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MASTER GARDENER Gazette

The long dormancy of winter is coming to an end! I'm hoping the cold weather is behind us as we get back to our gardens. I was surprised to see my tulips coming up, the trees budding, and even some hummingbirds and other small critters.

WGW 2025 was a huge success, as always. I heard so many positive comments from participants while I was tending the Bookstore. Thank you to all volunteers for your hard work! Enjoy the pictures from the Workshop as we prepare for the Plant Sales, which are just a month away.



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. Looking forward to seeing everyone at this month's Spring Social!

Carol Ann Leonessa, Editor, Master Gardener Gazette
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Our volunteers feel the effects at the end of a hard day's work at the Whidbey Gardening Workshop...

...but wait...
 they bounced right back
 and are ready for 2026!



From the President

At the Foundation Board retreat in January, four illustrious teams imagined being stranded on a desert island and how they could use their skills to survive. Each group had quite creative ideas, and the conclusion of the exercise was that Master Gardeners are well-equipped to meet any challenge through their knowledge, experience and teamwork – all while having lots of fun.



On this high note, we took on the daunting task of categorizing eighteen of the projects available to us as volunteer opportunities. We first surveyed which Master Gardener priorities were covered by each project. We then individually classified the activities as Critical, High, Moderate or Low priority. During the exercise it was pointed out that some projects, which may not cover many of our MG priorities, are critical for the recruitment of volunteers, the lifeblood of our organization.

It's probably not surprising that the most highly rated activities (critical and high importance) are those that cover most of our MG priorities, provide strong community outreach, and are successful events for recruitment. Included in the high impact group are the plant clinics, the Education Garden, WGW, the Hotline, the Education Series, Lord's Garden for its community outreach and volunteer education, and the Plant Sale. All require many volunteers for success. Let's call participation in these events group goals.

A second category of activities emerged during the exercise. Some of the listed projects were not well known by all participants, so feedback on their importance and relationship to the MG priorities was limited. Most of these activities either occurred once a year, were more focused, or were new. These include the Apple Festival, Orca Day, Harvest Festival, Seed Swap, and Camano 101. All are events sponsored by other organizations. Let's call participation in these events individual goals.

So why were we doing this? For many reasons! First, to ensure we are meeting the mission of our organization and of the MG program. Secondly, to give our volunteers some feedback on which activities the Board feels have the most impact on our community. Lastly, to provide a framework to determine how to accomplish our goals without overwhelming our volunteers.

The Board will review and discuss the data over the next few months, and we encourage members to join us. Do you prefer group goals, individual goals, or a mix? Are there ways to reduce or combine activities and still meet our mission? Do you have other ideas? We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Cathy Lofton-Day, ICMGF President

2025 Master Gardener Education Series

Once again, the **Education Garden at Greenbank Farm** will host the Education Series, every third Sunday during the summer from **1 pm to 2 pm**. Thank you to Sarah Van Alstyne and C-J Nielsen for organizing these excellent classes.

All classes qualify as Continuing Education for Master Gardeners. Invite your friends and neighbors – let them know the classes are FREE and open to the public.

May 18 – Wildfire Resilient Landscaping & the Home Ignition Zone, by Collin McAvinchey
Western wildfires can ignite at any time. Put these fire-resistance landscaping ideas in place and protect your home.

June 15 – Exploring Plants in Your Garden for Pest and Disease, by Jenny Glass
Learn to incorporate plant disease and pest detection/diagnosis into your gardening habits.

July 20 – Ground Covers: Planting in Layers to Create a Living Mulch, by Tobey Nelson
One of the rules for soil health is to “keep it covered.” This talk sheds light on the benefits of a “living mulch” and the many shrubs, perennials, and grasses to use.

August 17 – What To Do About Soil, by Gary Ketcheson
We will discuss some of the important properties of soils, with special attention to the soils of Island County.

September 21 – Assessing Tree Health and Diseases, by Sue Nicol
Learn to identify vulnerable trees and make good choices about planting and replacing trees.

