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Recruiting New WSU Master Gardeners . . . *By Mark Amara*

Many people are curious about what the Washington State University (WSU) Master Gardener (MG) program is all about. Here are some questions and answers.

What is a WSU Master Gardener? Anyone can use the term master gardener. Only volunteers trained by universities can put the university's initials in front of Master Gardener. When university initials are used, one can trust the information being taught or provided is unbiased and science-based. WSU Master Gardeners are Washington State University trained volunteers who have completed intensive training and are certified to provide unbiased, research-based education on gardening issues of importance in their local communities to conserve and enhance our natural resources.

WSU Master MGs are not affiliated with garden clubs although there are sometimes cooperative efforts between them. WSU MGs are unpaid volunteer agents of Washington State University, trained to help WSU achieve its land-grant mission of providing unbiased research-supported information on gardening to the public.

What is required to become a certified WSU Master Gardener? Specialized training is offered about every two years in Grant-Adams Counties. COVID constraints over the past year, however, set the timeline back a year. Approved applicants attend 60+ hours of on-line WSU basic training supplemented with hands-on classroom/field labs and satisfactory completion of all assignments. The MG training is taught by WSU Extension faculty, MGs, and resource specialists. After the training is completed, the program requires at least 50 hours of additional approved volunteer service to qualify as a WSU Master Gardener. Then, every year after that, WSU MGs must attend at least 10 hours of advanced educational training and complete another 25 hours of volunteer service per year to maintain the certification.

Is there a cost to attend the training? Fees for volunteers to participate in the program are $170 although a portion of the fee may be reimbursed after training is completed.

What are the primary responsibilities? WSU MGs serve as educators and resources for home horticulture and gardening for the public. WSU MGs address issues regarding rural or urban yards, gardens or landscaping. Referrals or questions from commercial enterprises or farms are referred to local or regional extension agents.

Inside This Issue

WSU MGs take questions from the gardening public, research and provide diagnoses, and answer common plant and insect queries. They compile and distribute educational materials at plant clinics, farmers markets, workshops, and county fairs. Additional outside activities may include working in demonstration and community gardens, collaborating with schools, and providing hands-on training sessions. WSU MGs are often requested to make presentations to local groups or to other Master Gardeners. Some WSU MGs write articles for a quarterly MG newsletter, local newspapers or other news media, and their articles are reviewed before being released. Other opportunities include preparing and staffing exhibits, displays, booths, and working at demonstration sites.

When is the next scheduled training? The next WSU MG class begins September 2022 for the Grant-Adams Counties training. For anyone interested in signing up to become a certified WSU Master Gardener, go to the link: https://extension.wsu.edu/grant/gardening/master_gardeners. On the Master Gardener Volunteer Program page, click on "Gardening Information" and then scroll down to "Become a Master Gardener Volunteer." From there you can access the training brochure and complete the WSU MG program application, which can be sent to the WSU Extension, Grant County at 1525 E. Wheeler Road, Moses Lake, WA 98837, hand delivered there, or emailed to ga.volunteers@wsu.edu.

Applicants should have a strong volunteer ethic, commit to becoming a volunteer educator for the WSU Extension, pass the background screening, agree to abide by WSU Master Gardener regulations, be willing to volunteer their time to take additional required trainings, and participate in other volunteer activities.

Sowing Native Seeds: Native Plants in the Garden . . . *By Barbara Guilland*

The eastern Washington landscape contains hundreds of native plants that transplant beautifully into our flower gardens. Our sunny, dry climate in Grant County supports plants common to the greater portion of the western U.S. states. Because these plants are adapted to a wide range of dryland climates that encompass eastern Washington, the native plants used in gardens require less water once established, resist pests and diseases better, need less fertilizer, and save resources commonly needed with non-native plants.

They also attract native pollinators, not just honeybees. All these factors may improve growth and pollination for the rest of your garden, especially if you plant them with non-native plants that have the same needs. Sowing native plant seed is somewhat like planning a garden in reverse. You will have to wait until the seed has germinated and grown to arrange the plants according to your desires.

Grant-Adams Master Gardener Moses Lake Native Plant Garden at the Public Library. Photo Credit: Barbara Guilland

For the last few years, nurseries that specialize in native and drought-tolerant plants have produced packets of native plant seed for gardeners to create a natural looking garden space that also attracts pollinators. However, when you choose to try to grow native plants from seed, you need to ask several questions to help ensure success.

