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MASTER GARDENER *Gazette*

Oh, glorious summer with its long sunny days and cool nights! Gardens are in bloom and vegetables are maturing. There are barbecues, parties, and time spent with family and friends.

Master Gardeners enjoyed time with others at the Spring Social with a classic car show for added entertainment. Our spring Plant Sales were very successful! We are serving the public at Plant Clinics all over the county, and the Education Series is bringing science-based knowledge on a wide variety of topics of interest to our community. So, sit back in your lawn chair in the sun and enjoy this July issue!



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@icmgf.org



The Spring Social brings together good friends, good food, and a warm thank you to Loren for all he has done!



From The President

Once again, our hard-working Master Gardener volunteers have outdone themselves with the rousing success of our two major fundraisers – the Camano/Whidbey Plant Sales and WGW. Both events exceeded their expected revenue, providing sufficient funds to support our planned ICMG program goals. Thank you all!



You may be aware that new leadership is needed for the Plant Sale. Raissa has proposed a team approach to managing the multiple tasks associated with planning and implementation. A similar strategy is being implemented for WGW. A kick-off meeting for WGW27 will be held on July 14 to introduce the concept of the six action teams: Workshop Design and Logistics, Education, Marketing, Registration, Marketplace, and Sponsor/Donor.

Teams will have decision making capability and will define their budgets. Instead of a chair, a project manager or project management team will track progress and ensure deliverables are met. The meeting will include brainstorming on Workshop improvements, review of team roles and responsibilities, and team building around tasks and deliverables. The more people who participate, the less any one person will need to do. If you are interested in participating in the team approach for either the Plant Sale or WGW, please contact me or anyone on the ICMGF Board.

Speaking of the Board, we are busy working on some other tasks. In May we formed an *ad hoc* Education Committee (EC). Its purpose is to support ICMG educational programs and fundraising events by serving as a centralized, shared service for coordinated access to speakers, educational content, and speaker development resources. Programs retain full decision authority while the EC eliminates duplication, ensures efficient use of volunteer talent, and expands ICMGs' capacity to deliver quality horticultural education to the public.

We are also reviewing all Foundation documents to ensure alignment with the new WSU Extension Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), including our Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. Final review of the relevant documents will occur sometime this fall, prior to submission to the WSU Contracts office.

Cathy Lofton-Day, ICMGF President

From The Education Garden

A decade ago, Tristan Levine was mushroom hunting with a friend. To find a specific type of mushroom, you need to understand its habitat, which means really noticing everything around you as you search.

That experience sparked an in-depth interest in native plants, and now Tristan serves as the lead for the Northwest Native Lowland Garden in the Master Gardener Education Garden.

When asked to name their favorite plants in the garden, Tristan responded that they are all interesting for different reasons! Serviceberry, for example, is an understory shrub that can turn into tree form and whose berries taste delicious. Evergreen Huckleberry is always a favorite, among the many other species. Tristan estimates that over sixty species are represented.

Tristan urges us to “appreciate the wild,” noting that a native garden can be both wild *and* beautiful. That beauty is not focused on the few days that a plant is in bloom so it might not be as showy, but there is more depth and much for visitors to learn.



Historically, there is a lot of use for native plants. Insects have co-evolved with them and thus are more accustomed to them. They require less input in terms of fertilizer and water. These are

some of the key things we strive to communicate to visitors as they wander through this important resource.

Tristan encourages all of us to visit and see how we might become more involved. Projects include renovation of some overgrown specimens, finding and removing non-native invaders, and pruning.

In Tristan's own words: “Come and enjoy cool plants and interesting wildlife and get inspired by nature!”

Wednesday work parties in the Education Garden continue through the summer, from 9 am to noon. All Master Gardeners and Interns are invited to join the fun or just stop by to visit.

