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MASTER GARDENER *Gazette*

When we had the idea of a newsletter for the Island County Master Gardeners three years ago, we talked about our vision. Vision? I thought I was just going to write a few articles about the goings-on in Island County. What started out as a simple newsletter idea is now our *Master Gardener Gazette*.

The *Gazette* has not only informed you about Whidbey Gardening Workshops and Plant Sales but also about everything else in our Master Gardener community, from crevice gardens to kokodama to diagnosing plant problems to meeting our new Master Gardeners to our Education Series and more. We have received many compliments from all over Island County for our “little newsletter,” and we feel like we are just getting started.

Look through the pages for news of volunteer hours, donations made, social activities, workshops, and even our plans for a bright future. Thank you for your continued support and if you would like to join us in creating, writing, or just suggesting ideas for the *Gazette*, don't hesitate to contact me!



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.

Carol Ann Leonessa, Editor, Master Gardener Gazette
newsletter@icmqf.org



Award-winning work
by all our volunteers at the
Whidbey Island Fair!



Plant Detectives – A Cautionary Tale by Loren Imes

*With gratitude to Edgar Allan Poe and assistance from
Google Gemini*

As the days grow shorter and we approach All Hallows' Eve, I have a dark tale to share with you, dear readers. A tale of a well-intentioned, but misguided man. Read it and pray that you learn from his tragic mistakes.

A creeping dread had settled over the once-verdant expanse of Mr. Bartholomew's garden. The vibrant hues of his beloved blooms had faded, replaced by an eerie pallor. The once-luscious leaves were now shriveled and brown, as if struck by a plague. Bartholomew, a man of delicate constitution and a fervent believer in the power of nature, had been experimenting with a variety of home remedies to revitalize his ailing plants. But as the days turned into weeks, and the garden's decline accelerated, a chilling realization dawned upon him: his experiments had unleashed a monstrous horror.

It began with a simple concoction of Epsom salt and water, a remedy he had found in an old gardening manual. He had applied it liberally to his roses, hoping to remedy their fading blooms. At first, the roses seemed to perk up, their petals regaining a semblance of their former vibrancy. But then, something strange began to happen. The leaves turned a sickly yellow, and the stems became brittle and snapped easily. Bartholomew, alarmed, tried another remedy, a mixture of milk and water, said to deter fungal diseases. But the results were even worse. The plants withered and died, their corpses strewn across the garden like fallen soldiers.

As the days passed, Bartholomew became increasingly desperate. He tried everything he could think of — homemade compost tea, diluted vinegar, even a concoction of crushed garlic and cayenne pepper. But nothing seemed to work. The garden was dying, and Bartholomew was powerless to stop it.

One foggy afternoon, as he sat in his study, staring across the desolate garden, there appeared the spectral forms of two visitors, their faces etched with concern and compassion.

"Who comes?" he demanded. "Island County Master Gardeners. Did you request a Home Hort Visit?"

His mind raced. In his anguish, he had forgotten about the appointment he had made with the Master Gardeners. "Do not despair, Bartholomew," one of them whispered, their voice as soft as a summer breeze. "There is still hope."

The Master Gardeners described to him the principles of Integrated Pest Management and the importance of knowing the cultural needs of the plant before treating it. They explained that unlike commercially available products, home remedies often lack rigorous scientific testing. This means there is no guarantee that they will work as intended or that they won't have unintended consequences.

Then they shared appropriate guidance and fact sheets from WSU Hortsense and urged him to rely on scientifically proven methods to treat his plant problems, including trying non-chemical solutions first.

Over time, their research-based advice helped restore Bartholomew's garden to its former glory and he became a devoted disciple of the Master Gardeners. He learned a valuable lesson from them that foggy day — that while it may be tempting to rely on old-fashioned wisdom, it is important to base gardening practices on sound scientific principles — and he vowed to never again experiment with ineffective and even dangerous home remedies.



