

Weeder's Digest

All the dirt that's fit to print



Newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners

September 2002

The Northwest Washington Fair is over, and was a big success for our Master Gardener Program. Having the computer at the fair worked well again, and we made a log of the amount of time it was used so a determination can be made for next year. We want to thank Craig MacConnell for holding the computer classes for our fair volunteers – they were great! We also participated in the scavenger hunt again this year, however there was not as many hunters as last year.



Thanks to all of you who dedicated your efforts to staffing the fair, working at Hovander, and coming to the office during this busy time.

September is the month to vote on next years' foundation officers. If you are willing to serve as an officer and have not been contacted, please get on the ballot by getting in touch with our president or the nominating committee. We will send out the ballots by mail, so please participate by selecting your favorite candidates and mailing the ballot back to the office.

We hope that all new Master Gardeners will have completed their required payback hours by Graduation day. If you have problems completing the time by that date – No Problem! Just come by the office (or call) and we will work out a schedule to complete your time later. Come to the graduation in any case and you will be welcome. The next newsletter will give details on what to bring, etc. to the potluck

All new and veteran Gardeners please submit your time slips to the office. If you do not have the forms – we will take any paper or E-Mail.

Al McHenry

September Foundation Meeting

The September meeting will be our last fall garden tour meeting. The first garden is located at 7183 Dahlberg Road, Ferndale. The second one is located at 7353 Meadowmist Lane, Ferndale. Matt and Terri Treat, on Dahlberg Road, have graciously offered to let us tour their rather new and uniquely done garden in a rural setting. It sits several yards off the road, but the house can be seen from the road. Mary Etta Foster's garden is larger and always has some new feature to catch the eye of the visitor. There is often a surprise around every corner.

We need to start early, so you should arrive at the Treat's garden at 6:00 pm. Then, go on to Mary Etta's for refreshments and a short meeting and tour. Bring a favorite treat to share.

Directions: Go north on I-5 past Ferndale.

Find the Grandview exit #266, and exit the freeway here. Turn right onto Grandview and continue to a stop sign at the corner of Grandview and Enterprise. Continue straight ahead on Grandview which will eventually become Dahlberg Road. Follow it around several turns and corners. Eventually, look for a large mail box on your left "Treat # 7183". Turn left into their drive way.

To arrive at Mary's from the Treat's, turn left onto Dahlberg, and drive to a stop sign at Harksell Road. Turn right onto Harksell, and drive a short distance to Meadowmist Lane and turn left. Mary's house is a couple houses in on your left across from open fields.

See you there!

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Newsletter Deadline:

Third Wednesday of every month.

Tis the Season



By Faye Agner

September gives the first hint of change to the glow of autumn. It is also the month when spring-flowering bulb catalogs appear on your doorstep. Daffodils, tulips, crocus, hyacinth, lilies and what have you. Order early and get a discount or free bulbs. The selection is great and tempting.

There are many reasons for planting bulbs, among which is they seem to foil deer to some degree, and moles and voles avoid them as they are poisonous. I hope you took stock this spring or summer to note where you need color and also need to replace bulbs. Nothing brings spring on like the appearance of crocus poking up their cheerful, colorful heads. Selecting healthy, good bulbs is very important. Larger bulb size usually results in larger flowers, too. Planting beds should have good draining soil, best in full sunlight. Work the soil to a depth of 12 inches, and add organic fertilizer, such as bone meal. Other fertilizers, with a ratio of 5-10-5 can also be used. Use about a cup of fertilizer for 6 bulbs. Planting depth for the bulbs are: tulips 6"; crocuses 2"; daffodils 7"; irises 3"; hyacinths 4". After planting, the soil should be soaked down to dissolve the fertilizer, settle the soil around the bulbs, and remove air pockets.

September is the time when you are enjoying the fruits of your garden. Tomatoes, peppers, some green beans, corn, carrots, cabbage, kohlrabi and even potatoes are ready to take to the table. Nothing tastes quite as good as something fresh from your own garden.

Continue to deadhead your flowering annuals and perennials. If they are allowed to seed, they will stop flowering.