Plant Detectives – Root Rot

by Jamie Halterman

Root Rot. Root rot is a general term for diseases that damage a plant's roots. Common symptoms include discolored leaves, stunted growth, and wilting. As the condition worsens, roots can no longer absorb water effectively, which may eventually kill the plant. Overwatering is the most common trigger, but it is only part of the problem. Root rot usually develops when excess moisture combines with poor drainage, creating conditions that allow harmful organisms to thrive. Common types of root rot are *Phytophthora*, *Fusarium*, and *Armillaria*.

Phytophthora.

Phytophthora is a microscopic organism often called a "plant destroyer." Although it is commonly grouped with fungi, it is a water mold that is more closely related to algae. It thrives in poorly drained, water-logged soil, where excess moisture makes plants especially vulnerable. It spreads through moving water, infected transplants, and contaminated plant debris, and it can survive in soil for long periods. In home gardens, *Phytophthora* may affect potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and raspberries.



Photo by R.S. Binder, Hortsense

Fusarium. *Fusarium* is a fungus that can cause both root rot and crown rot by attacking plant roots and lower stems. In vegetable gardens, it commonly affects beans, peas, squash, and cucumbers. In beans, early symptoms often appear as reddish-brown streaks on the stems, which spread until the lower stem and taproot become discolored and begin to decay. In peas, it causes red streaking on the lower stems and main root. In squash and cucumbers, symptoms include a deep brown, mushy rot at the base of the stem, and affected plants may break easily near the soil line. In some cases, especially with squash and cucumbers, the disease may go unnoticed until the vines suddenly wilt and collapse.

Armillaria. *Armillaria* is a fungus that affects many deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs, including rhododendrons and oaks. It often survives in old stumps and root systems, then spreads when healthy roots come into contact with infected wood or roots. Common signs of *Armillaria* include clusters of mushrooms at the base of the tree, flat white sheets of

fungus growth between the bark and the wood, and wood that becomes white, soft, and stringy. Infected trees are structurally weakened and may be more likely to break or fall during storms.

Preventive Measures. Because root rot can overwinter in affected areas, proactive measures are important for prevention and control. In vegetable gardens, rotate susceptible crops on a three- to five-year schedule.

Other preventive measures may include:

- Correct drainage problems, especially where water puddles near plants, and avoid overwatering.
- Do not plant susceptible species in soil with a history of root rot.
- Provide proper growing conditions since stressed plants are more vulnerable to damage.
- Remove and destroy infected plant material, including roots, to reduce the spread of disease. Do not compost infected material.
- Do not move infected plants to other parts of the garden.
- Sterilize garden tools after working with infected plants or soil.
- In vegetable gardens, plant beans, squash, and peas in hills to encourage the formation of secondary roots.
- For trees and shrubs, mulch the soil around the base of the tree. Protect trees and shrubs from wounding, such as with lawn mowers or trimmers.
- For containers and flowerpots, clean them thoroughly before reusing and discard any infested potting soil.

Conclusion. Root rot can affect a wide range of plants, from vegetables to trees and shrubs, and once it becomes established, it is often difficult to control. The best defense is prevention through good drainage, careful watering, crop rotation, sanitation, and proper plant care. By recognizing symptoms early and reducing conditions that favor disease, gardeners can protect plant health and limit spread in the home landscape.

Resources

University of Minnesota Extension, [Yard and Garden Problems](#).

Washington State University, Hortsense, Common Diseases: [Root rots](#); [Armillaria root rot](#).

Washington State University, Puyallup Ornamental Plant Pathology, [Phytophthora root disease and canker](#).

Thank You and Farewell

by Ilze Zigurs

Ever since Loren Imes announced his retirement as our treasured Program Coordinator, we have been saying thank you and farewell. But how did he come to this job, and what are his own thoughts on this transition? Read on and learn more!

Loren had a long-standing interest in gardening long before he became involved with the Master Gardeners. During his childhood in Wisconsin, his mother shared with him her love of nature, growing plants, and the many fascinating insects, spiders, and butterflies that inhabited their garden. Loren began to propagate his own plants and grow vegetables.

Summer visits to his grandparents, who were part-time farmers, sparked an interest in farming. When his grandfather declined to teach him farming, Loren decided to learn on his own. He grew two acres of chewing tobacco – in Wisconsin, no less – and was hooked.