From the Program Coordinator

I'm excited to share information about the launch of **WSU Extension Green School**, the new training program for future Master Gardeners.



Green School is a comprehensive training program designed to teach gardeners research-based techniques and skills to create thriving garden landscapes while protecting our natural resources. It emphasizes environmentally responsible gardening practices that use the latest horticultural research to address our stewardship priorities, like soil health, growing food, biodiversity, and climate change.

Starting this fall, Green School will serve as the foundational training for individuals pursuing either a Washington Gardener Certificate or the WSU Extension Master Gardener certification.

Two Training Options:

- **Washington Gardener Certificate** (cost: \$550) for individuals seeking to enhance their gardening skills or professional resume without a volunteer commitment.
- **Extension Master Gardener Volunteer** (cost: \$275) for those who wish to become a volunteer. This includes additional in-person learning and volunteer service.

The foundational training for both options will be delivered online through interactive modules and webinars, making it accessible statewide and accommodating busy schedules. For those wishing to become a Master Gardener volunteer, additional weekly in-person classes will provide hands-on learning experiences, followed by an internship that will allow trainees to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

Those that take the Washington Gardener Certificate program who then decide they would like to become Master Gardener volunteers can do so by completing the in-person classes and internship the following year.

Why the Change?

The update provides a modern, research-based curriculum, and allows wider access to advanced gardening education, empowering more individuals to become skilled stewards of our environment.

What Does This Mean for You, Our Valued Master Gardeners?

Your expertise and dedication remain crucial to our community and program. The Green School does not replace the existing Master Gardener volunteer program. Instead, it expands our reach, bringing horticultural education to a wider audience while maintaining the integrity of our existing Master Gardener program by focusing on those who wish to become volunteers.

If you wish to refresh your knowledge, Master Gardeners who are currently certified may take the training as Continuing Education for a reduced rate of \$125.

How You Can Help:

- **Promote the Green School:** Share information about the Green School and its two training options with your friends and neighbors. Registration will begin this summer and classes start in October.
- **Contact me:** Refer those interested to contact me directly or visit the WSU Green School website at greenschool.extension.wsu.edu.
- **Continue to be a resource:** Your experience and knowledge are invaluable. Continue to share your expertise with the community through our existing Master Gardener programs and events.

Thank you for your continued support of the Master Gardener program and dedication to sharing research-based horticultural education in Island County. Your contribution to fulfilling the mission of our Land Grant University is greatly appreciated!

Loren Imes, Program Coordinator



Class of 2025

Please help extend an enthusiastic welcome and big (green) thumbs up to the Island County Master Gardener class of 2025! After fourteen weeks of intensive training, these seven dedicated individuals celebrated their final class on February 18 and have eagerly put their newfound knowledge to work already as classroom hosts for the Whidbey Gardening Workshop.

Successful completion of their training was celebrated on their final class day with smiles, a sense of relief, and a fun graduation celebration that included a lunch provided by generous Island County Master Gardeners.



Over fourteen weeks, they heard presentations from Island County Master Gardener volunteers, WSU faculty, and partner organizations, learning the essential

skills and practices of being an Extension Volunteer.

This year's class is particularly noteworthy for its representation from Camano Island, with six enthusiastic individuals ready to nearly double the size of our Camano volunteer team. Our new interns there are Beverly Bradly, Suzanne Kieffer, Mary Kinsley, Amanda Krass, Janet Wick, and Jean Yoho. They will be mentored by a team consisting of Judy Coddington, Carole Matthews, and Rosemary Easley.

We also extend a warm welcome to our intern from Whidbey Island, Jamie Halterman, who has already volunteered at the Education Garden and looks forward to helping at the Coupeville Community Garden, along with her mentor, Anita Merrill. Their diverse backgrounds and shared passion for helping spread research-based sustainable gardening knowledge from WSU Extension will benefit gardeners on both Camano and Whidbey Islands.

