call to inspect damage on fruit trees. Deer damage is very common to young fruit trees and the recommended solution was to install rebar stakes around the trunk to interfere with a stag's ability to rub off the bark. In addition, last year's explosion of meadow voles seems to be continuing through this year. Watch for more opportunities to join in a Home Hort call as the season progresses.

Work parties at the **Coupeville Community Garden** have resumed on Saturdays from 10 am until noon. All are welcome to join. Volunteers at the Coupeville Community Garden have been preparing the soil and planning for the new growing season.

The garden has now expanded to four plots. The town of Coupeville reserved the two new plots for food bank patrons who want to grow their own vegetables. Master Gardeners will be there to provide educational guidance and moral support. The Master Gardener compost bin has been a big success. We keep the piles turned regularly and are reaping the benefits.



Camano Master Gardeners had their first monthly gathering of 2024 at the home of Adena Ray. There was a short business meeting to discuss outreach efforts including the clinic schedule and plant sale planning, followed by an excellent CE presentation from Adena on two methods for growing plants hydroponically and a demonstration in her greenhouse. Everyone present was excited to learn how they could use this system to grow plants indoors and have fresh herbs and vegetables during the winter months.

Whidbey Island Master Gardeners are invited to attend these monthly presentations. Please contact any of the Camano MGs for details.



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Master Gardeners joined with the Whidbey Island Conservation District to share best practices for **planting bare root plants** at the WICD Native Plant Sale. Interns Tristan



Levine and Julie Lary joined with Loren Imes to give three demonstrations in our Education Garden native plant garden on a beautiful sunny Saturday.

The first annual **“Great Whidbey Seed Swap”** was held at Greenbank Farm for gardeners to share extra seeds and to learn from local organizations. Representing the Island County Master Gardener program were Interns Scottie Kuper and Julie Lary, along with veteran MGs Lisa Phillips and Kim Baxter.



They shared Extension resources on successfully starting and growing your own vegetable plants from seed, discussed soil mixes, and showed examples of various seed starting techniques, including a demonstration by Julie Lary of making soil blocks.

2024 Master Gardener Education Series: Caring About Our Environment

Spring heralds the start of the Master Gardener Education Series, held at the **Education Garden at Greenbank Farm, 765 Wonn Road, 1 pm to 2 pm.**

Thanks to C-J Nielsen and Sarah Van Alstyne for putting together this great series of classes. All classes qualify as Continuing Education for Master Gardeners. Invite your friends and neighbors and let them know these classes are FREE and open to the public.

May 19 - Good Bug/Bad Bug by Sharon Collman

Learn about beneficial insects and how to control the bad ones without pesticides.

June 16 - Firewise Gardening–Landscaping for Fire Resistance by Collin McAvinchey

Western wildfires can ignite at any time. Put these fire-resistant landscaping ideas in place and protect your home.

July 21 - Good Lawn/Bad Lawn by Jim Peskuric and Mosa Neis

Reduce your monoculture lawn and grow a biodiverse lawn or meadow that supports healthier plants and soil, saves water, and encourages beneficial critters.

August 18 - Winter Veggies Growing Guide: Island Stalwarts by Anza Muenchow

Learn about some of the most successful winter vegetables for our island and best growing practices to help optimize your yield.

September 15 - Go Green in the Garden: Using Nature’s Own Plant Food by Anza Muenchow

Never buy fertilizer again when you learn how to enrich your plants and soil naturally.

From the Program Coordinator

Which of the following two statements is more interesting?

(1) Master Gardeners met weekly at the Coupeville Community Garden to grow food and share best practices with other gardeners; or (2) Six Master Gardener volunteers met weekly at the Coupeville Community Garden and grew 402 pounds of fresh vegetables while sharing best practices with 48 other gardeners.



I expect you preferred the second statement. Including the numbers adds context and makes the accomplishments more relatable and memorable. Those numbers come from *you* and what you do.

Statistics on the work done by volunteers in each county across Washington state are collected annually and compiled into a statewide report. This report is shared with WSU administrators to demonstrate the value that community volunteers bring to WSU's land-grant university mission to share research that improves the lives of Washington state residents.

Let's look at a few of *our* recorded numbers for 2023. We held 35 clinics at 4 locations and answered 271 questions. Twenty-seven volunteers gave over 1300 hours nurturing our Education Garden. Over 1400 people attended more than 50 classes (including those from WGW) to learn how to grow more food, save water, create healthy soil, use fewer chemicals, support pollinators and wildlife by growing native plants and managing noxious weeds, and much more.