Pumpkin art at Summer Social,
grown by Kim Baxter

From the President

Four years ago, you elected me to be President of the Island County Master Gardener Foundation. The pandemic was new, and our 2020 fundraising events had been canceled. I would be lying if I said that I was not worried and a bit overwhelmed by the situation. It did not take me long to realize, however, that I had nothing to worry about and that was because of you all.



So many of you stepped up to the task of adjusting to the new world order we were living in. A team came together to create a beautiful and professional Master Gardener calendar that sold very well and brought in much needed funds. You jumped in to pull off a highly successful Whidbey Gardening Workshop using the Zoom Webinar format. You stepped up to help stage an online plant sale. None of these successes would be possible without you, and I thank you for it.

Fast forward to the present and we not only have much to be proud of but are also looking at a bright future. The Camano Island team has grown and is seeking to create a new demonstration garden. We have embraced social media and have become more successful at advertising our events. We are reaching out to the community in new ways while continuing to collaborate with other non-profit organizations to educate the public. We are continuing to grow and donate vegetables to local food banks, and we are the proud winners of the Best of Show educational display at the Whidbey Island Fair.

By now many of you have heard that I am not running for President again this year. In four years on the job, I have accomplished a majority of what I had set out to do and I believe that having new and fresh ideas is an important part of a healthy organization. I fully endorse Cathy Lofton-Day as the next President of the Island County Master Gardener Foundation. She will be a great President if you elect her on October 31, which is our last member meeting of the year, and it's Halloween! Yes, our last member meeting this year will be on Halloween, so come on out to the Pacific Rim in costume. What a fun way to end the foundation year and my presidency!

Jim Peskuric, ICMGF President

P.S. I am not going anywhere and will continue to be active in our fun-loving, gardening community.

The Intern Experience

by Moe Bowman, Class of 2024

Like all samplings in a society, individuals' personalities, interests, and learning styles combine to form their own microcosm, and Master Gardeners are no exception. These are my impressions of my internship.

Soon after my graduation from training, I followed the gravelly path to the Education Garden at Greenbank Farm. It is true that I took a sizable bite when I accepted the invitation to adopt an "island" in the Cottage Garden. To be honest, I don't usually find myself weeding that much in February. Still, I joined the Wednesday band of usual suspects and soon found myself immersed.

There are always mysteries when one takes over another's garden. Where will the sun fall? What made it through the harsh winter? How much yellow can I live with? The pruned grasses provided a perfect home for bunnies. And since I subscribe to a non-violent gardening style, chicken wire became my friend.

But besides growing things, I really appreciate my garden buddies. I have found our group to be focused, supportive and positive. They might see something that requires attention, but they respect each other's opinions and recognize the value of dialogue.



To close these musings, I might also suggest a visit to the gardens on those quiet, off days. It is then that I make observations of the human visitors. They come in all ages and configurations – friends meeting to picnic, solos preferring the shade and a pond view, moms or dads pushing strollers with sleepy toddlers, and dogs with parents enjoying some quality time – all breathing in the language of flowers together.

From the Program Coordinator

Aside from needing advice on plant problems, one of the most common requests at the office is for a Master Gardener to give a public presentation. And, judging by the great turnouts we've had at our Education Series at Greenbank Farm, people enjoy learning from in-person presentations.



As outdoor garden chores wind down for the year, would you consider putting together a public presentation for next year to share your knowledge and inspire our island communities on the joys and benefits of gardening?

I can hear some of you say, "I don't enjoy speaking in public!" According to an [article in Psychology Today](#), public speaking ranks as one of our most common shared fears and is likely related to how we evolved as a social species. But fear not! There are ways to help conquer those fears. By just realizing that most of us share this fear, you will likely earn the respect of many in the audience by getting up there and doing something that they wouldn't do, or from those that have been in the same shoes.

One way to make giving a presentation easier is to partner with another speaker, with each of you sharing half the preparation and speaking responsibilities. This reduces your workload and lets you support each other throughout the development of the presentation.