Our new interns look forward to meeting and working with you, our certified volunteers, to answer gardening questions at our plant clinics and assist with other community projects that will prepare them to become certified Master Gardeners. Please be sure to welcome and encourage them as they join you to share our Master Gardener stewardship priorities in Island County.

The Intern Experience

by Jamie Halterman, Class of 2025

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

After attending the Whidbey Gardening Workshop and the plant sale for several years, I thought becoming a Master Gardener would be a great way to learn more about something that has been an interest of mine for years. But who knew how many different things are involved in becoming a Master Gardener! Soil management? Vermiculture? Hot and cold composting? Meadowscares?



I have had vegetable and flower gardens for years but learning about soils and fertilizers was an eye-opening experience. For the first time, the vegetable garden over-wintered with a cover crop that will be turned, but not roto-tilled in. Our soil is very sandy, and previously we engaged in both inefficient and over-watering.

Armed with a better understanding of how to manage sandy soil, how to properly irrigate, and how to diagnose plant problems, we are looking forward to a more robust garden. I would like to say that we will have our own "homemade" compost this year, but having been overly ambitious in establishing the size of our first compost area means that will have to wait a year.

One of the most fun parts of learning to be a Master Gardener came in attending an event for children on how to build your own worm bin with my 4-year-old grand-niece. What I learned in our vermicompost section helped me explain to her (and her mom) about maintaining the bedding, feeding her worms, collecting compost tea, and disappointing her dad that she was growing red wigglers and not worms for fishing.

I live on Whidbey and completed the program on Camano in February. I'm looking forward to meeting more Whidbey Master Gardeners, practicing what I've learned in my own garden, and being a contributing member of this community.

Thank You and Farewell

by Julie Lary

Over thirty years ago, John Bachert and his wife, Marjorie, didn't envision turning acres of tangled blackberry bushes, underbrush, and groves of fir, alder, and maple trees into a spectacular garden featured in the *Seattle Times Pacific NW Magazine* and twice in the Whidbey Island Garden Tour.



Instead, they were enjoying their first visit to Whidbey Island at the invitation of their neighbor in San Francisco, whose son had purchased Toby's Restaurant in downtown Coupeville. Delighted with the area, they purchased a three-acre lot south of downtown Coupeville.

After spending a few more years in San Francisco, they decided to take early retirement and start building their future home. While they realized a substantial portion of their lot was a kettle — a depression formed by a retreating glacier when a block of ice and sediment breaks off and melts — they didn't realize the extent until the blackberry vines were removed.

"I laid-down hundreds of railroad ties, three to four ties in height, to stabilize the steep edges, so I could start planting, initially ground cover," explains John. "It was extremely challenging and nothing like I'd done before. Previously, we lived on a standard 30 x 120 lot, and I spent my free time beautifying the walkways between the neighborhoods. Now I owned a lot the size of a San Francisco block!"

Along with dealing with the physical constraints of his garden, John applied his gardening knowledge to choosing plants and designing gardens. "I wish I'd become a Master Gardener sooner," he explains. "I overplanted trees and should have selected more native species." Despite his early mistakes, John persevered, becoming a Master Gardener in 2005.

Completing the training provided the opportunity to not only expand his knowledge, but to meet and learn from other gardeners, especially from his mentors, Steve and Donna Stansberry. John spent many years applying his gardening expertise at the Island County Master Gardener Education Garden at Greenbank Farm.

He also volunteered at plant clinics in Coupeville and Oak Harbor and participated in countless events, including the Whidbey Gardening Workshop.

His greatest gardening achievement, however, was turning a multi-acre kettle into a wonderland with hundreds of rhododendrons, roses, and other flowering bushes; apple, pear, and cherry trees; a bountiful vegetable garden; weaving paths; and a tranquil pond blanketed with water lilies.

Many of the rhododendrons in John's garden are from Meerkerk Gardens, where he serves on the Board. "Rhododendrons are my passion," says John. Complementing the landscape is garden art — delicate glass globes and flowers, large metal sculptures, garden benches, and archways covered with flowering vines.