- Are the seeds you plan to use native to climates similar to ours? Several nurseries in the western United State specialize in native plants. It's a good idea to know what plant seeds are contained in the packet. Some plants may not be native to eastern Washington or may not be what you want to see in your garden spot: too aggressive, too low or high, wrong color, and hard to eliminate once established. Some seeds may be annuals that reseed easily every year, some may become perennials that only last a few years, and some may have to be replanted after a year or two because they don't reseed easily. It helps to research the plants before you plant the seed. It won't eliminate all the surprises, but then surprises are why we try new plants.

- Will native and drought-tolerant plants survive in the soil, sunlight, and moisture present in your garden? You need to pick a portion of your garden that resembles the open land of the countryside. We have hot, dry summers, and cold, and sometimes very dry, winters. The garden plot should not be too sheltered and get sun for at least 10 hours a day. Seeds selected for our area should thrive in the open land around us, especially if provided the proper amount of water. It will help if you learn the pH factor of your garden, organic matter content, nutrients, sun and shade factors, and water availability. As with all plants, landscaping with native plants involves choosing the right plant for the right site and conditions in its **mature** size.

Planting and Caring for Native Seedling Beds

- Some wildflower seeds need cold-winter stratification, so it is better to plant in the fall.
- For best results, prepare a new planting area and clear the area of weeds.
- You can till in some clean, well-draining soil, but it is better if it is not a rich organic garden blend; native prairie plants often compete better on less fertile soil.
- Rake out the soil to prepare for planting.
- Scatter the seeds on the surface of the soil. Mixing the seed with some sand first may be helpful to spread seeds evenly and space them out.
- Water the seeds after sowing. They will need to be watered whenever there has not been any measurable rainfall . . . at least until plants are established. In our area, depending on the weather and the sandiness of your soil, watering might be once a day. Watch for dryness and signs of stress.
- The biggest challenge is always weeding. Since you may not recognize what is a weed and what is a wildflower, you should wait until you can tell for sure what the plant is before pulling it and at the same time start shaping how you want your garden to appear.
- You should remember that many native plants are aggressive growers, and your gardening will include removing some native plants along with your weeds.
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Seed-Grown Native Plants that Do Well in Home Gardens

Penstemons: Palmer's, Firecracker, Venus, Hot Rock. Sulphur-flower Buckwheat. Photo Credit: B. Guilland

Gardeners may call some of these plants weeds because they are aggressive growers and spread seed easily. Part of the pleasure of growing a native garden will be learning how to use these plants. Most are vigorous growers. All the native plants listed in the table below have grown at one time or another in the native plant garden at the Moses Lake Public Library Master Gardener Demonstration Garden.
Packets of mixed seed can be purchased from native plant nurseries such as:

High Country Gardens Nurseries
https://www.highcountrygardens.com/wildflower-seeds/mixtures/pacific-northwest-native-wildflower-seed-mix

American Meadows
https://www.americanmeadows.com/wildflower-seeds/pacific-northwest

Western Native Seed https://www.westernnativeseed.com/

Seed-Grown Native Plants that Have Appeared in the Moses Lake Demonstration Garden

Native Plant	Height, in.	Description
Bachelor's Button *centaurea cyanus* Also called cornflower	18-24	Naturalized European plant common in across US
Black-eyed Susan *rudbeckia hirta*	24-36	Also known as Gloriosa Daisy
California Poppy *eschscholzia californica 'Ballerina'*	8-14	Not strictly native, but flourishes like a native
Common Blanketflower *gaillardia aristata*	24-30	This species found mostly east of the Cascades
Desert Evening Primrose *oenothera caespitosa*	12-18	Fades from white to pink
Firecracker Penstemon *P. eatonii*	1-3 ft	Brilliant red flowers & large, leathery evergreen leaves, zones 4-8. Blooms early to mid-spring.
Harebell *campanula rotundifolia*	4-20	Also known as Bluebells of Scotland, this plant has the typical blue bell-shaped flowers of campanulas. (I have this plant in my home garden. It can be aggressive and hard to get rid of, but it will be very pretty in the right place.)
Hot rock penstemon *P. deustus*	12-18	White flowers bloom May –June, zones-4-8.
Lewis Flax *linum lewisii*	6-36	This wildflower has blue-green needle-like leaves on graceful stems.
Nodding Onion a*llium cernuum*	8-18	Attractive nodding pink flowers and grasslike, oniony foliage. It self-seeds.
Nutall's Larkspur *Delphinium Nutallii*	12-18	Glorious blue flowers
Pearly Everlasting *Anaphalis margaritacea*	8-40	Small, white, strawflower-like flowers that keep well in a dried flower bouquet
Palmer's Penstemon *P. palmeri*	30-36	pale pink flowers bloom May-June
Prairie Smoke *Geum triflorum*	8-20	Another wildflower more common on the east of the Cascades
Showy Fleabane *Erigeron speciosus*	6-30	Daisy-like flower with numerous lavender-blue ray flowers with a yellow center
Showy Milkweed *Asclepias speciosus*	18-50	Light pink to purple flowers fading to yellow
Venus Penstemon	24	Purple, zones 4-8

References

Arthur R. Kruckeberg and Linda Chalker-Scott, Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Paperback – Illustrated, 2019.