Of those who offered their demographic information, 70% were women, 30% were men, and 84% were white. Ten volunteers grew and donated over 2500 pounds of fresh vegetables at 3 gardens. All of this work was done by 94 Island County Master Gardeners who recorded over 5200 total hours of volunteer time.

I enjoy reviewing the data because it is objective information that can be used to inform what we do. If the numbers are low, it might inspire thoughts on how to do better. If the numbers are high, we can ask why it is working so well and can consider whether these practices could be applied elsewhere or shared with others.

To some, it might seem boastful to publish this sort of information. But in this age of social media and self-promotion, and with so many other organizations competing for money and attention, it is important for us to tell our story. Not only can a new generation of gardeners learn how to benefit from what we offer, but they also might consider volunteering with us.

As we look forward to our year ahead, thank you in advance for regularly recording your volunteer time and who we are helping. And, as always, thank you for being a WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer!

Loren Imes, Program Coordinator

It's Plant Sale Time!

The Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, May 11, from 9 am to 1 pm at Greenbank on Whidbey Island and the Camaloch Chalet on Camano Island. Thanks in advance for everyone's hard work propagating plants for a successful sale!

In addition to the usual lovely starts and divisions and the highly successful hanging baskets, we hope to introduce kokedama, as demonstrated at our recent Whidbey Gardening Workshop. Moss and teacup gardens will complement the houseplant and garden art.

If you're interested in contributing to or assisting with any of these categories, please email Raissa DeArmond at plantsale@icmgf.org.

Happy planting!



From the Education Garden

Spring is just around the corner, bringing change and new ideas to all our gardens, including the Education Garden at Greenbank Farm.

What's new? Several interns from the class of 2024 have joined in to help fill the cavernous hole created by the retirement from the Education Garden of Donna and Steve Stansberry, who helped to establish the gardens, and of Nancy Hindes, veteran lead of the Native Plant Garden. We hope to celebrate the contributions of these valued colleagues later in the season, while appreciating the enthusiasm from the new people joining us.

Tristan Levine is the new lead for the Native Plant Garden team, which includes Heather Diamond, Sandy Penland, and others who will maintain and evolve this wonderful resource. Lisa Phillips will serve as lead and coordinator of a team of people in the Cottage Garden, including Moe Bowman and Julie Lary. A warm welcome and thank you to the interns, and to other regulars from the Wednesday work parties who have committed to different parts of the garden.

Who is Blue? A blue heron sculpture was installed on the edge of the Pond Garden many years ago. That heron – now nick-named Blue – will be the mascot for the new Facebook page dedicated to promoting the Education Garden.



Julie Lary, Class of 2024, is working with Gretchen Schlomann on this creative resource. “Blue” will fly over the garden regularly and report what is going on, describing what we can learn from plants and activities in the garden. This is a great outreach tool, and we thank Julie for her creativity and making it happen.

What else can we learn about seasonal tasks? The coming of spring brings a flurry of seasonal activity, which may remind you of what needs tending to in your own gardens. Barb Douglas is pruning roses to remove winter damage and encourage growth in the right directions. Judy Nylander is continuing to rehabilitate older rhododendrons while checking for damage from winter freeze. As tempting as it might be to trim back branches now, that trimming should wait until after peak bloom.

Raissa DeArmond is encouraging us to think about plant sale contributions by dividing perennials, starting seedlings, and growing from cuttings. Soil and pots are available in the garden if you need them for your own plant sale contributions.

Gary Ketcheson is watching the old trees in the Shade Garden carefully, as the trunk movement from winter windstorms brought roots to the surface. Exposed tree roots should be covered with compost or soil to protect them from damage.

Work, visit, learn! Stop by anytime during a regular work party, Wednesdays 9 am to noon. Or wander through at your leisure. Or join us during the [Education Series](#) at 1 pm on the third Sunday of each month, May through September. We welcome you!

Caption Contest!

What is Carolyn Mercer saying to Tom Lucido? Submit your entry for the bubble text in this picture from last year's Plant Sale via email to newsletter@icmgf.org. The winner will be announced at the next Foundation member meeting. Shower us with entries, please!