John has decided that it is time for him to pare back on his commitments and retire from the Master Gardener program. We thank him for sharing his time, energy, and horticultural knowledge with others at the Education Garden, plant clinics, and Whidbey Gardening Workshop, and for over twenty years of volunteer service as an Island County Master Gardener.

It's Plant Sale Time!

Our annual Plant Sale will be held on **Saturday, May 10, from 9 am to 1 pm at the Greenbank Farm** on Whidbey Island; and on **Saturday, May 17, from 9 am to 1 pm at the Camano Multi-Purpose Center** on Camano Island.

This is the fourth year of holding the plant sale on both islands — and very successfully so — but the first time they will be on separate dates. The different dates allow us to volunteer on both islands for those who are able, and we encourage you to join the fun.

We expect to have a multitude of plant starts and divisions, the highly successful hanging baskets, and garden art to complement your house plants and gardens. We hope to expand our vegetable offerings. If you're interested in contributing to or assisting with any of these categories, please email Raissa DeArmond at plantsale@icmgf.org.

Thanks in advance for everyone's hard work in providing plants and garden art for a successful sale!

Plant Detectives

by Warren Weissman

A couple of years ago, I emailed the MG program asking for help with several plant problems in my garden. Volunteers and Loren quickly responded to my inquiries and provided very useful feedback. That assistance motivated me to join the MG program. Now, after participating in the weekly 2024 Coupeville office clinics, helping Loren respond to email and phone inquiries, and working successfully on publicizing the monthly Camano in-person clinics, I'm even more convinced that effectively answering community questions is critical to enhancing the value of the MG program. Further, are there ways we can answer questions even more effectively and can we implement or streamline procedures to make even better use of our scarce human resources?

Last spring, I registered for the Statewide Answer Clinic Team, a monthly meeting to share tips and techniques for increasing the effectiveness of answer clinics. At the first Zoom meeting in June 2024, I realized that the information sharing and discussions were very interesting and that there was much I could learn about how to better serve the gardening public.

Meeting participants filled out a survey about answer clinic practices in their county, and the group agreed to continue meeting monthly to drill down into how answers are provided to the gardening public. My strongest first impression was surprise at how diverse the answer clinic work is from county to county.

Some counties host year-round clinics while others are only seasonal. Information sources such as Hortsense and the PNW Handbooks are used everywhere, but some counties also produce topical fact sheets and use other approved materials specific to their needs. Answer clinic procedure manuals exist in some counties but not others. Training and experience requirements vary significantly from county to county, ranging from just standard MG certification in some counties, to counties that require additional training, annual refresher training and formal mentorship, where seasoned answer clinic volunteers support less experienced volunteers.

Clearly, factors like the size and geography of counties or the availability of volunteers create variability in the way counties approach the answer clinics. Island County, like other smaller counties, has its own set of geographic and size issues to navigate. But the output

of the monthly meetings has been lots of good information about practices, procedures and lessons learned. What to do in the next phase of the statewide group is being discussed, focusing on how to identify, disseminate and implement best practices.

Among the practices arising from the meetings are:

- Creating a statewide answer clinic orientation and training curriculum or template. Should all counties require MGs to receive training adapted to their county that goes beyond the basic MG training before participating in answer clinics, and/or should refresher training be required for MGs on the answer clinic team?
- Standardizing clinic protocols through a procedures template adapted to each county's needs, along with development of standardized forms for tasks common to all counties.
- Sharing information through searchable databases of questions received, plant problems and diagnoses, photos, reports on the spread of invasives or pests, and anything else likely to be repetitive or common to multiple counties.
- Creating lists of people willing to share their expertise, including MGs with particular gardening expertise, scientific and diagnostic experts at WSU or elsewhere, and MGs with extensive answer clinic experience.