Native Wildflowers, Groundcovers, and Vines: https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2076/2020/11/C211-Native-Wildflowers-Groundcovers-and-Vines-

Native Plants of the PNW: http://nativeplantspnw.com/wildflower-seed-list/

Northwest Meadowscapes: https://northwestmeadowscapes.com/

USDA Plants Database: https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/home

Master Gardeners Promote Native Plantings . . . *By Mark Amara*

WSU MGs not only currently maintain three native and drought-tolerant demonstration gardens in Othello, Moses Lake, and Soap Lake, but they also promote the use of native plants in our desert climate.

Here are updates to the existing demonstration gardens.
The Othello Demonstration Garden, located behind the Old Hotel Art Gallery, is surviving with little effort. The biggest improvement there this year was to remove a large cypress tree that blocked the storage shed. Without it, the welcome sign is visible, and the garden appears less overgrown and cluttered.

According to MG Terry Rice, our favorite plant at the Othello Demonstration Garden this year is the Blue Indigo Baptisia australis. This plant had beautiful foliage and stunning blue flowers, which turned into interesting seed pods. All parts of this plant are great used in cut flower arrangements. Seed pods were gathered and will be started in the greenhouse as well as in some winter-sown pots (see article below on winter sowing). Indigo also comes in yellow and white. It thrives in full sun and is drought tolerant once established.

Blue indigo. Photo credit: Terry Rice

Before (top picture) and after (bottom picture) tree removal demonstrates the change. Photo credits: Terry Rice

The MG drought-tolerant and native plant gardens at the Moses Lake Public Library saw many changes this year. Master Gardeners Barbara Guilland, Tina Bradley, Duane Pitts, and Mark Amara and community volunteer Louis Logan spent several weekends weeding, pruning, and planting new grasses, forbs, trees and shrubs. It seemed like tons of weeds were removed. Basin Bark donated a truckload of bark that volunteers spread on the garden, giving each of the gardens a fresh look. A dozen new plants that had been donated as well as some purchased from BFI Native Seeds were planted in the area in the spring.

The memorial tree of Sharon planted to honor former MG Edris Herodes, who passed away a few years ago, is thriving. MG plans are moving forward to replace faded and cracked signage at the garden and to add specie names for those surviving plants.

At the Soap Lake demonstration garden, Duane Pitts and Mark Amara worked cooperatively with the Soap Lake Garden Club to weed and prune the plot. New plants are being considered to replace those that have been removed or have died.

Duane Pitts helps to spread bark. Photo Credit: Mark Amara

Barbara Guilland led the effort to help maintain the Moses Lake Demo Garden. Photo Credit: Mark Amara

The Soap Lake garden in its prime.

Photo credits: Mark Amara (left) and Karen Woodhouse, Soap Lake Garden Club (right)

In a new initiative, Master Gardener expertise and efforts resulted in an informal working arrangement with Washington State Parks (WSP) at the Dry Falls Visitor Center southwest of Coulee City. In June, MG co-coordinators Duane Pitts and Mark Amara met with David McWalters, Washington State Parks Interpretive Specialist, to discuss a plan to inventory and recommend grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees for a new native shrub-steppe ecosystem garden that will be added to the Dry Falls Visitor Center site.

By October 2021, McWalters had pitched the plan to regional WSP regional staff and received approval to move ahead with project implementation. Plans will start with establishing a gravel path, and then designing and installing an irrigation system and planting recommended plants. The irrigation system is already being worked on, and some dormant planted grass will be broadcast this fall to help with weed control. The project is expected to be a long-term effort and developed in stages, not done all at once. The goal is to be a cooperative effort among WSU Grant-Adams Master Gardeners, Washington State Parks staff, and Washington Conservation Corp personnel, although as the project evolves, other groups may also get involved.

A Washington State Parks crew cleared undesirable vegetation in spring 2021. Several junipers and other deteriorating trees were removed.

The cleared site left significant bare areas.

The plan view above assembled by David McWalter identifies the layout. View is looking northwest.

