

Garden Miscellany

By John VanMiert

According to the calendar, it's springtime, and we might encounter some spring-like weather on certain days, maybe followed by some less spring-like weather. But we can enjoy from now on a continuous display of flowers, such as bulbs, border perennials and flowering shrubs and trees.

April is the gardening preparation time. The garden spot can be spaded or tilled as soon as the soil has warmed up a bit, and the soil is dry enough to be handled. If you spade or roto-til too cold, wet soil you end up with hard clods which are hard to handle in a seed or planting bed. Now is a good time for adding the available compost or other decayed organic material to the soil. Organic matter in the soil is so essential for improving the physical quality of soil. Success in growing a good producing flower or vegetable garden depends on it.

A commercial fertilizer with the ratio of 5-10-10, at the rate of 4 # per 100 sq. feet is the recommended amount for gardens in the absence of a soil test. Fertilize your rhubarb plants once again.

Can a vegetable garden be grown here in the Puget Sound region without the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides? The answer to this question is a definite yes. Success may require a bit more effort and vigilance on the part of the gardener. Manures and composts are low in fertilizer values, but the incorporation of organic matter to the soil is so very important. Although fertilizers are most quickly available to plants in the chemical form, it is quite possible to supply a garden's entire mineral needs in the form of organic fertilizers. For example, gardeners have been using manures since the beginning of agriculture, and they are still an effective source of organic matter and nutrients.

Manures and compost are valuable sources of organic matter and fertilizer. However, keep in mind that only half of the applied manures will be available for the plants in the first year in a new garden spot. When manures of any kind are used to supply nutrients for crop production, it is necessary that one understand that they are quite low in these essentials compared to synthetic fertilizers. For example, to obtain the same amount of nitrogen as 15# of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0), it would be necessary to incorporate 200# of chicken manure or 1500# of cow manure (with bedding) into a garden. In addition, since raw organic material must be converted into the chemical form by microorganisms before the plants can benefit from it, there will be a lag between time of application and time of use. This delay is variable depending on soil temperature and moisture levels.

Perennials should be treated with the same kinds of fertilizer and at the same rate. Azaleas, camellias, rhododendrons, heathers, andromedas and some others need an acid fertilizer with the ratio of 5-10-5. Rhododendrons and azaleas should be fed between now and not later than the end of July. If fertilizer is applied in the latter part of the summer, then vigorous growth of the plant results in a time when the plant is supposed to get ready for its dormant stage. An early frost in the fall could be very damaging to such late fertilized plants. Care should be taken that the fertilizer is evenly distributed over the root areas of azaleas, rhododendrons, heathers and andromedas because the root system is very shallow and fertilizer burning on the roots has to be avoided.

Time to sow cool and warm season vegetables and herbs. Wait with planting of warm season vegetables until the danger of frost has past.

Most houseplants will benefit from a monthly application of a water-soluble fertilizer 10-10-10. A few houseplants (like the bromelias) should be fed only twice a year, in the spring and fall.

Continue needed planting of trees and shrubs. Try different varieties of azaleas and rhododendrons to lengthen the blooming season: kurumes in shades of reds; exbury in shades of yellow; robin hills in two-toned pastels.

Dahlia tubers should be planted, and it is a good time for division of crowded tubers. Also, gladiolus should be planted. By the end of April, after the danger of frost is past, many annuals and vegetables can be seeded in the garden. Gardeners usually plant the annuals in the first week of May.

Early flowering shrubs such as forsythia, spirea, mock orange and later the deutzia and weigelia should be pruned as soon as possible after the blooming is finished. Spring flowering heathers may be pruned or sheared back after they are through blooming, too. This cutting back is necessary to keep the plants in a groomed looking shape. If you let heathers grow without proper care of pruning, they will look shaggy on the lower part of the plant. Did you finish the pruning of your fruit trees? It is last call this season for pruning of your fruit trees.