It would be interesting for Island County MGs to consider which of these practices should be implemented on Whidbey and Camano, perhaps via a committee of interested MGs who could formulate recommendations. Is there value, for example, in standardizing procedures among our clinics and creating written procedures that will assist future MGs? Should there be additional training, or refresher training, for MGs dedicated to the clinics?

I'm particularly interested in how we can feed the information currently gathered at in-person clinics, plus the questions and answers generated from email and phone inquiries, into a searchable database that facilitates our responding to future questions. The blog to which we post questions received is a useful tool but doesn't capture the information generated in the in-person clinics, it isn't as searchable or sortable as we may desire, and we need a data capture system that requires as little manual input as possible.

I will continue to participate in the statewide meetings to gather further information for next steps.

From the Education Garden

The greenhouse season has been in full swing for some months now, and the coldest winter in decades has been especially challenging for keeping plants warm. We expect this has been as true in your greenhouses as at the Education Garden, where Barb Douglas and Susan Dakis have packed the greenhouse with a prodigious collection of geranium starts for the annual plant sale.

During early November, geranium cuttings are taken from donated plants, with added purchases to get a wide collection of colors. By December, the cuttings have rooted, and the growing plants are fed throughout the winter. Once they have a good root base, they are transplanted to slightly larger pots, keeping the tight root system that they prefer. Around March and April, they can go outside to harden off.

Last year, Barb and Susan introduced an innovation that made a big difference in providing consistent warmth and moisture during winter – a heated propagation bench filled with sand. We know that plants prefer their moisture and warmth at the soil level, rather in the air, and this bench design provides both.



A wood frame on top of the potting bench is lined with heavy-duty PVC plastic and filled with about 4" of sand. A heating cable is then woven back and forth throughout the length of

the frame, like an electric blanket. Another 2" of sand are put on top. Plant pots sit directly on the sand, which is kept evenly moist.

Piping was installed to hold up row cover above the plants during especially cold periods. Fans keep the air moving so it does not get stagnant.

A special addition to the planting beds was donated by Kim Baxter – numerous small pots of Cape sundew (*Drosera capensis*), a carnivorous plant that has been happily eating any fungus gnats that find their way into the greenhouse.



This time of year brings plenty of other seasonal work, including an eagerness to clean up debris in our gardens. But remember those pollinators and other creatures who love that mess! Resist “over-cleaning” the shelter that the debris provides.

Another seasonal activity is caterpillar inspection. It’s been a while since we had a large outbreak of tent caterpillars, but it is always a good idea to stay alert. Look for and dispose of those tell-tale eggs, covered in a brownish gray material that protects them from the weather. Red alder, cottonwood, and fruit trees are among their favored nesting spots.

Join us for a wide array of activities in the garden during Wednesday work parties, 9 am to noon. From June to September, we also work 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 9 to 12.

2025 Plant Clinics

Volunteer at one of our four plant clinic locations:

CAMANO ISLAND

Last Saturday of the month, March to September

11 am to 1 pm, Camano Plaza Ace Hardware

370 NE Camano Dr., Camano Island

Contact Adena Ray

OAK HARBOR and NORTH WHIDBEY

First Sunday of each month, March to October

10 am to 12 pm, Country Store

31686 State Route 20, Oak Harbor

Contact Lisa Phillips

COUPEVILLE and CENTRAL WHIDBEY

First and third Saturdays, May to August

10 am to 2 pm, Coupeville Farmers Market

788 Northwest Alexander St., Coupeville

Contact Deb Mitchell

SOUTH WHIDBEY

Various Saturdays, April to June

11 am to 2 pm, Freeland Country Store

5463 Cameron Rd., Freeland

Contact Christine Dimm

Various Sundays, May to July

11 am to 2 pm

South Whidbey Tilth Farmers Market

2812 Thompson Rd., Langley

Contact Christine Dimm

Meet Our Scholarship Student

Rebecca Ayala of Stanwood was awarded the Island County Master Gardener Foundation scholarship in Fall 2024, in the amount of \$1,000. She graduated from Stanwood High School last summer and started her Associate's degree program at Everett Community College in the fall, focusing on Environmental Science.