In June, Amara and Pitts visited the site. David McWalters, seasonal Interpreter, Erin Bonam, and Duane Pitts stand on a portion of the cleared area

Mark Amara describes soil characteristics while David McWalters looks on

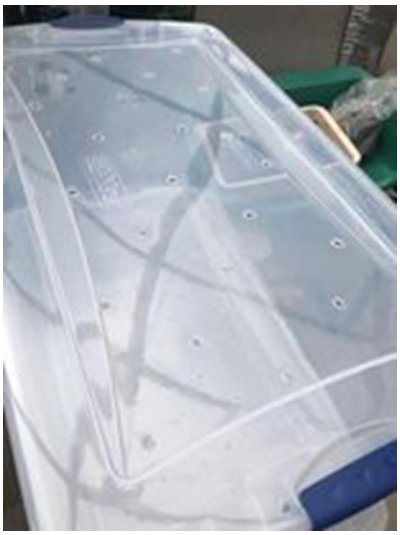
Amara, Bonam, and Pitts dug holes throughout the project area to describe soil color, texture, depth, pH and other soil characteristics. Photo Credits: Mark Amara and David McWalters

Winter Sowing Method Vastly Improved . . . *By Terry Rice*

I have been winter sowing seeds for over 10 years. Winter sowing is a fun and efficient way to get lots of flower and vegetable seeds started early in the year for your garden. Plants that are winter sown seem to be stronger than the ones started indoors. In the past, I used plastic milk jugs for my seedlings, which are practical and use readily available materials.

However, I found the process of cutting, venting, and taping the jugs quite time consuming so I started looking for other options. I thought I would try using clear plastic storage bins, preferably with cups or pots in the bottom, and set out to find inexpensive materials. My local nursery had a large stash of used pots that I could clean up and use, and I found large plastic bins at a local retailer. It became clear to me that taller bins are better to allow plants more room to grow.

Seeds planted in pots inside storage bins.



Storage bin with holes soldered in the top and bottom of the container.

It's important for drainage when using this method to make holes in the bottom and top of the container so that moisture can get into the containers. I used my soldering iron to accurately make the holes.

I start planting seeds in January and set the bins out in a sunny area where they can get moisture from the rain and snow.

One thing I discovered using this new technique is that the pots in the bins dry out a little faster than using milk jugs so supplemental additions of water were needed. It is a lot easier to pop the lids off and give them a good soaking than it was getting water in the tops of the milk jugs. You can find a great list of seeds to plant on the website www.wintersown.org . A few of my favorites are snapdragons, zinnias, cosmos, sweet peas, gomphrena, tomatoes, and herbs.

Seeds planted in covered storage bins survive snow and low temperatures.

Winter sowing is a method that works well in our climate and offers lots of options. My hope is that many of you will try it this year or next. Many people start on the Winter Solstice and continue planting through March. Just remember to be patient because your winter-sown seedlings will start sprouting when nature says it's time.

Winter-sown zinnias planted in the garden. Photo by Terry Rice

The winter-sown pretties in the vase are cosmos, zinnias, gomphrena, snapdragons, and bells of Ireland. They were all transplanted between April and June. Photo by Terry Rice

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The Best-Laid Schemes . . . *By Duane Pitts*

"The best-laid schemes o' *mice* an' *men* / Gang aft a-gley"

First, I thank Robert Burns, Scottish poet (1759-1796), for the quote from his poem "To a Mouse." How true, how true. Our plans often go awry.

Second, this pandemic year proves to me how true Burns' observation in "To A Mouse" really is. Let me explain.

Since March 2020, life has taken on new aspects none of us expected: COVID 19. Isolation. KN-95 Masks. Online learning. Shopping online. Overseas travel bans. Social distancing.

So has gardening:

- Plants flew out of stores for home-grown fruit and vegetables.
- Businesses sold out of canning jars.
- Canning lids became -- pricey as gold!
- And summer heat! Too hot! Too long!

We did not know in March 2021 that we would still be living the pandemic in the summer heat that never seemed to end.

How did my garden grow this year? All my schemes and plans for gardening took unexpected turns.

I did not plan on redesigning my berry garden to look like it is in the photo (right), but it does. However, I planned to be finished by the end of June. It is now November, and I am almost at the end! Almost. Still, I need to reset the compost bin.

Last year I grew fingerling potatoes in straw bales. In October 2020, I put the rotted straw around my berry plants in their own patch. Little did I know that strawberries would produce potatoes this year! It only took a few missed potatoes buried in the straw. I supplied our son and his wife (and the two teenage boys at home) with around 4 pounds of volunteer potatoes (just a snack for the teens) and about 1 pound for us. The potatoes bested the strawberries!