Lawn care is upon us again, mowing, killing moss and weeds. A good dressing with a high nitrogen fertilizer with the ratio 3-2-1 (12-8-4) at 4 lbs. Per 1000 square feet is recommended. Lawns adjacent to the lake or water streams could use a special prepared lawn fertilizer that is lower in phosphate. If thatching is necessary, now is the right time to do it. April is also a good time to install new lawns. Remember, Kentucky blue grass isn't ideal for our region. A mixture of 50% perennial turf-type ryegrass and 50% fine fescue makes a better lawn for the Northwest Pacific west coast.

Good gardening and enjoy the outdoors.

Governor Locke Proclamation

Governor Gary
Locke has declared
April 14th through
April 20th, 2002 as
Washington State
University Master
Gardener Volunteer
Week.



President's Message

This morning's Herald headline read "Flaky Storm Ushers in Spring". I've been waiting for some Spring weather to inspire my message—but today is my deadline, so I will take the calendar's word for it—Spring is here!!



Pat Nelson,
MGF President

Even though I am looking out my window at a beautiful snow-scape, I must mention that it is time to be thinking of our plant sale! There are a lot of ways to contribute to this event: pot up some plants at home [don't forget to mark them], help pot perennials at Karen Gilliam's, and lots of help is needed in setting up the day before, or working at the sale itself. Christine Michaelis is coordinating the sale again and would like a co-coordinator to help her this year and assume coordinator-ship next year. So, come forward for this important position!!

It was great to have several new Master Gardeners at the Foundation meeting. I hope that they enjoyed themselves and will convince other trainees to join us next month.

More greenhouse issues were discussed, and one thing became clear—it would be great to have one, but we need more committed people to make it work!

Jill Cotton, Bill Baldwin, Linda Bergquist, and Joh VanMiert are doing a great job assisting with the trainee class—it is running smoothly!

Bill Jennings attended the State M.G. meeting and came back with lots of information on M.G. programs in other counties. With this and other information, we will be coming up with our own manual.

And by the way, we have been a little short on the treats [perish the thought], so surprise us!!

Volunteers needed:

1. A photographer to take pictures at events for our Website
2. A communications coordinator who would publicize our M.G. events
3. A plant sale coordinator for next year

Call soon—don't miss out on these life-altering opportunities!!

Next meeting:

~Christine Hurst

The speaker for the Master Gardener meeting is Julie Whittacker, a botanist currently employed at Fourth Corner Nursery. She will talk on native plants in our landscapes, special plants for special areas, collecting seed and other propagation techniques.

Lake-Friendly Gardening

a free workshop series

Saturdays 10:00 - noon
Bloedel-Donovan Park Pavilion

Celebrate spring by picking up some tips about keeping your lawn and garden healthy—all while protecting Lake Whatcom water quality! Come to a series of free workshops led by local experts on health care for your lawn and garden.

| | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|
| April 6 | Groundcovers: Alternatives to Turf |
| April 13 | Lakescaping |
| April 20 | Managing Pests Safely & Effectively |

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Weeder's Digest

All the dirt that's fit to print



Newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners

April 2002

Implementing the Mission of the Master Gardener Program

The board of the Whatcom County Master Gardener Foundation and I have been meeting in a continuation of the strategic planning that was initiated about two years ago for the Master Gardener program here. This effort includes articulating the mission of the program, prioritizing our activities to accomplish that mission, monitoring and measuring our impacts to this community.

The Master Gardener program is firstly a community service program designed to provide a trained cadre of volunteers to help the local community with their home gardening information needs. It is an integral component of Washington State University fulfilling its land grant mission. I want to emphasize the community service focus. It is what separates the Master Gardener program from the multitude of local gardening clubs. We are here to do good things for our community. Yes, Master Gardeners learn about the science of gardening, but the reason is to do good things for others.