At the University of Wisconsin, the agricultural focus was on dairy farming, so Loren explored landscape design and ultimately completed his degree in graphic design. After a brief career as an interface designer with Microsoft, Loren realized his dream by purchasing a small farm on Whidbey Island.

Learning has always been a fundamental theme in Loren's life. Without a formal background in agriculture, he relied heavily on University Extension publications to learn farming. He developed an abiding respect for the work that this organization does.

The farm was always a family business. Once their two children moved away, Loren and his wife knew that they could not sustain the farm with just the two of them. It was Anza Muenchow who described the Program Coordinator position that she was moving on from, and Loren was intrigued – and hired!

When asked about favorite highlights from his nine years as our Program Coordinator, Loren replied that it would be impossible to choose from so many memories. Instead, he emphasized that it has been a real pleasure to work alongside committed volunteers who care so deeply about learning, service to others, and building community.

Loren's advice to whomever the new Program Coordinator will be is the same as he always tells us – to stay focused on the educational mission of Extension and the Master Gardener program. And, consistent with the kind and caring person we know him to be, he also advises that the new Coordinator be enthusiastic, patient with volunteers, and show genuine gratitude for the work they do.

If you have ever been in Loren's office, you have seen the quote from former Master Gardener, Don Lee, that Loren keeps on his wall: "You didn't join the Master Gardener program to become a better gardener; you joined to help others become better gardeners."

In Loren's own words, his final advice to all of us: "Share your love of gardening and the natural world with the people of Island County. We live in a beautiful place, and by working together, we can make a meaningful impact while advancing the priorities of the Master Gardener Program."

Thank you, Loren, for the meaningful impact you have made during the nine years you spent with us!



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.

Earth Day. The weather may have been miserable on April 18, but Master Gardener volunteers were at Camp Casey come rain or shine! Earth Day provides the opportunity to remind people how precious our planet is every day, and to answer questions from our community at the Plant Clinic table. Volunteers also hosted a seed matching game for kids and adults where small containers of seeds had to be matched with pictures of plants on a poster.



Viburnum on the Move. The new space for the Vegetable Garden at the MG Education Garden has been redesigned. That change meant that a large Viburnum shrub had to be moved out to another location. Not daunted by the size of that shrub, a dedicated

crew pulled together to move it to its new home. Yes, even large shrubs can be moved, as this impressive team showed us!

Spring Social. The gracious hospitality of Melissa Evans was once again on display at her home, as Melissa hosted us for this year's spring social. A classic car show was an extra event taking place in the meadow, alongside a bounty of food and good cheer.

Cathy Lofton-Day introduced a volunteer fair, as well as presenting Loren with our farewell gifts and heartfelt good wishes for his retirement.



Plant Sales. This year's Plant Sales were rousing successes, with just over \$8,700 raised from both events! The top items sold were perennials, geraniums, and veggies (mostly tomatoes). At the Whidbey Island sale, we served about 234 customers and sold 1,237 items. On Camano, even with a mid-morning downpour, our sales totaled \$3,916 – an increase of \$350 over last year. We sold about 783 items to 140 customers.



Consistent with our educational mission, Amanda Krass created a Keystone plant display that was well received. She offered Garry Oak and Canadian Goldenrod plants to all by donation. The new interns were a great addition to the teams on both Whidbey and Camano. A tremendous thank you to Raissa DeArmond for her leadership and all the volunteers for your hard work!

All About Dahlias. May 17 marked the kick-off of the 2026 Master Gardener Education Series, with Dave Thomas speaking about Dahlias.



With over 60 years of experience and a wonderful sense of humor, Dave talked about how to plant, store, and propagate these beautiful flowers that come in more than 15,000 varieties. He generously gave away many tuberous roots so attendees could easily start their own dahlia gardens!



Regenerative Ecosystems. Jim Peskuric gave the talk for the June session of the Master Gardener Education Series, focused on how regenerative ecology can help save our planet.