Planting fall vegetables in late summer/fall is not a bad idea. There are a fair number of vegetables which can be planted as the usual gardening season draws to a close. Let's start with a vegetable or salad herb that is called corn salad, or lamb's lettuce. It is quite easily grown, can be planted right now and harvested during late fall up to next spring. Garlic can be planted now for harvesting in July or August. Mustard greens germinate and grow very fast. You can plant this crop right through the end of September for harvest into fall and winter. Kyona and Mike Giat are good ones. This is also the time to plant onion sets, or you can actually plant them anytime right through the winter, just as long as your soil is well drained and workable. You've still plenty of time to plant radishes. Many varieties mature in less than thirty days. If you like turnip greens, plant them now also; they can be quite productive in fall. Shallots and chives can be planted or divided during the fall and can be harvested the year around. Spinach is often planted in fall. During most winters, spinach gets along fine. Cabbage and other cold weather loving plants can still successfully be planted for winter harvesting.

September is a good time for lawn renovation. This is usually done in the spring, but recovery is almost as good this month, because fall rains and moderate temperatures hasten the establishment of new roots. Plant only recommended species and cultivars for Western Washington, which will go a long way toward preventing problems. Perennial turf type Rye grass and fine Fescue will perform satisfactorily in our climate.

An annual lime application may help turf grass performance by reducing soil acidity and encouraging the activity of microorganisms. Apply 25 to 30 pounds per 1000 square feet in the fall. Maintain the proper level of fertility and avoid over-fertilizing. Use always a 3-1-2-ratio fertilizer. Apply annually 1 to 4 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn in several applications. One application should be in late fall or early winter. And, if you fertilize your lawns only once a year, November is the month to do it.

It is not too late to take summer cuttings of your favorite shrubs. You should use partially ripened wood, although only a smaller percentage may strike, and the ones which do will probably have to be left in a protected location during the late fall and winter. Roots may not develop before next spring. Cuttings may be classified according to the plant parts- as roots, tubers, rhizomes, stems or leaves- or according to the stage of development of the parts- as dormant, ripe or hardwood cuttings or active, that is green, immature or softwood cuttings.



President's Message



Pat Nelson,
MGF President

September—a month of so many changes! The garden isn't taking the same kind of care. It's mostly deadheading and cutting back—everything seems so messy! Brown lawns need much less mowing and, finally, what really scares me, is that I find myself thinking of fall colors!

But, let me go back for a moment to July 26—our trip to Whidbey Island—it was awesome! Good work, Chris! A big plus was that Connie Morrissey took some great pictures of the gardens that we visited and, as a result, she has agreed to be our official photographer. Thanks Connie!

Now, on to August—a very hot, dry month! The evening of our potluck was perfect—about 75 degrees. As usual, the food was awesome—we have some great cooks in this group! But, we always must get down to business. Vic Gould and Dianne Rapoza told us some great things that are going on at the Whatcom Residential Treatment Center—but, as all important projects—they need more

volunteers. Call Vic or Dianne for information.

We talked about our upcoming Graduation in November. It sounds like a great program. Interesting awards will be given, Rod Tinnemore, our state MG coordinator, will be here to talk to us, and Cheryl Kinsley [author of *Weeder's Digest* 'Plant of the Month'], will talk to us about trends in gardening—plants, techniques, new ideas to consider—as we put our gardens to bed for this season and prepare them for the next. She will talk about what's new, reminding us that the next 'new' thing is often a return to a tried-and-true 'old' thing! Cheryl will focus on possibilities for stewardship of our environment, our community's resources, and our own time and energy, while creating and maintaining a garden of one's own that reflects the gardener's interests and personal style. There will be plenty of time for questions. A big plus is that John Van Miert will be there to help Cheryl if she gets stumped during the Q&A! You won't want to miss this! More info next month!

The nomination committee for next year's officers are Jean Powell, Elizabeth Bays, Dick McClure and Bill Jennings. Hopefully, they will have something to report by September.

Karen Gilliam will be offering a hyper-tufa class on September 26 at 1 p.m. Cost is \$5.00 for materials.

Sharon Lindsey has bought her containers and plants for her up-and-coming Bonsai workshop. Watch for details.

Our September Board Meeting will be Friday, September 6, at 10 a.m.—remember these meetings are open, and all are welcome. Check with the Extension Office for location. As of October, our board meetings will be on Thursdays, thus freeing people to take 3-day holidays.