Another option is to take advantage of several presentations that have been developed by a statewide team of seasoned presenters. These presentations have been reviewed by WSU Extension staff and are ready to go. All you need to do is practice presenting them. You can [see them at this link](#). Take one of these presentations and partner with another speaker and you are practically finished!

I also have several presentations from previous Master Gardeners that just need some updating, which you can come see in the office. Or you can share on a topic you are passionate about. I can get you a copy of the new Master Gardener PowerPoint template and even help you with putting it into PowerPoint if you don't have access to the software.

I can even envision a team of fellow Master Gardener speakers who would be willing to give supportive feedback. So many great possibilities!

As a Master Gardener, you have a wealth of knowledge that can benefit others. Whether it's about sustainable gardening practices, native plants, or pest management, sharing your knowledge can inspire others to adopt eco-friendly practices in their own gardens. Let me know if you are interested and I would love to help get you started.

Loren Imes, Program Coordinator

Annual Re-Application Begins Soon

A reminder that the re-application process begins soon. To remain active as a Master Gardener, you need a current background check, and the following minimum hours recorded in GivePulse:

- Certified MGs – 25 hours of volunteer time and 10 hours of continuing education
- Emeritus MGs (those who have served 10 years or more) – 5 hours of volunteer time and 1 hour of continuing education

Loren will let you know if your background check needs updating. Let him know if you need help finding volunteer or continuing education hours or with entering your hours into GivePulse.

Your work as a WSU Extension Master Gardener volunteer is deeply appreciated by WSU Extension, Island County, and your fellow volunteers. We look forward to having you continue with us in 2025!

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.

Jim Peskuric and Mosa Neis taught the July class in the MG Education Series, **Good Lawn/Bad Lawn**. Over twenty-five members of the public showed up to hear Jim's vivid examples of the value of biodiversity in lawns and meadows. Mosa Neis provided advice for making it happen based on her experience at the Pacific Rim Institute.



July also brought the annual **Whidbey and Camano Fairs**, popular events for attendees and volunteers alike. Congratulations to and gratitude for all the volunteers who staffed these important outreach events.

Thanks to the creativity and hard work of Melissa Evans and the entire crew of volunteers, the Master Gardener exhibit at the **Whidbey Island Fair** won **Best of Show** for educational displays! The theme was **Blue Ribbon Produce and the role that pollinators play**.



In addition to a lush array of vegetables and other plants, there were interactive activities for kids and adults. What a terrific way to showcase the delights and benefits of gardening!



The Master Gardener booth at the **Stanwood-Camano Community Fair** was also well attended. Visitors to the table enjoyed talking

about their gardens and learning about the Master Gardener program on Camano Island.

The August class in the MG Education Series at Greenbank Farm was **Winter Veggies Growing Guide: Island Stalwarts**, taught by Anza Muenchow. Record attendance of more than 35 people reflected the high interest in growing your own food, as well as appreciation of Anza's expertise on this topic.

Our annual **Summer Picnic** was held at the end of August, with a dependably delicious feast of potluck items and the reliably good company of our fellow Master Gardeners. Many thanks to Tom Lucido for hosting us in his beautiful garden.

A special feature of the picnic was the recognition of three Master Gardeners who retired earlier this year from their many years of service in the Education Garden: Nancy Hindes, Donna Stansberry, and Steve Stansberry. Thankfully all three of them remain in our MG community as Emeritus Master Gardeners.

Nancy Hindes helped establish the Native Plant Garden in 2009 and served as its lead, enhancing the plantings and educational value to the treasure that it is today.



Steve and Donna Stansberry were there at the very start of the Education Garden, when it was just a blank slate.

Their contributions are legion, and we were glad of the opportunity to celebrate them.