Continuing Education – Refresh, Learn, Share

Continuing education classes at our Foundation meetings are open to the public. Each event is posted on our Foundation and WSU Extension websites and in our Facebook group. By sharing this information on your social media, with personal acquaintances, and on local event bulletin boards, we can expand our ability to provide public education in gardening, so please take a moment to spread the word!

With the March meeting, we returned to hybrid events. We hope you will **join us in person at the Pacific Rim Institute, 180 Parker Rd, Coupeville**. If you need to join online, look for the Zoom link on the Master Gardener emails, sent one week prior to each meeting.

Members of the public who prefer to attend via Zoom can register via a form on the Foundation website, but we encourage them to come in person and we hope you will all help to make them welcome at our meetings. MGs who plan to attend via Zoom do not have to register, since you get the link via the MG email.

Here is what's coming up.

May 30 - Learn How to Be a Plant Problem Detective! by Loren Imes

Is your fir failing? Maybe your daphnes are drooping or your wisteria is wilting? How do you know if the problem is a pest, disease, nutrient deficiency, too little water, too much water, sun damage, cold damage, a soil issue, or something else? Refresh your memory on the steps to take when confronted with a plant problem and get to the root of the issue to keep your plants thriving!

June 27 - Your Best Food Harvests for Fall and Winter by Anza Muenchow

Think ahead to plan, prepare, and create a bountiful harvest of the fall and winter crops that you enjoy. Learn how to prep your beds and amend your soil, which crops to start when, whether to direct sow or use transplants, what the best practices are for irrigation during summer, and how to protect your crops during colder weather. Bring your questions for this interactive discussion.

Holly's Garden

As you know, our dear colleague and friend Holly Grason passed away in December. Holly was our Central Area Representative during the pandemic, and she was always looking for new ways to connect with the community during difficult times.

It was Holly who suggested that we rent garden plots at the Coupeville Community Garden and donate all harvests to the "Gifts from the Heart" food bank in Coupeville. The collaboration continues to be a very successful one.

As a result of Holly's tireless efforts on this project, we are dedicating the ICMGF garden plots at the Coupeville Community Garden to Holly's memory. Island County Master Gardeners, other members of the gardens, and the mayor of Coupeville will all be invited to join us for the naming ceremony of "Holly's Garden."

The dedication ceremony will be held at 10 am on April 20 at the Coupeville Community Garden, Highway 20 & Broadway.

We thank Tom Lucido for the amazing job he did in creating the beautiful plaque for Holly's Garden.



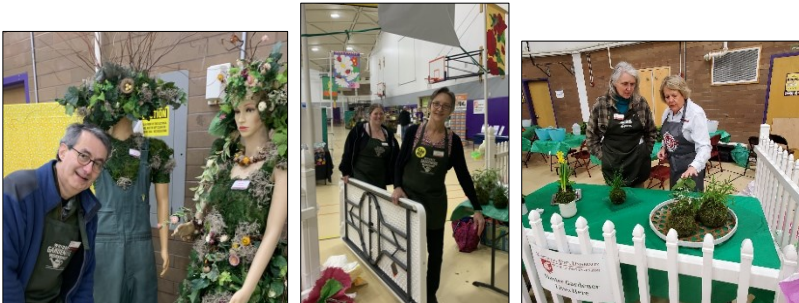
Upcoming Events

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

- April 18** ICMGF Board meeting
- April 28** Spring Potluck
- May 11** ICMGF Plant Sale
- May 19** MG Education Series at Greenbank
- May 23** ICMGF Board meeting
- May 30** ICMGF Member meeting
- June 16** MG Education Series at Greenbank
- June 20** ICMGF Board meeting
- June 27** ICMGF Member meeting

LOOKING FARTHER AHEAD

- August 31** Summer Picnic
- Sept 27-28** [Advanced Education Conference](#) (virtual)



Thank you to all the volunteers
for making WG2024 a huge success!

ICMGF OFFICERS

President – Jim Peskuric
Vice President – Jenni Wilson
Secretary – Kim Baxter
Treasurer – Paul Rowe

AREA REPS

South – Christine Dimm
Central – Deb Mitchell
North – Lisa Phillips
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 the [Resources](#) page or point your smartphone camera at the QR code. If you need the password, contact Loren.



The [ICMGF Member Portal](#) on the Foundation website includes

- member picture book
- minutes of Foundation meetings
- minutes of Ed Garden Committee
- Foundation by-laws & agreements
- selected CE videos

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 newsletter@icmgf.org.