

Weeder's Digest

All the dirt that's fit to print



Newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners

July 2002

The NWW Fair is coming

Included in last month's newsletter was a current roster of Master Gardeners who have returned their registration slips. It contains names, addresses, telephone numbers, and known e-mail addresses. If there are errors in this list, please report them to the office for correction.

If you know of any Master Gardener who did not receive this edition of the newsletter, it is because they did not return the questionnaire we needed to keep them on the list. They can be added to that list if they notify us with their current information.

The Northwest Washington Fair will be upon us in August. The volunteer list is now being prepared, so if you want to be included call now to reserve a time that best fits your schedule. We staff the booth from 9:00a.m. to 9:00p.m., August 12 through August 17. The new coordinator is Gretchen White 360/734-0377. Call her to reserve your volunteer time.

Don't forget to put your time in at Hovander. July is family vacation time, so we know that your time is valuable, but it is also a critical growing time for the garden. So, keep on working at the garden.

Watch the newsletter for the date and time for the graduation/Potluck. It will be held in November this year.

Keep active and keep gardening.

Al McHenry

Attention all Veteran Master Gardeners:

Many of you continue to give countless hours of your valuable time to various Master Gardener programs. A majority of you, myself included, fail to turn in a record of these hours to the office. It has become increasingly important to the program to have an accurate record of your volunteer hours. There will be a form available on our web site, or you can just write them on plain paper and send them to the office. I will be trying to keep track of these contributions of time and energy so The Foundation can recognize those members who continue to support our program.

Thank You,
Merrilee Kullman

MG Timesheets and Roster

Need to make a correction to your information on the roster? We have created a hidden area in our website for local Master Gardeners. This area has links to an internet form for submitting hours, an address change form and other related information.

Also, a printable volunteer timesheet is online! Or you can use the internet form to send us your time through the internet. Please be sure to keep track of all volunteer time and the number of hours. It's more important than ever!



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Newsletter Deadline:

Third Wednesday of every month.

Tis the Season



By Faye Agner

July is the month we will/should be rewarded for all the earlier TLC spent in the garden. We can enjoy the diversity of flowers and eat fresh vegetables.

A few hot days and the gardens have really put on a spurt of growth. It is satisfying to see. There seems to be an abundance of powdery mildew around this year. This can be controlled by a good wash with a stream of water. If you prefer to go the chemical route, discuss your problem with your nursery person and *carefully* follow the package instructions. If you have some good examples of mildew in your yard, pick a few of the leaves and press them in a book. The Extension Office would like to have them.

Spring flowering bulbs have finished their growth and may be dug, cleaned and stored. Tulips should be lifted every year. Your Irises need attention right now. Irises have thick underground stems called rhizomes. They grow at ground

level or partly below the ground. Every year underground offshoots develop from these parent rhizomes. After 3, or sometimes 5, years the plants are getting crowded with smaller flowers as a result. Also, crowding adds to the leaf spot disease. It's the right time to divide and replant Irises now to be assured of beautiful flowers next year. Caution for late summer Irises dividers: Rhizomes planted too late in summer or fall are very susceptible to winter damage.

Daffodils multiply by offsets, or baby bulbs attached to the parent plant. As they multiply they often get too crowded and don't bloom as prolifically or as large as they did when they were first planted. After several years, they may need thinning. After the daffodils bloom in the spring let the foliage yellow and die back. Then, turn up a clump of bulbs with a spading fork. Shake the dirt off the clump and pull all the larger (1 to 2 inches) bulbs apart. These large bulbs may still have bulblets surrounding them depending on how long it's been since you last divided them. Gently pull any bulblets from the large bulbs, trying not to damage the roots. Replant them at three times their height in well-drained soil. If your soil has more clay, don't plant them as deeply; if it is on the sandy side go a little deeper. The bulblets may take three or four years to bloom.

Gather herbs for drying. Pick them in the morning to preserve the fragrance. The leaves should be completely dry.