And the program does good things. I have been very gratified to see the diversity of benefits that come about as a result of the efforts of Master Gardener volunteers. In fact, these efforts have grown and expanded over the years, sometimes to the point that we do not have enough volunteer resources to do everything we want or need to do. This is why we have needed to prioritize the projects we conduct or are a part of. Labor (volunteer and staff) is a precious resource for us. We need to be sure that each effort matches our mission and is directed towards making a difference in our community.

One thing that I have noticed is that when the Master Gardener program wants to staff an effort, it turns each year to the new class for most, if not all, of the labor. From the first day's class onward the new trainees are enticed to get involved in many new or ongoing activities by enthusiastic recruiters. Yet our mailing list shows about 240 veterans and an average new class size of forty-five. I also notice that I see about the same fifteen or so veterans deeply involved in many of our projects and hardly see or hear from many of the others on our list. Yet, I believe that there are many veteran Master Gardeners who have much to give – a resource that is lost to our community. This situation is not necessarily unique to Whatcom County. Most other counties and states have initiated minimum requirements for veteran Master Gardener participation as a result of this same issue. These requirements usually include a minimum number of reported volunteer hours and often a minimum amount of continuing education to qualify as a Master Gardener. These annual requirements range from 15 hours to 40 hours of community service as a volunteer and from five to twenty hours of continuing education and training in the area of gardening.

I understand that there are pros and cons to this type of approach, yet I have experienced the frustration of having some of our core activities such as the office clinic go un-staffed for weeks due to a shortage of volunteers willing to help, or hear that Hovander needs help, especially later in the season.

At the last strategic planning meeting with the foundation board and others, I heard strong opinions from both sides of this issue. I must say that I have mixed feelings as well. In fact, in the past I have resisted requirements for veterans even though virtually all of my colleagues in this state have gone that way. So, I offer up a compromise to try. Just like when you watch or listen to public radio or television, or go to some lectures or other activities, where a suggested donation is placed before you for your participation, I would like to try this approach for Whatcom County Master Gardeners for now. This way you understand that it is your time as a volunteer that allows us to operate, and you make an effort to give what you can. No one, at this point, is telling you as a

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Newsletter

Deadline:

Third Wednesday of every month.

Implementing the Mission of the Master Gardener Program

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Master Gardener veteran, what you have to give, but hopefully you will see and understand the need and give generously of your time. I suggest that you use the range of examples I gave above to guide you in your pledge of time.

Last year we tried something new for the class to let them know of many of the activities the Master Gardener program is involved in, and to facilitate getting commitments from them to help with those activities that they had interest in. This was a listing of projects with a description of activities involved, and an estimate of the total number of hours needed for this for the year. This list closely matched the project prioritization that our strategic planning had developed. We then held a “job fair” on the last day of class and the new volunteers could visit a booth and hear more about specific projects and then make a commitment of hours and sign up for those they had an interest in. The new class members also had a “dance card” that kept track of their personal commitments for the activities they signed up for. I believe that it helped us allocate the new class members’ time and keep better track of the commitments made. This also allowed the new class members to better understand the existing volunteer opportunities before they finished and dispersed to their normal lives.

We are now in the process of revising the prioritized list for this year. What I have noticed is that once again, it has grown and that those involved in the strategic planning want more of the projects ranked as “must do.” If we are to accomplish all of these good things, then it is clear to me that we need more time from our volunteers. I hope that you find ways to help.

I have included last year’s list, as we do not yet have this year’s list ready for this newsletter. I do not think that there will be big changes for this year. Please look over the list and see if there are some activities that you can contribute to. If you can, come to this year’s “job fair” on the afternoon of Tuesday, April 16 and give us your pledge. If you can’t make it on the 16th, just give us a call to the office or send us an email to cbmac@wsu.edu and tell us where you can help us make a positive impact on our gardening community and how much time you are willing to pledge.