The blackberries last year produced about 4 freezer quart bags. I expected the same in 2021. However, we had 4 freezer gallon bags! Something about summer heat really got them growing; many of them were thumb-sized. And, more were still ripening at the end of October this year.

Then, totally unexpected, from early summer to late October, the raspberries produced enough daily to eat with cereal. Last year, they all bore fruit in the same two-week period of mid-summer. I was still picking raspberries on October 29 (see photos below).

Last year, we harvested a handful of green bell peppers while the hot peppers did not produce, and we harvested "a ton" of tomatoes. This year, the hot peppers thrived in the heat, the bell peppers waited until a cooler September to produce, and the tomato plants were few but kept on fruiting until the first nip of October frost. I potted a jalapeno and two hot chili peppers and placed them in my plastic greenhouse until it is time to bring them in from the winter storms.

Red hot chili peppers

Herbs drying in holey brown bags

Most of the herbs suffered last year and were puny. I didn't bother harvesting any of them and picked only a few basil leaves. Pitiful. Only the rosemary thrived. This year I have bags of drying thyme, oregano (regular and Greek), sage, and rosemary and a freezer holding jars of basil pesto!

What a difference in one year.

Last year our grapes made enough for one snack. The heat jazzed them up this year, enough to make Concord grape jam and jelly. However, the plums trees had a different idea than last year's ten Mirabelle plums to eat fresh and enough Italian plums for jam. No Italian plums this year, and the magpies snatched five of the twelve Mirabelles right off the limbs! Three others disappeared. Into thin air, apparently.

Thus, third and last, I learned a lesson from the pandemic and this past summer. Just like the best-laid schemes of mice, the plans of men also go astray. Expect the best, but settle for what you get out of your garden. It will not come that way again.

Photos by Duane Pitts

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Growing Tomatoes. Community Horticulture Fact Sheet #7. WSU: King County Extension. Growing Tomatoes – Tip Sheet #7 | King County | Washington State University (wsu.edu)

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Public Help Requested to Report Spotted Lanternflies

Karla Sulp, communications specialist at the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), announced that the department is asking the public to watch out for an invasive insect called the spotted lanternfly (lycorma delicatalula), a potentially destructive pest that may have been seen in the Omak area in eastern Washington. The insect, not native to the area, comes from Asia. It first arrived in Pennsylvania in 2014 and has been spreading in several eastern states since then. It prefers to attack grapes but will also go after hops, apples, peaches, and other fruit trees.

Adult spotted lanternfly. Photo credit: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Should it become established here, the insect could threaten many Washington crops, potentially resulting in costly quarantines and increased use of pesticides to control it. It would not only affect growers but also homeowners as well.

In late October 2021, the Washington Invasive Species Council was notified of a possible sighting near Omak. The sighting included a photograph and noted that five live specimens were seen. Though WSDA entomologists searched the suspected area, they could not confirm the sighting. However, WSDA is asking the public to be vigilant and check their trees and other outdoor surface for the spotted lanternfly adults and eggs. Sven Spichiger, WSDA entomologist, indicated that the search of the area revealed "abundant host materials in the area" but no insects, and WSDA is asking people to be on the lookout for both adults and egg masses. People should report to the WSDA if they think they have seen any form of the insect.

Spotted lanternfly egg mass close up Photo credit: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Coincidentally, the recent latternfly sighting comes at the same time that the WSDA and other state agencies have requested the public to report tree-of-heaven locations as part of its concerted effort to locate and remove this invasive species and preferred host of the spotted lanternfly. Although the spotted lanternfly is not a threat to human or animal health, it is a potential threat to Washington agriculture. Justin Bush, Washington Invasive Species Council (WISC) Executive Director, believes the public is invaluable in helping to stop invasive species and encourages anyone to notify the council via its website or phone application called Washington Invasives.

Although spotted lanternfly populations have not been found in Washington right now, WSDA plans on surveying the area for this pest in 2022. However, it is too late for WSDA to mobilize and survey the state this year and is relying on the public to help find and report it if seen so populations can be eradicated as quickly as possible.

When reporting possible spotted latternfly sightings, include a photograph, date, and location of the sighting and most importantly, collect the specimens.

- Reports can be made using WISC's online reporting form or mobile app or by emailing WSDA at pestprogram@agr.wa.gov or calling 1-800-443-6684.
- After reporting, suspect specimens and egg masses can be taken to WSU Extension offices. The WSU Extension address is 1525 E. Wheeler Road, Moses Lake, WA 98837.
- More information about spotted lanternfly can be found on WSDA's website. Report tree-of-heaven locations to WISC.