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The second annual **Harvest Faire at Greenbank Farm** was held in early September, with up to 5,000 attendees enjoying the family activities organized by

the Port of Coupeville. Master Gardeners hosted tours of the Education Garden and answered questions at a plant clinic.

The last class of the season in the MG Education Series, **Go Green in the Garden: Using Nature's Own Plant Food**, taught by Anza Muenchow, was held in September. The strong hint of fall in the air at Greenbank Farm did not keep participants from enjoying Anza's advice on keeping our soils healthy and our gardens growing.



C-J Nielsen and Sarah Van Alstyne organized the Ed Series this year. Many thanks and kudos to them for a great program. If you are interested in presenting in the series, please let them know. It's a relaxed and informal atmosphere and the audience is always grateful.

Volunteers at the **Lord's Garden** are still harvesting cucumbers and tomatoes (and yes, they are late in maturing), with Brussels sprouts, bell peppers, and winter squash still to come. So far, they have harvested over 1,000 pounds of crops to be shared with Agape, the Senior Center, Cambridge Cove, and CADA in Oak Harbor; and with Cam-Bey in Coupeville.



At the **Coupeville Community Garden**, Deb Mitchell helped a Spanish-speaking family start their own plot and was able to provide them with translated growing resources. The central area MGs meet there Saturday mornings, and all are welcome to volunteer.

From the Education Garden

Did you know that the Master Gardener Education Garden has a **wild side**? If you wander the pathways through our ornamentals and vegetables, you will come upon the wilder side and a new project to add to our existing spaces for wildlife habitat.

Jim Peskuric is leading a team that is transforming the former blackberry bramble on the hillside behind the Pie Shoppe. They are mounding a large pile of weed and pruning material that will provide a home to wildlife as it slowly breaks down. We are already seeing rabbits, birds, squirrels, snakes, grasshoppers, and several types of pollinators in this area.



Wildlife support and biodiversity can happen in any backyard garden. Two programs that promote these goals are [Habitat at Home](#) from the Washington

Department of Fish and Wildlife, and [Homegrown National Park](#). Consider adding your own yard to the growing base of people joining these efforts.

The new **Information Podiums** are now installed throughout the Education Garden, and we are delighted to report they are getting regular use. Please visit them! Educational signage is a constant goal – and an on-going challenge. As we work on new projects or everyday maintenance, we look for how to convey useful information to the public in an engaging way.

We **invite you to stop by** and help us in that goal. Wander the garden as if you were a new gardener and see what catches your eye for another opportunity to highlight something that we can communicate to visitors.



Meet Our Newest Master Gardeners

Heather Diamond, Langley

Class of 2024



I am a retired university instructor and museum curator who now writes creative non-fiction (www.heatherdiamondwriter.com). Originally from Everett, I moved back to the Pacific Northwest in 2022 after living in Arkansas, Texas, Hawaii, and Hong Kong. I now live in the woods near Langley.

When I'm not writing, reading, or birdwatching, I am working in my native plant and vegetable gardens and expanding my knowledge of forest stewardship, planting for pollinators, vermiculture, and organic vegetable gardening.

Rosemary Easley, Camano

Class of 2024

I grew up in North Seattle and spent childhood summers on Camano Island beginning in 1963. After college, a job offer landed me in Chelan, Washington, where I met my future husband, married and raised our three children. Forty-two years later, as retirement time approached, we decided to make Camano Island home.



Gardening has always been a passion of mine and with the gentle push from a fellow Master Gardener, I decided to take the leap, hit the books, and enroll in the Island County Master Gardener Program. Best decision ever! I have found "my people."

I look forward to many years of continued education and the opportunity to serve my community as an Island County Master Gardener.

Tristan Levine, Freeland

Class of 2024



I moved to Whidbey Island from the Seattle area three years ago. There, I was working at the Burke Museum of Natural History on specimen preparation as well as installations for Planet Word, a museum in D.C. On the island, I took my passion for gardening to work at Venture Out Nursery and the Pacific Rim Institute. I currently volunteer as the lead for the Native Lowland Forest Garden at the Master Gardener Education Garden.