At Stanwood High School, Rebecca was Key Club president and CTE Student of the Year. Her presidency of the Key Club was especially memorable, as she introduced new activities and revitalized the group.

Rebecca's interest in environmental science began when she moved from the Midwest to the Pacific Northwest and was thrilled by the natural beauty here. That fascination was reinforced by the introductory course she took in high school. The class cemented her desire to work outside, hands-on, focusing on soils, plants, and trees.

The Associate's program is a direct-to-transfer program that sets Rebecca up for next steps at a four-year university. Many paths are open to her from there, but her current goal is to be a cultural interpreter/park ranger, to share knowledge with visitors and help them appreciate and understand park resources.

Rebecca has been accepted in an AmeriCorps program for the summer, which will add to her firsthand experience in the field. She appreciates the challenges in environmental sciences and wants to get involved in addressing deforestation and other issues.

The scholarship has been a significant benefit, providing freedom from stress and allowing Rebecca to focus on her academic work. "It's a huge deal," says Rebecca, and she appreciates the support.

Congratulations to Rebecca, and we wish her every success in her academic program and future career!

Coupeville Community Garden Join Us in Volunteering!

A team of Master Gardeners has been volunteering in the Coupeville Community Garden (CCG) for a few years. The late Holly Grason was the founding force in getting CCG started and the Master Gardener plots are named "Holly's Garden" in her memory.

The garden's focus is on growing food. Vegetables are donated to two area food banks: Gifts from the Heart in Coupeville, and Good Cheer in Bayview. The current team consists of Line Goulet, Jim Peskuric, Deb Mitchell, and Kathy King. Previous members have also made significant contributions.

The demonstration food garden started with two plots rented with Foundation funds. Gifts from the Heart food bank donated two more, and an additional two were rented recently. The team is excited to have more space for its activities and is actively recruiting new volunteers to join the effort.

Volunteers are needed to:

- Help plan the garden.
- Tend the garden and the compost area.
- Water 2-3 times per week as needed.
- Deliver produce to the food banks.
- Develop placards explaining challenges and how we are addressing them.
- Develop periodic notes for enclosure in the food bank and CCG emails and newsletters.
- Develop, promote, and/or conduct teaching events in the garden, which are advertised through the mayor's office and on the garden's Facebook page.

Work parties are on Saturdays from 10 am to noon, starting in April. Contact Jim Peskuric for questions.



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.

Donations from Bayview

Nursery. Kim Baxter and Raissa DeArmond took advantage of a generous offer from Bayview Nursery and came home with a truckful of donated plants for our use. At the end of last season, the nursery had put out an open call on Facebook for garden clubs to come pick up clearance perennials for free. Thank you to Bayview for their generosity, and to Kim and Raissa for their quick response.



Stanwood Camano Volunteer Fair. Island County Master Gardener volunteers launched our 2025 outreach efforts in February at the Stanwood Camano Volunteer Fair, an event featuring over thirty community-minded volunteer organizations. Volunteers Beverly Bradly, Suzanne Kieffer, Jean Yoho, and Lori Fekkes staffed an engaging booth, sharing information about the Island County Master Gardeners and the work that we do to help people become better gardeners and stewards of our environmental resources through sharing research-based information from WSU Extension. It was also a great opportunity to connect



with volunteers of other local organizations, and to share information about our Whidbey Gardening Workshop.

Seed Swap. In February, Island County Master Gardeners were on hand at the Great Whidbey Seed Swap at Camp Casey, eager to share their knowledge with fellow gardeners. Deb Mitchell offered an informative presentation on the basics of healthy soil and propagating vegetables by seed.

Tandy Scott, Leif, Julie Lary, and Susan Hamilton staffed a table brimming with WSU Extension resources, including informative handouts on seed starting techniques, soil health, and vegetable gardening in the Pacific Northwest. Visitors were able to get their gardening questions answered and were excited to learn about upcoming Master Gardener programs like the Whidbey Gardening Workshop and Washington Green School.