Our September tour/meeting will start with a tour of Teri and Matt Treat's garden. It is a small, but very well designed garden with some wonderful garden art. They have a new piece that they want to ask us about for plant suggestions. I told her that if she asks 15 of us—she would get 15 different suggestions...She said, "Great!" Then we go to Mary Etta Foster's. If you haven't seen her garden before, be ready to smile—It is just as delightful as Mary Etta!! We will have our meeting and refreshments there. See Chris's message for directions.

Thanks—Pat

Winter Wreath Workshop

In mid-October we will use freshly cut plant material that will look and smell good as it dries in a wreath on your wall or table. Do not dry them ahead of time. They must be fresh to be workable in order to make your wreath. You will need to cut plant material, and keep it fresh the day of the class. So, keep it in water or a moistened baggy, keeping each type of plant separate. Other items to bring are old newspapers to work on, scissors and pruners, \$3.00 material fee. A wreath base and wire will be provided.

Here is a suggested list of plants from which to get cuttings. You may think of others. It is important to choose plants with fragrant stems and leaves so they will continue to be fragrant as they dry. So, look around your garden, or your friends' gardens, for things that look great in October. Rosemary, thyme, santalina, curry, honeysuckle, sage, Japanese quince, astilbe, eucalyptus, heavenly bamboo, lavender, oregano, basil, viburnum, peoris, dianthus, smoke bush, mini-rose, clematis flower heads, various berries. Some are added because they keep their color well when dried.

For more info contact Chris at 360/366-5501 or cchurst@gte.net

Plant of the Month By Cheryll Greenwood Kinsley

Maiden Grasses-and their friends

Family: Gramineae (Grass family)

Genus: *Miscanthus*

Species: *sinensis*

Featured cultivar: 'Morning Light'



The harvest is happening, the weather is warm, and the gardener has a brief window between the glorious profusion of late-summer color and the full-up, flat-out, rake-'til-you're-ragged clean-up that happens every fall. Take a break from cooking and pickling the seemingly endless stream of little zucchinis that appear as if by magic every morning (or take a rest after leaving them on strangers' doorsteps in the dead of night), and enjoy this warm beginning of fall in the Pacific Northwest. It's time to give our backs a break, put our feet up on the porch rail, and sip lemonade during what is usually one of the warmest months of the year. We can bask in the sunshine and pay tribute to our own hard work-and give thanks for the many good-looking plants that consistently perform well without asking much from us. There are many ornamental grasses that fall into this category.

Grasses, and the unrelated but similar-looking sedges, play an important role in our gardens. Many of them are easy to grow and even easier to maintain. They're very attractive and remarkably resilient. They require no deadheading of blossoms, no tricky pruning-and there are no worries about aphids or thrips or powdery mildew. They demand little water, and they're not fussy about soil. Their overall shape; the variety of looks they offer in size, form, and color; and their slender, graceful leaves provide interesting focal points in nearly every garden, whether it's a single container, a standard plot in town, or several acres in the county. Their disadvantages are few. Some can spread invasively by rhizomes or reseed themselves a little too enthusiastically, and others can be frustratingly messy as they continually shed their leaves. I was given a nasty shock by a grass a few years ago, when I reached into the center of one of my blue oat grasses (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*). I was confronted by a mass of what looked to be a gathering of other-worldly aliens dropped off by their Mother Ship the night before (dodging the zucchini deliverers, no doubt). They were most unpleasant to behold. It turned out that an earthly fungus-*Fusarium*-had moved in and made itself comfortable. Happily, that was the only sighting I have to report. A rare occurrence, indeed.

I don't think I could reach into the center of any of the *Miscanthus* in my yard, even if I wanted to. The leaf blades are tightly packed and have very sharp edges. All of the six or so that flourish in my beds are divisions taken from one parent plant purchased nearly ten years ago: *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light'. It is a delightful grass, my very favorite, sized just right for a city yard. Some members of the *Miscanthus* genus can top ten feet, and caring for them requires a ladder and a strong sense of adventure. Trimming them is out of the question; the same sort of exercise in futility as, say, giving an elephant a pedicure. They are very useful in other settings-*Miscanthus x giganteus* is now being examined and cultivated commercially in Europe as a potential bioenergy source.

Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light' is nearly four feet tall, and narrowly upright, so it's excellent for those places that need a strong vertical presence without much horizontal spread. Its very narrow leaves are pale green with white margins and just the faintest tinge of pink. It is a beautiful specimen plant, and it blends nicely with a range of companions. Right now it's enhancing *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Siskiyou Pink' and a tumble of *Sedum* 'Vera Jamieson' at its feet. I'll enjoy the spectacle now; and in the winter, I'll appreciate the movement and rustling sound that *M. sinensis* 'Morning Light' brings to my garden. In February, I'll lop the whole thing straight off at ground level, and before I can say, "the tulips are finished," it will be growing vigorously up-but not out-to take its place once again.

The *Miscanthus* genus has fifteen species, none of them native to this hemisphere. But they seem to enjoy their adopted home in the Pacific Northwest, although not excessively so. I can find no evidence that they are a threat to native vegetation as is, for example, *Cortaderia*, the Pampas grass that settles in all too easily and way too vigorously. That particular grass genus is best avoided. While many *Miscanthus* are large, many others are right-sized for our smaller gardens. These include *M. sinensis*

Continued on page 7

Garden Friends and Foes By Todd Murray

Whiteflies on Tomatoes

Order: Homoptera
Family: Aleyrodidae
Species: Greenhouse Whitefly (*Trialeurodes vaporariorum*) and other species

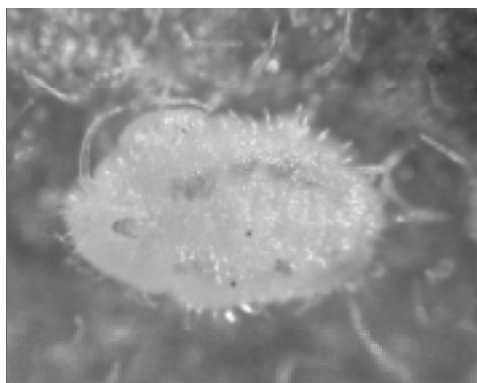
Description and Life History: Well, I originally planned on writing about the birch leaf miner and I was so organized that I already wrote my Pest of the Month for September. I planned ahead before I went on a wonderful camping trip in NE Oregon. When I returned the other night and started to check out the garden, I found swarms of whiteflies on my neglected tomatoes. Ugh, everything was looking great when I left and now you can barely see the tomatoes through the white cloud of flies. Now my girlfriend is wondering how I can be a pest management specialist if I can't even keep up on my own pests. I'm thinking the same too; so to make up for this, whiteflies are the pest of the month!



Whitefly adult.

Whiteflies are very interesting critters. They behave much like aphids in the sense that they can reproduce very quickly and abundantly; a female whitefly will lay 80-100 eggs in her short lifetime. Eggs are laid on the underside of leaves. The "crawler stage," that hatches after a few days of development, is called so because this is the only mobile stage of the whitefly's immature life. After the crawler molts into the next immature stage, it loses its legs and antennae, becomes flattened and glues itself to the leaf surface. The immature stages look like a light green flattened blob with waxy hairs. For the next few molts, until the whitefly emerges from the pupa (not a true pupa but a last resting stage before the adult stage) to become an adult, the immature whitefly is sessile (stationary). The development of whiteflies can take anywhere from 18-38 days depending on the weather and temperature. Whiteflies have multiple generations per year and become most populous during mid to late summer.

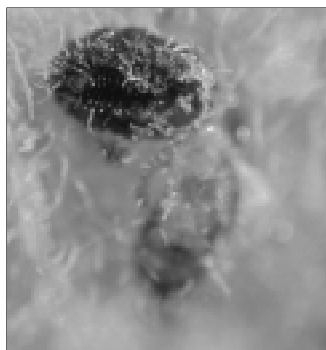
Damage: Like aphids, whiteflies have piercing-sucking mouthparts so the damage caused is very similar to that of aphids. Direct damage to tomato plants causes deformed new growth and wilting, chlorotic leaves. Whiteflies can also transmit some plant viruses. If your plant gets infected with a virus, do your neighbor a favor and pull it out. Whiteflies, like aphids, secrete honeydew, causing the opportunity for sooty mold to grow. Feeding by whiteflies can also cause deformed fruit and discoloration of your tomatoes.



Whitefly immature feeding on tomato leaves. This is about 1-2mm in length.