I am particularly interested in land restoration, native plants, and educating the public. In my free time, I enjoy berry picking and caring for fruiting perennials.

Anita Merrill, Oak Harbor

Class of 2024

My enthusiasm for gardening and all things nature was inspired by the summers spent as a child with my grandmother on her Oregon farm. The enjoyment continued while growing veggies with my mother as we traveled around with my Air Force father.



As an adult, I have continued that love of growing plants and changing the landscape in North Carolina, Las Vegas, and the Pacific Northwest. Over the past few decades, I've considered becoming a Master Gardener in each place that I have lived, but the time was never quite right until now.

My love of learning extends to other areas as well. I have two Bachelor's and an MBA degree. In my 40s I earned my black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and in my 50s became an avid road cyclist, completing many century rides.

I have three adult children who are living on their own. I share my home with our 16-year-old Jack Russell and my wonderful husband who I've convinced to share my love of gardening.

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Warren Weissman, Camano

Class of 2024

I dabbled in collecting orchids, growing vegetables, and keeping ornamental gardens over the years. But there were too many moves, too many climates, and too little time, and gardening remained an interest but not a passion.



After retiring and moving to a Camano property with too much grass and too little landscaping and with lots of possibilities, gardening as a passion became feasible. Internet research, plus trial and error, took things down the right path but more knowledge and a more rigorous approach clearly was needed.

Conversations with Master Gardener friends and relatives of Master Gardeners, plus good experiences with the ICMG Hotline, led to the obvious: take advantage of a great learning opportunity and a chance to work with other passionate gardeners. The MG program was also an opportunity to deepen community ties already created by other not-for-profit work.

Mistakes may continue, but dabbling has been defeated!

New Camano Training Class

A new class of seven enthusiastic Master Gardener trainees began October 1 on Camano Island.

Training runs for 14 weeks on Tuesdays, with a break over the holidays, and wraps up in mid-February. This is the first training to take place primarily on Camano. Training will return to Whidbey next year.

Save The (New) Date!

Our next Whidbey Gardening Workshop is coming up and will be here before you know it!

March 15, 2025
Oak Harbor High School

The theme is
"Focusing on Our Priorities"

The [nine priority areas of the statewide Master Gardener Program](#) are key to our overarching goals as Master Gardeners – to provide to our community the skills and abilities needed to help mitigate the environmental and sociological issues that face us today.

Everyone has a role to play in creating and sustaining healthy and resilient communities. Our goal in the Workshop is to support these objectives and help educate both new and experienced gardeners.

We are delighted to announce that Kelly Dodson and Sue Milliken of the Far Reaches Botanical Conservancy will be our keynote speakers. Their work in creating the Conservancy and their continuing efforts with preserving endangered plants exemplify the Master Gardener priorities of Climate Change and Biodiversity.

Opportunities to volunteer will be listed in GivePulse in early 2025. Contact either of the WGW Co-Chairs, Barb Faville or Carolyn Lancet, with questions.

Put March 15 on your calendar and join us for another inspiring Whidbey Gardening Workshop!

Upcoming Events

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

October 31 ICMGF annual board meeting
ICMGF annual member meeting & election

December 8 Holiday party

LOOKING FARTHER AHEAD

March 15, 2025 Whidbey Gardening Workshop

May 10, 2025 Plant Sale

Election of 2025 Board

We will elect the open ICMGF board positions for next year at the October 31 member meeting. Many thanks to Julie Lary and Sarah Van Alstyne of the Nominating Committee for assembling an excellent slate of candidates and thank you to the candidates for their willingness to serve on the board. The candidates are:

President – Cathy Lofton-Day
Secretary – Kim Baxter
North Area Rep – Lisa Phillips
South Area Rep – Christine Dimm

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



Enjoying the beautiful weather and surroundings at the Summer Social

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.