NW Flower and Garden Show. Four Island County volunteers helped staff the Washington State Master Gardener booth at this year's Northwest Flower and Garden Festival. Kim Baxter, Rosemary Easley, Anita Merrill, and Lisa Phillips each met with visitors to share information about our statewide stewardship priorities, and how Master Gardeners are the go-to resource for communities seeking research-based horticultural information. Rosemary enjoyed meeting other volunteers, saying "I am with three awesome King

County Master Gardeners today. The booth is wonderful, and we are having a great time." Thanks for representing Island County at this major gardening event!



Camano News. Camano 101, Living on an Island, was held April 5 at the Camano Center. Like its sister event, Whidbey 101, this popular event is designed for people who are new to Camano Island and would like to learn more about protecting and preserving the resources that make our islands special. Interns Beverly Bradly, Suzanne Kiefer, Amanda Krass, Janet Wick, and Jean Yoho joined volunteers and staff from twenty other local organizations to tell people about the stewardship priorities of the Master Gardener program and to answer questions about gardening on Camano.



Whidbey Gardening Workshop Thanks You!

The 2025 Whidbey Gardening Workshop was held on Saturday, March 15 at Oak Harbor High School. The Workshop featured 40 interesting and diverse classes – everything from powdery mildew to wetlands to tomato success – taught by 36 instructors from all over our area. Response so far has been very positive, with compliments to the professionalism of the presentations, to the energy and vibrancy of the Marketplace, and to the overall experience.

Melissa Evans reports that this was the largest Workshop Marketplace in the Workshop's history, featuring an enticing collection of flowering plants and shrubs, unique garden art and products, and informational booths on bats, weeds, and how to help our veteran population. Carol Ann Leonessa even sold the last of our ICMGF coffee mugs.



New this year were the mini talks on growing hubbard squash, lavender cultivation and use, and the benefits of becoming a Master Gardener.



Back by popular demand were the Make-n-Take classes, featuring succulents, seedling transplanting methods, and everyone's favorite: Kokedama! Students in those sessions were guided in the creation of a project containing living plants that will enhance their homes and gardens in the coming months.

Our growing list of sponsors helped make this possible, through both monetary and in-kind contributions. Sunbelt Rentals donated most of our tables rent-free, and our friends at Home Depot donated enough of their iconic orange buckets to hand one to each person who bought a ticket. "What? I also get a bucket?" was heard over and over as people left at the conclusion of the Workshop.



Many of our sponsors also contributed to the largest raffle in recent history, which featured gift cards, tubs full of tools, live plants, and many more garden treasures. Our keynote speakers even donated live plants for the raffle.



But it must be said that this Workshop could not happen without our stalwart gang of Master Gardener volunteers (and the occasional spouse or grandson). Our members signed up to tote tables, push carts, build booths, answer questions, and do whatever was needed to make the Workshop a success. You showed up, did what was needed, and left with a smile. The Workshop co-chairs thank you!

The gratitude for the work everyone puts into this annual event is captured perfectly by Tana Hasart, President of the statewide Master Gardener Foundation, who was one of the attendees at the Workshop. Here is what she wrote:

"We so enjoyed the entire event, coming home with new information and strong impressions about how well the day was organized and conducted. Each of the workshops attended were outstanding, giving us new information to share with others as well as for our own use.

Please share my appreciation with those that made a difference – the great Island County MG volunteers. PS – We are already planning our participation next year!"

Last but clearly not least, we thank our two Workshop co-chairs – Barb Faville and Carolyn Lancet – who spent untold hours and energy in leading this complex and wonderful event!



Remembering Mark Willstatter and Terry Rose

The Master Gardener program lost two dedicated, long-time volunteers recently – Mark Willstatter and Terry Rose.