Cutting roses or removing the dead flowers will encourage subsequent bloom. Most hybrid tea roses will continue to bloom and will provide good fall display if you prune carefully now. A monthly fertilizer application is needed to keep the roses blooming.

The yield of beans and cucumbers will be improved if the plants are watered well with a weak liquid fertilizer. Be sure to make regular harvests from your vegetables while they are in their prime condition. Remove the suckers from tomatoes, and watch for needed staking to keep the fruit off the ground. Overhead watering should be avoided. Moist weather and overhead irrigation are to blame for Late Blight on tomatoes.

Some summer pruning of fruit trees should be done in order to prevent diseases for the next season. Remove all trimmings away from the trees.

Avoid fertilizing landscape plants in our area (after mid-July) with a high yield nitrogen fertilizer, because of stimulation of vigorous growth later in the fall which will not be hardy for early frost. You can fertilize again after the plants are dormant. Flowering shrubs and trees, like forsythia, deutzia, hydrangea, potentilla, flowering cherry, crab apple, Hawthorne and others benefit from a fertilizer containing only phosphorus and potassium (0-10-10) for more flower setting. It makes the plants hardier for winter season pansies, violas, wallflowers and forget-me-nots. Sow either in a cold frame or in a sheltered, shady spot in the garden. Among the vegetables that can be planted at this time for a late fall or winter harvest are beets, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, endive, garlic, kohlrabi, mustard greens, onions, spinach and turnips. More next month on veggies to start in August.

Fertilizers can be classified into two main categories, organic and inorganic. Traditional organic fertilizers are soybean meal, fish wastes and sludge. When mixed into garden soils these materials will provide nutrients for plants and help to improve the physical condition of the soil. Not only do they increase fertility, but they also improve soil aeration and water holding capacity. They also make the soil easier to work.

Inorganic fertilizers are, basically, byproducts of chemical reactions. They usually contain the needed minerals in more concentrated form than do the organic types. The most effective way of providing for plants' needs is to apply both organic and inorganic materials at the right times of the year.

Plants do need 16 elements for normal growth and development. Plants obtain three of these



President's Message



Pat Nelson,
MGF President

Yes—it is summer! I never thought of myself as liking ‘average’—except, of course, when it comes to temperatures. So I find myself longing for an ‘average’ summer! The extremes of our spring wore me out. For instance, June 13th, the meeting/tour in my garden, found the temps in the 90s—and 24 hours later, it was in the 60s. But, the meeting/tour was great fun! It was great to have Dick Steele with us once again! Plus — Craig MacConnell joined us. We enjoyed it—do it again, Craig!

Also above average are the exciting things going on with the MGF. For instance, Dianne Rapoza and Becky Falacy have an enthusiastic committee working on the 2003 plant sale. They shared some of their ideas with us and will be having up-dates in the newsletter.

Another new committee with lots of energy is busy working on the greenhouse. Kolla Roderman and her husband spent 5 hours pressure washing inside and out, others have been cleaning, weed eating, and repotting plants. We will be offering classes to learn everything you ever wanted to know about successful greenhouse management. So, if you are interested, call Linda Bergquist and let her know. Watch for their monthly up-date in the newsletter.

The Lake Whatcom Residential and Treatment Center has asked the Master Gardeners to help teach their residents how to garden. Victor Gould has come up with a great program. It will be 2 days a week. One day will be a garden club with education; the second will be hands on in their garden. Vic will be sharing these experiences with us in up-coming newsletters. Anybody interested in this program can call Vic.

Graduation/potluck is set for November 7. We are going to make it special—that takes planning so if you have any ideas, call Chris Hurst. We will be letting you in on our progress.

With all of these programs in the works, it sounds like we won't have much of a summer off—there's just too much to do! Our committees will be meeting regularly, so if there is something you are interested in, call and come join us!