Thank you,

Craig MacConnell

The Master Gardener Mission

As I have mentioned in the last two newsletters, the board has been meeting with Craig MacConnell to discuss the mission of the Master Gardener program. We have had a positive feeling about the progress so far. Since the program is primarily a community service program, the following subjects are what we have been discussing:

1. What are the priorities of our community service activities?
2. How do we keep the veterans involved in these activities?

Number one has become important because we often do not have enough veteran volunteers to handle all of our projects. For instance, our top priority activity is our office clinic and too often it is un-staffed. We have 240+ veterans on our mailing list—where are they?

Number 2 poses a question that I don’t quite understand. I went into the M.G. program influenced by a friend and active veteran. I realized that this program was not just to help me be a better gardener, but also to then share this information with the community. This approach needs to be emphasized from the beginning. Whatcom County is not the only county with this problem. However, other counties have chosen to initiate minimum volunteer and training hours per year in order to continue as an active member. It was suggested that we do the same. There was a lot of discussion presenting different solutions. I must admit that I was for initiating the minimum hours per year. However, it was decided to compromise. You know what our programs are and that they cannot succeed without volunteers. Please look over the list of activities included in this newsletter and choose those that interest you. If possible, come to the job fair on Tuesday April 16 to find out more about each activity or call/e-mail the office with your pledge. I hope that this will work out so that we can show the rest of the state that our veterans volunteer because they want to not because they have to!!

Thank You,

Pat Nelson

2001 Master Gardener Activity Pledge Summary

| Volunteer Activity | Duties | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------|
| MG Office Clinic | Receive inquiries via walk-ins, telephone & e-mail. Diagnose plant problems, research signs and provide answers. | 774 |
| Hovander Demonstration Garden | Design, plant, and maintain vegetable, herb, small fruit, and weed demonstrations. Answer gardening questions from the public. Prepare signs and perform related duties. | 1238 |
| Northwest Washington Fair | Receive inquires from fairgoers. Diagnose plant problems, research and provide answers. | 160 |
| Program Evaluation | Call previous clients and conduct a simple program evaluation questionnaire, summarize results. | 40 |
| Miscellaneous Public Events & Clinics | Receive inquiries. Diagnose plant problems, research and provide answers. | Open |
| MG Speakers Bureau | Provide educational talks on a variety of subjects to gardening clubs, neighborhood organizations, schools and others. | Open |
| Crane Fly Survey | Volunteers will sample home lawns in the Lake Whatcom Watershed | 100 |
| Lake Friendly Gardening Calendar | Develop calendar for gardening activities that have a focus on water quality protection and water conservation. | 32 |
| MG Library Clinic | Receive inquiries via walk-ins. Diagnose plant problems, research and provide answers. | 26 |
| Insect Collection | Collect, label and display insect specimens from Whatcom County to be used as a reference collection for Master Gardeners. | 30 |
| Rose Evaluation | Develop and implement evaluation protocols for looking at disease-resistant varieties of roses using the rose garden at Cornwall Park. | 30 |
| MG Plant Sale | Prepare for and operate plant sale. Respond to plant information inquiries. | 640 |
| Plant Sale Propagation | Take cuttings of herbaceous plants, transplant to larger containers, miscellaneous related work. | 75 |
| Greenhouse Plant Sale Propagation | Take cuttings of herbaceous plants, transplant to larger containers, miscellaneous related work. | 75 |
| Saturday Farmers Market | Receive inquiries. Diagnose plant problems, research and provide answers. | 200 |
| Youth Gardening | | Open |
| Environmental Gardening | | Open |
| Attracting Beneficial Insects | Volunteers will design and conduct an experiment evaluating different flowers for attractiveness to beneficial insects. | 100 |
| Slug Management | Volunteers will design and conduct an experiment testing the efficacy of Sluggo Brand pesticide with other treatments. | 100 |
| Estimated Total Hours | | 3620+ |

Plant of the Month By Cheryl Greenwood Kinsley

Snowberry

Symphoricarpos albus

Family: Caprifoliaceae
(Honeysuckle family)

Genus:

Symphoricarpos

Species: *albus*

I catch my inspiration for this column wherever I can, and this month it was no challenge at all. In February I declared that for a few months, at least, I would feature mid-sized shrubs suitable for Pacific Northwest home landscapes. Regular readers are aware of my preference for ease of care and my commitment to “right plant, right place.” I try to incorporate native plants whenever possible. So I experienced a possibly oxymoronic no-brainer inspiration when I looked out my window this first day of spring and saw ten inches of snow on the ground.