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Jim gave us a great overview of the big picture, noting that a regenerative system moves beyond just sustainability to actively restoring and rebuilding native ecosystems. Jim then zeroed in on what we can do in our own yards and gardens with specific practices that work *with* nature rather than against it.

Camano Events. The Camano Master Gardener group started 2024 with ten members. In 2025, they increased by five and this year added two more, for a grand total of seventeen! They are an eager and ambitious group, with plenty of activity both in the works and in planning.

Plant clinics on Camano are being held on the fourth Sunday of the month from March to September. They are preparing for participation in the Stanwood Camano Fair in August. An Education Garden is in the planning stage, and everyone is looking forward to getting the necessary approvals to move forward.

Summer Volunteer Opportunities

There are many ways to participate in our community outreach activities during the summer months. Here are a few needs:

Whidbey Island Fair

July 23 to 26

Stanwood Camano Fair

July 31 to August 2

Plant Clinics

Ongoing

Coupeville Community Garden

Tuesdays and Saturdays, 10 am to 12 pm

Education Garden at Greenbank Farm

Wednesdays 9 am to 12 pm

The Lord's Garden

Wednesdays, 5 to 6:30 pm

See the [full list and contact information here](#).

The Secret Lives of Master Gardeners

Many of you know Scottie Kuper as our indomitable printer of those excellent plant labels for the Plant Sale, but did you also know that she trains puppies in the Guide Dogs for the Blind Program?

Scottie has raised and trained dogs for more than forty years, starting with animal-assisted therapy and two Newfoundlands. She has taken on many roles over the course of this work, including founding a puppy raising team and serving as a board member at a Southern California animal shelter, and becoming a puppy raiser for Summit Assistance Dogs in Oak Harbor.

It was at Greenbank Farm while staffing a Master Gardener table that she saw a sign: "Puppies Here!" She signed up immediately for the Guide Dogs for the Blind group and is now the club leader for their Whidbey Island Puppy Club. She coaches the puppy raisers in Guide Dog's reward-based training methods, plans handling sessions and socialization outings, and coordinates vet care.

For Scottie, the most rewarding part of her work is watching a puppy grow into a responsive, affectionate, resilient, and dedicated pup who works to please. In raising these pups, she has learned more about herself as a human being, including how to best support a person through the highs and lows of raising a puppy and letting go when it's time.



People often ask how she can stand to give up a puppy who has been with her for a year or more. In her own words: "We know from the beginning they're not ours. There's someone out there who needs and wants a guide more than any of us can imagine. That is who we raise for."

To learn more or find out how to get involved, see the [Guide Dogs for the Blind website](#), or just talk to Scottie, whose joy and enthusiasm for this work are a delight to witness. No experience required!

If you are involved in an interesting project or activity outside your MG volunteering that you would like to share, please [contact us](#).

Upcoming Events

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

- July 14** WGW kick-off meeting
- July 19** MG Education Series at Greenbank Farm
- August 15** Summer Picnic
- August 16** MG Education Series at Greenbank Farm
- September 17** Board Meeting*
- September 20** MG Education Series at Greenbank Farm
- September 24** General Membership Meeting & CE

*Board meetings are open meetings. If you would like to attend, please contact the board president for details, president@icmgf.org.

LOOKING FARTHER AHEAD

- October 29** Annual Board Meeting
Annual Membership Meeting, elections, & CE
- December 6** Holiday Party



Plant sale volunteers bring sunshine to any weather!



ICMGF OFFICERS

President – Cathy Lofton-Day
Vice President – Anita Merrill
Secretary – Kim Baxter
Treasurer – Paul Rowe

AREA REPS

South – Christine Dimm
Central – open
North – Lisa Phillips
Camano – Rosemary Easley

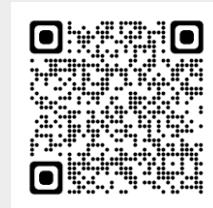
State Foundation Rep — Carol Anne Ebert

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 by-laws & 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.