Our next meeting/tour is at two very special private gardens—so bring some special goodies! For more information and directions, check Chris Hurst's message.

See you all then.

~Pat

July foundation meeting and garden tour, July 11, 2002.

~Chris Hurst

At 7:00 pm, arrive at the home of Martina Elenbaas at 522 Willow Road. To get there from I-5 take the Old Fairhaven Parkway to Chuckanut Drive. Go past the Fairhaven Park. The first street to your right will be Willow Road. Take it up a hill approximately 1/8 mile. 522 will be on your left.

The second garden is Joanne Roose at 3808 Taylor Avenue. Take Fairhaven Parkway back to I-5 north. Follow I-5 north to the Samish Way exit. Turn right onto Samish Way. Go about 1/4 mile. The Elks Lodge is on the right, the entrance to Ridgemont Development is on the left. Turn left into Ridgemont and follow it up a hill to 38th street. Turn right onto 38th street then left onto Taylor Avenue. 3808 is the 3rd house on the right.

Martina's garden won a Whatcom in Bloom award last year when only four years old and is built into a hillside. Joanne's garden is full of many structures and art forms and has an oriental flavor. It is very tranquil and beautifully done. A short meeting and refreshments will be held at Joanne's.

Plant of the Month By Cheryll Greenwood Kinsley

Persian Shield

Family: Acanthaceae
(Acanthus family)

Genus: *Strobilanthes*

Species: *dyeranus*

I spotted the handsome stranger across the crowded room. He beckoned to me...and as he did, I could sense I was heading into dangerous territory, that he would be demanding and temperamental and take up too much of my time. But the way he looked! That made any sacrifice worthwhile. He was irresistible.



No, you haven't wandered into the romance stacks by mistake. This is indeed the Plant-of-the-Month column for July 2002 and I have to fess up: I actually spotted the good-looking stranger in a well-stocked garden center and "he" was part of the inventory. It happened a few weeks ago, and it was one of those transporting moments with which we gardeners are quite familiar. I saw a stunning plant tucked in amongst the petunias and marigolds and geraniums. I'd never seen it before, and although it was reminiscent of several old friends—slightly like coleus, a little like heliotrope—it had a look all its own. And I knew I was in trouble. So much for my resolve to have carefree and *ordinary* flowering annuals in my garden beds this year, with nothing more exotic than the odd zinnia. Even though I was captivated by the stranger's looks, I knew they were clues that this plant is neither native nor acclimated to the region where I live. No, I'd have to work hard to please this particular exotic.

As a matter of fact, *Strobilanthes dyeranus* is native to South Asia and grows most happily in the country formerly known as Burma and now called Myanmar (perhaps I was smitten with it because my older son lives in Rangoon). 'Exotica' is often tacked on to its name, as if there were any doubt; and the species name is frequently spelled "dyerianus." That's just the beginning of the taxonomical controversies about the entire *Strobilanthes* genus. Two enterprising young Englishmen have devoted their doctoral dissertations to sorting it all out. But for the purposes of this column, we'll just call the lovely thing *Strobilanthes dyeranus*. It is a member of the same family as *Acanthus mollis*, commonly known as Bear's Breech, a plant that's much more widely grown in the United States. I once had a Bear's Breech, only because it was left in one of my gardens by a previous owner. In that setting, it served primarily as slug food—they thrived on it, too—and was not particularly attractive. It was too big and thuggy to uproot, though; and so we coexisted, it and I, without paying much attention to one another.

I'll pay attention to *S. dyeranus*, although it's destined to be a short-term relationship. It won't tolerate winter temperatures below 55 degrees and so even though in its native habitat it is a perennial, here it must be treated as an annual or coddled as a houseplant; and with its need for consistently high humidity, its reaction to winter here, even indoors, would be, I suspect, to drop all of its leaves immediately. And that would be a shame, because *S. dyeranus* has the prettiest leaves imaginable. They're crinkly like those of the heliotrope, and they have the same deep purplish green along their edges. But the centers! They're an indescribable mixture of dark pinkish purple with deeply colored veins and silvery overtones. They're arranged in whorls along the soft stems, which may be—although I can't confirm this—the origin of the genus' name. *Strobila* is derived from the Greek and means "whirling around." As a descriptor of a reproductive system, the word is associated with pinecones and hop blossoms.