Monitoring: Check the undersides of leaves regularly with a hand lens to monitor for both adults and nymphs. Look for flying whiteflies regularly by knocking tomato leaves. This is an easy way to monitor adult activity and abundance because they are easily disturbed and will flutter away. Your local garden shop will also sell yellow sticky cards for measuring the number of adult whiteflies that are flying (this is what most commercial growers do). In a small garden setting, sticky cards may also manage your whitefly populations by killing the adults. Monitoring your populations, especially during hot dry weather will help you decide if or how to manage whitefly problems. Generally, tomatoes (and other plants) can tolerate some whiteflies (up to 10-25 nymphs per leaf) but population explosions (50 and up nymphs per leaf) like the one I'm experiencing can quickly rob you of your tomatoes.

Management: An important tactic for avoiding whitefly problems is to buy clean plants. Inspect your tomato starters before you purchase them. Look for the small sessile immatures on the undersides of the leaves. I believe this is where I really screwed up. My plants that I bought probably had whiteflies on them already.



Mummified whitefly immature. Evidence that it has been parasitized.

Gardeners in western Washington generally do not need to apply insecticides for whitefly control and should not use insecticides without other control tactics. With regular monitoring at this time of year (I know that was my fault for not looking before we left for vacation), you can keep them down by the most reliable insect control method: squishing them. Insecticidal soaps and oils are effective for killing whiteflies but be sure to read the label first. Also, test the product on a leaf first before applying to the entire plant; these products can burn foliage. Spraying water from the gardening hose underneath the leaf will also cause adult mortality and reduce the number of eggs laid. I am using the water hose method, hoping to avoid another large egg-laying session by drowning the adults.

Weed of the Month By Laurel Shiner

Purple Loosestrife

Lythrum salicaria

THREAT: Purple loosestrife is a wetland plant that is gaining a foothold in Washington State. Purple loosestrife poses a serious threat to wetland ecosystems, displacing sensitive plant species vital to sustaining waterfowl and wildlife populations. The plant offers no food value to wildlife and its growth is generally too compact to offer cover, which may be just as crucial. It spreads rapidly with a dense, intertwining root system and it produces prolific amounts of tiny, wind-blown seed.



DESCRIPTION: Purple loosestrife is a perennial plant. Its purple-magenta colored flowers grow on long spikes. A well-established plant can grow up to 10 feet tall and 5 feet wide. Thirty to fifty stems arise from a common rootstock. One purple loosestrife plant can produce up to 2 1/2 million seeds which spread easily by wind, water or other means. Purple loosestrife is a favored perennial plant among many gardeners. However, even so-called sterile cultivars can produce viable seed. In 1990, a quarantine was established which prohibits the buying, selling, and transport of purple loosestrife within Washington State.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: The intertwined woody root system of purple loosestrife makes it difficult to pull established plants. Plants under a year old are easier to remove by hand. Root sections will resprout if the entire root is not removed. Cut stem pieces from mowed plants will also send out roots unless the stems are allowed to dry out rapidly. Biological control (insects) was released in purple loosestrife infestations in Washington State in 1992. Some chemical controls are effective. Contact the Weed Control Board for site-specific control recommendations.

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

Garden Friends & Foes

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Whitefly parasitic wasp. Approx 0.6mm in length.

Most exciting about this whitefly problem, and my real reason for sharing this experience with you, is that the majority of the whitefly immatures on my tomato plant are parasitized! Some leaves approach 90-95% parasitization. The parasitoids that are attacking the whiteflies with such voraciousness are wasps (Hymenoptera) in the family Aphelinidae. The two types that attack whiteflies in our area are from the genera *Ecarsia* and *Eretmocerus* spp. Both tiny wasps, less than one millimeter in length, are prolific and effective. You can monitor your whiteflies for parasitoids by looking for mummified whiteflies. These mummies will appear dark blue or black. Mummies are formed when the parasitoid pupates inside the whitefly.

To review, a parasitoid is an insect that uses another insect to feed their babies. They develop much like a parasite, but they kill the host (unlike a parasite that keeps its host alive). The adult wasp lays an egg inside the whitefly nymph host. The wasp larva hatches and feeds on the whitefly internal organs and tissue, eventually killing it. The larva develops, pupates and emerges as an adult to do the whole thing over again. Another added benefit of these particular whitefly parasitoids is that they host feed. This means, if they size up a whitefly that isn't suitable for developing their babies, they stab it with their stinger and drink the whitefly's guts. These wasps act as predators and parasitoids, killing many whiteflies for each wasp that develops.