Past plants-of-the-month for April have included plants that actually *bloom* about now. But this year, the selection has been made based solely on a name: snowberry, a North American native that you’ve all seen growing wild along the roadsides in town and in the county. There is one species of the genus *Symphoricarpos* that’s native to China, but the other ten hail from our very own continent. Since I don’t know if it’s snowing in northern Asia at this moment, I think I’ll stick to the species that’s native here. The *Symphoricarpos* that’s found from Alaska to California, the Pacific slope variety, is *S. albus* var. *laevigatus*. Its Atlantic cousin is *Symphoricarpos albus* var. *albus*, but since I also don’t know if it’s snowing in Maine, I’ll keep this close to home.

Since almost nothing has leafed out yet this year, it’s still easy to spot the characteristic white berries of this bushy, free-form shrub that ranges from three to six feet in height. It’s used to growing under Douglas firs, where it’s most sparse, to open rangelands, where it’s less so. It has a habit that can’t be harnessed, rather like an unruly perm or a cowlick with a mind of its own. You won’t be able to transform it into a tidy specimen. Place it where you can enjoy its hazy, open effect; its interesting and variable leaves-of quite different forms on the same plant, from large on new growth to small on older branches, with either smooth or serrated edges and sometimes both, branch to branch. Appreciate its racemes of bell-shaped, pinkish flowers, faintly fragrant, in May and June; and of course the bumper crop of iridescent white berries all winter. Birds don’t seem to eat them and deer look down their long noses at the pretty white clusters; but hungry cattle and sheep and grizzly bears and moose go after them with gusto. I know that moose and grizzlies aren’t found in Whatcom County-but then it doesn’t usually snow in spring around here, either. You never know...and even if you’re not in the habit of raising moose food, remember that birds appreciate the cover provided by *Symphoricarpos albus*.

This shrub grows well with little care, in light shade or in full sun, in acid or alkaline soil. Its one disadvantage in the home garden is a propensity to develop powdery mildew in the late summer. This might be encouraged by proximity to other cultivated ornamentals, since the wild snowberries growing happily at roadside seem never to show leaves mottled with this oh-so-common fungus.

There are named hybrids and species other than *S. albus* available that feature more compact form, flowers of deeper pink, berries with greater iridescence or different coloring. But the common snowberry is the one that comes to my mind today. It’s been here for a very long time. Lewis and Clark took specimens of it home to Thomas Jefferson, who shared cuttings and his affection for “Snow-berry” in letters to friends, most notably Madame La Comtesse de Tesse in 1813. European plant breeders took to it immediately, and *S. albus* still has a devoted following there. But since I don’t know if it’s snowing in Europe, either, I’ll simply appreciate this attractive shrub with its berries still held on branches today, now buried in this unlikely snow of spring.

Attention All You Hosta Lovers!

Since Gary Griebe is far too busy at this time of year to come and speak at our foundation meeting, he has graciously offered to allow us to visit his Shady Lane Hosta Farm. He owns the commercial peony and hosta growing operation and sells the plants wholesale to nurseries all around Puget Sound. The tour will be Saturday, April 27, at 9:00 a.m. The address is 1733 Mt. Baker Highway (look for mail box) across from the Van Wyck fire department. Turn off the highway and drive to the end of the 1/4 mile lane. See you there. Questions?