This plant will keep me whirling around all summer. The well-drained, rich soil and the location in full sun to partial shade I can easily provide, although I'll avoid placing it the full, unremitting glare of the afternoon sun, lest its colors fade and its edges brown. But its need for consistent moisture will mean I'll be doing regular and frequent duty with the hose. And I'll have to be alert for spider mites. They'll move right indoors with my *Strobilanthes dyeranus* if I do decide to let it winter over inside. Taking softwood cuttings will probably be more successful. Thank goodness it's a fast grower.

I will tuck my *S. dyeranus* in among plants with silvery foliage that complement its scale as it progresses toward its full height of four feet, although in the captivity of my garden it will probably only reach three feet. I will give it ample water and might even mist it from time to time, but never during the hottest part of the afternoon. I will feed it my plant on a half-strength, double-frequent regimen and it will reward me, I'm told, with deep purple blossoms that will be one inch across. These will appear in the fall, when every garden can use a little color and, let's face it, a little *oomph* from interesting foliage.

Whatever this plant needs, I will try to provide. As I watch it and fret over it, I will contemplate how its common name—Persian Shield—came into being, and wonder whether it misses its native land. But mostly I will delight in its beauty and work hard to make sure it is as happy and comfortable as possible.

Garden Friends and Foes By Todd Murray

Ashy Gray Ladybugs

Order: Coleoptera
 Family: Coccinellidae
 Species: *Psyllobora viginti-maculata taedata*

This month's bug is not a pest but can commonly be mistaken for one. The small, ashy gray ladybird beetle is very closely related to our common ladybug. Adult beetles are circular and very small, about 3/32 of an inch long. The coloration is a mottled cream and black, much like a Holstein cow. The newly hatched larvae appear as little, smoky black alligators that lighten in color as they develop.

Yellow stripes can be found on larger larvae.

Not much is known about the biology of this critter and the following is based on personal observation. Ashy gray ladybugs overwinter in the adult stage and are active very early in the spring. I usually find the first adults just when apple leaves begin to pop. They are also found on blackberry and rhododendron leaves at this time. By June adults mate and begin to lay very small clusters of eggs on or near apple leaves (I've found eggs on the stem, also). Larvae hatch and begin to feed. In July and August you can find pupae stuck to the undersides of the leaves. So what are they doing there?

For some varieties of apples, each spring's growth can bring gnarled, twisted, burnt looking foliage. Gardeners, who take the time to look, can find these beetles running around on the damaged leaves. Many may curse these beetles for causing such damage to their apple trees. However, these curses (and sometimes retaliation with insecticides) are only based on circumstantial evidence. Powdery mildew is usually the culprit of gnarled leaves and the ashy gray ladybug is actually eating the

mildew! Unlike most ladybugs, the ashy gray ladybug is a fungus feeder and prefers to feed on powdery mildew.

As summer continues and weather dries, powdery mildew may continue to thrive. If this is the case, management may be necessary. The key here is to use a management strategy that will cause least impact on your beneficial ladybugs. Although we don't know the specifics for this species, fungicides can impact many beneficial insects. Using a beating stick, knock the beetles out of the canopy before applying fungicides; these beetles are good flyers and will come back to the foliage. Water sprays with your garden hose will also kill back the powdery mildew without causing too much harm to the beetles.

It's always important to know the actual cause of plant damage before you decide on a management practice. Conservation biological control (recruiting and keeping native beneficial organisms) is one of the cheapest and easiest IPM strategies around. Make life easy for your good guys, and avoid friendly fire with pesticides.