Mark Willstatter was a valued and tireless volunteer who passed away on December 11, 2024. Mark trained in 2005 after retiring from a career in electrical engineering and moving to Whidbey Island with his wife Paula. After training, Mark enjoyed the camaraderie he found by working weekly at the Education Garden at Greenbank Farm.



Many remember Mark's friendliness and easy smile. "Mark was always a joy to be around" recalls Gary Ketcheson. "At the Greenbank Education Garden, he pitched in wherever there was a need. He always brought lively conversation to the sometimes tedium of weeding. He was up on current events and was

always interested in discussing things. And on top of that, he was an excellent baker, contributing great baked goods to potlucks and special occasions."

Ilze Zigurs similarly remembers Mark was "always ready to help with whatever needed to be done in the garden." She recounts a conversation between Mark and another regular volunteer who were taking a break on a bench next to the cottage, "as they looked out over the Cottage Garden, Mark asked 'How many times do you suppose we have weeded that patch over there?' It was a rhetorical question, of course, with no answer other than 'over and over and over again.' But Mark was always ready to go again, and his calm and cheerful presence in the garden was a boon to all."

Mark retired from the program in 2021 after developing Parkinson's and moving to the South Sound. At his new home, he put his skills as a Master Gardener to good use by helping in the local Pea Patch.

There is a Celebration of Life scheduled for May 18 on Whidbey Island. To attend, [RSVP to Paula](#) by May 1.

Terry Rose was a dedicated Island County Master Gardener who enriched our lives and the Master Gardener program from 2004 to 2024. He passed away on January 8, 2025 after a brief illness caused by cancer. Chris Rose, Terry's wife, shared that "he was very proud to be able to call himself a Master Gardener and enjoyed his time with his fellow gardeners."



Terry's presence was a constant source of warmth, and his contributions will be deeply missed. Many remembered Terry's wonderful, deep voice, honed as a professional broadcaster for local radio and TV, and voiceover personality for commercial clients. He gladly offered this talent at Foundation events including the Whidbey Gardening Workshop where he would open the Keynote presentation, then head to the Hospitality room and assist Raissa DeArmond by welcoming and caring for volunteers and instructors throughout the day.

In addition to being a Master Gardener, Terry was a Rotarian. Carole Matthews became friends with Terry through her husband's involvement with Rotary, where Robert's Rules of Order is established practice. Ilze Zigurs shared that her "most vivid memory of Terry was how excited he was about how I ran the Foundation meetings when I was president. He almost always came up afterwards and complimented me on my mastery of Robert's Rules."

Terry also served as Foundation Vice President in 2006, President in 2007, and then, along with help from Carolyn Mercer, recruited Deb Mitchell to serve in the same capacity. Deb shared that "even after he went Emeritus, he was still willing and asked for Home Hort Calls with me. That melodious voice will always be in my memory."

The WSU Extension Island County Master Gardener program is very grateful for the contributions of these two volunteers.

Upcoming Events

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

April 17	Board Meeting
April 27	Spring Potluck (Freeland)
May 10	Plant Sale (Greenbank Farm)
May 17	Plant Sale (Camano Multi-Purpose Center)
May 22	Board Meeting
May 29	General Membership Meeting & CE*
June 19	Board Meeting
June 26	General Membership Meeting & CE*

*At PRI and on Zoom

LOOKING FARTHER AHEAD

July 27	Summer Picnic (Oak Harbor)
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Loren with members of the Class of 2025 at graduation:
Jean Yoho, Mary Kinsley, Beverly Bradly, Suzanne Keifer,
Jamie Halterman, Amanda Krass, and Janet Wick

Please watch for and welcome all seven of them
at our volunteer events!

ICMGF OFFICERS

President – Cathy Lofton-Day
Vice President – Jenni Wilson
Secretary – Kim Baxter
Treasurer – Paul Rowe

AREA REPS

South – Christine Dimm
Central – Deb Mitchell
North – Lisa Phillips
Camano – Rosemary Easley

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 bylaws & agreements
- selected CE videos

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 newsletter@icmgf.org.