Wireworms & Click Beetles

Order: Coleoptera
Family: Elateridae
Species: *Agriotes obscurus* & *A. lineatus*

Description and Life History:

Most gardeners are familiar with wireworms. We generally associate them as pests on potatoes, sugar beets and other tubers. However, most wireworms play an important role in our environment. Many wireworm species are recyclers and decomposers of forest litter and wood. Only a few species give us grief in our gardens. But, guess what? We have two new species of wireworms in Whatcom County. A survey done by Eric LaGasa (our most awesome Chief Entomologist-WSDA) found established populations of *Agriotes obscurus* and *A. lineatus* in Whatcom County (to read more about his survey, visit <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/pestsurvey/Wireworm.htm>).



Click beetles in general (adult wireworms) are elongate, parallel-sided, compact, streamlined beetles with serrate (saw blade like) antennae. When looking at the beetles from the top, you will recognize that the segment behind the head (pronotum) has corners that are pointed and fit snugly around the corners of the wing covers (elytra). The joint between these two regions is extremely flexible. This is a distinguishing character of adult click beetles, in the family Elateridae. An easier way to ID a click beetle is to roll it over onto its back. If the beetle arches its back and produces a notable clicking sound as it catapults through the air, then you have a click beetle. If not, you just have an upset beetle of another sort on its back. The power conducted by this clicking mechanism is one of the strongest forces produced by a land animal and is used to escape bad situations. The two new *Agriotes* click beetles are a dusty brown/gray

color and look like many of our other click beetles.

Wireworm larvae look like tubular, caramelized noodles that are about an inch long when fully grown. Wireworms resemble mealworms that you buy at the pet store to feed your critters. These new wireworms have a single-pointed rear end, instead of multiple points or bumps and ridges. Wireworms (along with mealworms) can be a tasty, crunchy treat when honey roasted (a common dish served at WSU's annual Bug-Luau)!

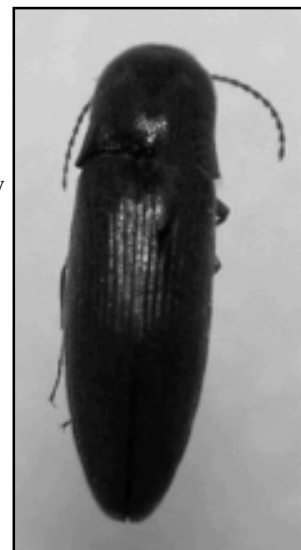
The life cycle of wireworms can take up to 5 - 6 years to complete. This is why they are hard pests to get rid of. Adult beetles lay eggs in the soil, near suitable food sources in the soil. Eggs hatch in 2 - 7 days and larvae start to search for food by wiggling through the soil. Larvae enjoy soil temperatures between 50-70°F and will move up in the soil as it warms in the spring to find your new plants, and then move down if it becomes too hot or cold. Larvae continually move as much as 2 feet down into the soil depending on soil temperatures and food sources. The larvae also pupate in the soil in the late summer-time. Adults will emerge from the pupal stage as soil temperatures warm to 50°F during the following spring. Again, adults emerge 5 years into the lifecycle; at any given time, you can have different life stages in the soil with overlapping generations.

Damage:

The larvae of these two species prefer to feed on grass seeds and roots but also have been found in strawberries (roots and fruit), vegetables and tubers. The preferred habitat is pasture, sod and grassland. Even though these species of wireworms are serious agricultural pests in Europe, we haven't seen major problems in Whatcom County. *So Todd, why is this our pest of the month?*

Last year, after I became aware of our new beetles, I noticed that a few customers (even some Master Gardeners) complained of planting their veggies from seed and nothing sprouting. After investigation we found *Agriotes* wireworms to be the culprit. Larvae use the carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced from germinating seeds and growing root tips to find their food and can detect CO₂ from up to 20cm (~8") away in the soil!! Wireworms will feed on and destroy the germinating seeds. Additionally, wireworms feed on the developing root systems and tubers of garden grains, corn and vegetables. The adults do not cause any important damage; it's only the larval stages that are damaging.