Tis the Season

Continued from page 2

elements from water and air. They are Carbon, Hydrogen and Oxygen. The other elements are divided into three classes: Primary are: Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Secondary are: Calcium, Magnesium and Sulfur. Minor are: Boron, Manganese, Copper, Zinc, Iron, Molybdenum and Chlorine. All plants must have these minerals to grow. Fertilizers contain the minerals that plants use to manufacture their own food and fiber

All fertilizers sold in the U.S must have the proportion of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium on the container and always in the order of N-P-K. How much to use in your vegetable or flower garden? A good estimate is anywhere from 3 to 5 lbs. of 5-10-10 per 100 sq. ft. For more information see the EB publications: EB1090, EB1280. (Editor's note: EB1090 is available online at <http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb1090/eb1090Abstract.htm> and EB1280 is available online at <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/homehort/mg/turfgrass.pdf>)

By the way, Dead Heading refers to the removal of the spent blooms from rhododendrons and azaleas, not to the author of his article.

Weed of the Month By Laurel Shiner

Brazilian Elodea

Egeria densa



Threat: Brazilian elodea, native to South America, has been imported to North America, as well as many countries around the world, as an aquarium plant (often sold under the name of Anacharis). It has been intentionally or accidentally introduced to freshwater bodies in many of these areas. Brazilian elodea forms dense stands in both still and flowing waters, which can cover entire lake surfaces. These dense stands affect water movement, water quality, recreational uses and navigation, as well as trapping sediment and impacting native plants and fish. Brazilian elodea grows rapidly in the spring, shading out slower growing native plants. In the United States, this weed apparently spreads solely by plant fragmentation, as no female plants are known to be present in this country. It is illegal to sell this plant in the state of Washington.

Description: Brazilian elodea is a submersed, freshwater perennial. It roots in water up to 20 feet deep, with the stems growing up to the surface of the water, where they form dense mats. Adventitious roots grow from the stem nodes. The leaves and stem are generally bright green. The leaves are minutely serrated, 1-3 centimeters long and up to 5 millimeters wide. Brazilian elodea produces small white flowers, with three petals, in late spring and again in the fall. The flowers float on the water or rise above the surface on threadlike stems. In this country, only male flowers have been found so seed production is not known to occur here. This plant is often confused with other aquatic plants, both native and introduced. Brazilian elodea has four (sometimes eight) leaves per whorl (hydrilla, another introduced weed has five leaves per whorl, while the native American elodea, or waterweed, has three).

Control: Like all aquatic weeds, control is difficult and eradication may be unrealistic. To prevent the spread of any of these plants, trailers, boats and fishing gear should be carefully inspected to avoid transporting plant materials between water bodies. Aquarium plants should never be discarded in sewer systems or water bodies. Accurate identification of Brazilian elodea is essential before control work can begin, as it resembles other aquatic plants, including some native species. Control efforts can include chemical and mechanical measures, although success is usually limited. Cutting the plants will open up the water body, but does not kill the plant. All plant pieces must be removed from the water as escaped plant fragments will spread the infestation. Bottom barriers can be used in small areas, such as docks or swimming areas, to prevent the growth of bottom-rooting plants. Where possible, water drawdowns may be used to control Brazilian elodea, although success is dependent on many variables (degree of desiccation, substrate, air temperature and presence of snow. Grass carp will eat Brazilian elodea readily and may be effective in appropriate sites. Contact the weed board for site-specific chemical recommendations.

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board, 901 W. Smith Rd., Bellingham, WA 98226, (360) 354-3990

July Bus Trip

The Whidbey Island bus trip is July 26, on a Friday. We will leave the R.E.I. parking lot at 8:00 am sharp and return about 5:00. You need to bring your lunch and plenty to drink. The cost for master gardeners is \$12.00. Guests pay \$17.00. The trip will include two private gardens - Crescent Moon and Frogg Well. We will also visit two nurseries, both with great demonstration gardens - Rose Hip Nursery and Hummingbird Farm. There are still many seats available on the bus. Please call me at 360/366-5501 or come to the July foundation meeting to make your reservation.