For my specific problem, since I missed the problem to begin with, I have the unique opportunity to see the results of my favorite IPM strategy: the Do Nothing strategy. So now implementing a good, diligent adult whitefly management program and many hungry parasitoids working for me, I'm not too worried about the tomato plant. I'm reducing the potential of more whiteflies by killing the adults while relying on the parasitoids to balance the remaining whiteflies and ultimately impressing my girlfriend with my savvy pest management skills. All I had to do is *nothing!*

Hovander Happenings

We have been quite proud of our demonstration garden projects this year. Hopefully, many of you had a chance to see our garden at the MG picnic.

Weekly harvests continue, with the produce going to the Ferndale food bank, Project Concern. We continue taste-testing some of our produce each Wednesday. One of our new corn trials, Yukon Chief, was determined to be unsatisfactory!

Mystery sometimes strikes our gardens. For several years it was the artichoke thief—this year it is who dug up one of the weeds from the Weed ID Garden!

Keep “Pumpkin Day” in mind for the third Saturday in October. Who wants to organize a pumpkin pie bake-off like we had last year?

**By David
Simonson**

A big “thank you” to all who planned and attended the surprise housewarming at my new Smith Road abode! I’m amazed I got sucked into this event without a clue! And the gift of the beautiful metal arbor and hanging fuchsia basket was “over the top.” Thank you, good friends, for your caring!

Plant of the Month

Continued from page 4

‘Adagio’, which reaches only two feet and turns bronzy red in the fall; ‘Arabesque’, high achieving at five feet; ‘Purpurescens’, with the coloring its name implies; and ‘Zebrinus’, for those who appreciate the truly exotic. The matriarch of the clan, *M. sinensis* ‘Gracillimus’, is the well-known Maiden Grass. In my opinion, its tendency to shed its rigid leaves that are completely compost-resistant is a reason to keep it out of my garden; but if you like its looks, you may want to consider *M. sinensis* ‘Yaku Jima’, the dwarf form.

If you do choose a *Miscanthus*, be prepared to enjoy it year-round, except for the very early spring when it is but a low-lying clump after its annual shearing. Even then, it looks tidy; and the plethora of spring bulbs and flowers will easily distract the eye. By the time summer arrives, your *Miscanthus* will again stand proud as an example of good looks and easy maintenance.

Tis the Season

Continued from page 2

The vegetable harvest continues. Carrots and beets will be ready. Onions may be pulled up for drying and storing. Early cabbage, cauliflower and celery will be ready for harvesting. Dig the main crop of potatoes. Tomatoes do need lots of sun to ripen here in Whatcom County. Vine crops, cucumbers, pumpkin and squash, will mature this month and early October. Sweet corn varieties continue to mature in the warmer section of the Pacific Northwest.

The time is here for the fall webworms. Many ornamental trees and shrubs with soft foliage are preferred by the fall-webworms. Full-grown caterpillars are about an inch long. There are both non-chemical and chemical means of controlling fall webworms. The simplest method is to locate the fall webworm nest in the tree or shrub, cut it out and destroy it.


September is also a good time for planting or transplanting peonies, and rhubarb plants. If you plant rhubarb now, you can usually start enjoying a pie by next spring. High time for dividing the Irises, if you didn’t get to it in July or August.



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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WHATCOM COUNTY

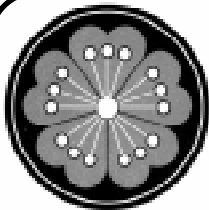
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Craig MacConnell
Horticulture Agent

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**MASTER
GARDENER**

Dates to Remember:

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|--------------------|-----------------------|---|
| September 6 | 11 a.m. to noon | Foundation Board Meeting
Extension Office |
| September 12 | 6 to 9 p.m. | Monthly Foundation Meeting
Garden Tour |
| September 16 | 1 to 2:30 p.m. | Hyper-tufa Class |
| October 19 | 9 a.m. to noon | Pumpkin Day
Hovander Park |
| November 14..... | 7 to 9:30 p.m. | Graduation Potluck/Meeting
Ferndale Senior Center |
| Wednesdays | 8 to 9 a.m. | Master Gardener breakfasts
Babe's in Ferndale |
| Wed. & Sat. | 9 a.m. to noon | Hovander Work Parties |