Canadian growers have found that heavy wireworm populations cause problems via an unusual secondary pest, the crow. Crows have been seen



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Weed of the Month By Laurel Shiner

Meadow Knapweed

Centaurea jacea x nigra

THREAT:



Meadow knapweed is a highly competitive plant, displacing native plant communities and reducing forage for wildlife and livestock. The plant exhibits low palatability and competitive superiority and has the ability to inhibit the growth of surrounding vegetation by exuding toxins through its roots and leaves. It can easily invade disturbed lands and deteriorated or overgrazed pastures. Thousands of acres of valuable grasslands and pasture in Eastern Washington and Montana are now lost to knapweeds. The structure of the plant is similar to tumbleweed and increases its ability to spread seeds great distances. Plants and seeds are most often picked up and carried by vehicles. Once thought to be aggressive only east of the Cascades, knapweed has now become a significant problem in most Western Washington counties.

DESCRIPTION:



Meadow knapweed is a perennial in the composite (sunflower) plant family. The upright branching stems are up to four feet tall. The solitary flowering heads are surrounded by bracts with a comblike fringe near their tip. Meadow knapweed is usually found growing in the heavier clay soils typical of much of the county. The flowers are pink to purple in color and occasionally white.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:

Unfortunately, meadow knapweed is sometimes collected and even cultivated for its ornamental beauty, a practice which results in further seed spread. It is important to be able to identify knapweed in the early stages of an infestation to prevent its spread from seedfall. There are cultural, chemical, and biological control methods for knapweeds. Repeated mowing may suppress the plants' ability to produce seed, but in some cases only lower the blooming height. Hand pulling is difficult due to the plants' tough perennial root crown. The plants usually will not come out easily, making hand digging necessary. Proper pasture management and a combination of methods is necessary to achieve long-term control. Contact the Weed Control Board for site-specific or chemical control recommendations.

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board • 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226 • (360) 354-3990
www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pubwks/noxious/noxious/htm

Naturally Natives

Red Flowering Currant



Red Flowering Currant or *Ribes sanguineum* is a plant in the Gooseberry family (Grossulariaceae) but is sometimes called the Ribesaceae. Of almost 30 species of currants and gooseberries native to the northwest, this is definitely the showiest and deserves to be planted in everyone's flower garden. It has been popular in European gardens since at least 1830. The red flowering currant is an 8 to 10 foot tall shrub but can be pruned and kept smaller. On older twigs, the usually 3-lobed leaves occur in clusters. The pendant flower clusters are closely set with gorgeous red to pink, (sometimes white) flowers. The fruits are black and not tasty (unpalatable???) and probably useful as a source of seeds.

Although it blooms during the early to mid spring, the color and attractiveness of the plant is worth it. Double whites and reds to pinks have been developed in Europe and have made the trip back to the Northwest. It is tolerant of both sun and shade but tends to get leggy in woodland settings. The easiest source of plants is from seeds collected in the fall and cleaned and stratified at 32 to 36 degrees F. for 3 months. Hardwood cuttings can be taken in the fall and can be tip or stem layered as well.

By Richard Steele

Wireworms & Click Beetles

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tearing up strawberry plants to get to the tasty wireworms in the soil.

Monitoring:

It is good to check your soil for wireworms prior to planting. During tillage of the soil, sift through the dirt to inspect for wireworm larvae. We have noticed that during fallow times, larvae are easy to see underneath rocks or garden borders. Inspect these regularly for wireworms as you would for slugs. Baited traps can be constructed by placing 3-4 tablespoons of coarse, whole-wheat flour inside a fine mesh bag, such as panty hose (panty hose seem to be an important tool for many entomologists, almost as useful as duct tape). Place the bait in a hole about 6 inches deep into the soil.