Whatcom County Master Gardener Website

The URL for the Whatcom County Master Gardeners is <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/homehort/mg/mgarden.htm> This website contains the monthly newsletter as well as other internet information for Master Gardeners, including Hortsense.

Book Review

Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest by Arthur R- Kruckeberg

This excellent book will be of great value to anyone interested in using native plants in their city or suburban gardens. It is divided into sections covering trees, shrubs and perennials, plus information on ferns and grasses. The plant descriptions give plenty of information on habitat, desired growing conditions, companion plants and methods of propagation. Many photographs and line drawings illustrate the wealth of native plants in our area. How fortunate we are!

The Master Gardener Library contains three copies of this book. Two of them are in the circulating library, so you can take them home and browse. It's soft cover with 250 pages.

Jane Beer,
Library Committee

Walk About Tour

A "Perennial Walk-About" will be hosted by Karen Gilliam at her home at 1155 Clarkson Lane on July 30 from 9 am -noon. It will include shrubs, ground covers, and perennials. A plant list will be provided so bring a clipboard and pen to take notes. There is no fee, but please call Karen at 360/384-4562 to register.

Hovander Happenings

Fava bean day is on the way!

Once again this year, we are having a very successful season at the Hovander MG demonstration garden. I haven't counted, but I believe we have at least 50 veggies!

Volunteers from the class of 2002 have been good workers so we sometimes can hardly find a weed to pull! We are doing vegetable tasted-testing almost every week and we are trying to introduce people to a wider array of vegetables. For those who remember—it will soon be fava bean day! All the other Hovander projects are doing nicely. We surely miss Dick Steele's expertise on the weed garden.

Our work days are Wednesday and Saturday from 9 till noon.

David Simonson

Insect Collectors!

If you signed up for the insect collection to fulfill your volunteer hours, I will have a long over-due training session on July 10th at 6:30pm to 8pm (at the latest) at the 1000 N. Forest Street office. Pending on how many people sign up, we will meet in the large teaching room on the first floor. Please RSVP if you plan to attend.

Contact Todd at 360/676-6736 or tmurray@coopext.cahe.wsu.edu

Bellingham Botanical Garden -Dream or Reality?

Do you dream about your ideal garden and wish you had somewhere to make the dream come true? Join a group who is dedicated to making the dream a reality. The City of Bellingham purchased the Pacific Concrete site on Squalicum Parkway and, is in the planning stages for a new park. Some of the land is dedicated for baseball fields but the city has not yet decided how to develop the remaining acreage. A small group of garden enthusiasts has formed to pursue the idea of creating a botanical garden in the new park. We are in the preliminary stages of organization and looking for others to join us. Once we have developed a plan we will present it to the city for their consideration. This is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity to craft a beautiful garden that will enrich and enlighten the entire community. For more information, please contact Jane Vawter at 360/676-2732 or atjane@vawter.biz.



MASTER
GARDENER

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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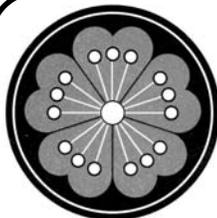
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**MASTER
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Dates to Remember:

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|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| July 11 | 7 to 9:30 p.m. | Monthly Foundation Meeting
See President's Message for location |
| July 26 | 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Whidbey Island Bus Trip
Meet at REI parking lot |
| Wednesdays | 8 to 9 a.m. | Master Gardener breakfasts
Babe's in Ferndale |
| Wed. & Sat. | 9 a.m. to noon | Hovander Work Parties |
| Wednesdays | 1 to 4 p.m. | Bellingham Public Library |
| August 12 - 17 | All Day | Northwest Washington Fair |