Place a sheet of plastic (like a trash bag) over the bait and cover the plastic with soil. You can then come back and lift the plastic layer and the topsoil to inspect the bait for wireworms a week later. In agriculture, the threshold for pre-plant insecticide treatment is an average of .5 to 1 wireworms per bait station. After planting, monitor the germination of your seeds and scout for stunted plants.

Management:

We don't have many management tools available to the home gardener yet. This is due to the sporadic nature of the pest and our lack of knowledge about these new pests. In all the problems encountered by the home gardener, there is a single commonality; wireworms become an issue when a new garden is planted in a spot that was previously occupied by grassland pasture or sod. Once the pasture or sod is removed, the wireworms get hungry and ravaged the germinating seeds. Do not plant your garden on land previously occupied by turf or pasture. Keep the ground fallow for the majority of the growing season to drive out the wireworms from your garden area. Although we haven't documented this scenario, these tactics may be important when growing your lawn from seed.

Tilling the soil may help reduce wireworm populations in the early spring. Wireworms are very vulnerable to mechanical damage during the pupal stage. Canadian small fruit growers have responded to the wireworm infestation by using the worms' taste to the growers' advantage. Farmers have planted grain in between the rows of strawberries to draw wireworm populations away from the strawberry plants in the spring. Growers then till or treat the soil with a pesticide. This method of pest management is called "trap cropping." Canadian entomologists have been testing different seeds treated with insecticides already; however, gardeners do not have any insecticides registered for this purpose. As with all pest management, predicting and monitoring your pest problems is key; so grab a handful of whole wheat flour, a pair of pantyhose and start digging.

Plant Sale.. Plant Sale.. Plant Sale...

~Christine Michaelis

The Greenhouse Gang has been feverishly working all winter, and their last report indicates that they have 1000, yes 1000, tomato plants growing to be sold at our annual Plant Sale! Now, we need the volunteers to sell all the fruits of their labor. Please consider helping out with this annual — festive event.

If you plan to contribute plants to the Plant Sale - please bring labeled plants to the greenhouse the week prior to Saturday - May 11 and no later than Friday morning - May 10. White identification labels can be obtained from Dick Steele. If interested in purchasing plants of your own, volunteers are allotted 3 plants to purchase prior to the sale. This must be done on Friday.

Remember:

Plant Sale set-up: Friday, May 10th - 9am until pm (sometime) (Lunch will be provided Friday)

Plant Sale: Saturday, May 11th - 8am-12pm or 12pm-4pm, or all day!

Items to bring:

Bake Sale goods for Saturday morning. Calculators if you want to help out with pre-checkout. Paper bags or boxes for our customers. Carts or wheelbarrows. Your name tag. Rain-gear (just in-case).

Thanks so much to everyone who contributes to this event. Please call me with questions or comments. Christine Michaelis 734-1273 or cmichaelis@peacehealth.org



Weeder's Digest is the monthly newsletter for the Whatcom County Master Gardener Program. Guest articles are encouraged. Please submit typewritten articles by the third Wednesday of each month to Karri at the Master Gardener Office. Articles can also be submitted by e-mail to: karrimac@coopext.cahe.wsu.edu. Editor uses MS Word for Windows and PageMaker 6.5. Any articles prepared on other programs or platforms should be saved as Text Files or Rich Text Files. Editor reserves the right to edit for space considerations, grammar, spelling and syntax.

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**MASTER
GARDENER**

Dates to Remember:

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|---|
| April 11 | 7 to 9:30 p.m. | Monthly Foundation Meeting Extension Office |
| April 4 | 7:30 p.m. | WHS presents Dan Hinkley Whatcom Museum |
| April 13 | 9 a.m. to noon | Perennial Workshop #2 Karen Gilliam's |
| April 14 | 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. | B.C. MG Advanced Training Burnaby B.C. |
| Wednesdays | 8 to 9 a.m. | Master Gardener breakfasts Babe's in Ferndale |
| Wed. & Sat. | 9 a.m. to noon | Greenhouse work parties Penny Nordby's |