

# Weeder's Digest

All the dirt that's fit to print



Newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners

September 2004

The Fair is over! And it turned out to be a very busy, successful time for us. We had between 450 – 500 people stop and take our quizzes, and many more asked gardening questions we were able to help with. We need to thank all the Master Gardeners who helped at the fair: Donna, Jill, Jack, Judy, Gretchen, Nicole, all the volunteers, and the office staff.

Our annual Advanced Training is here! The date is September 24<sup>th</sup> and the place is the Bellingham Technical College. The brochure and application will be available soon and will give you all the instructions you will need to come and participate. It will be very instructive and a fun day, so I hope you all can come. See you there.

September is the month to vote on next year's 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 candidate and mailing the ballot back to us.

Please Remember that our annual Potluck/ Graduation will be November 11<sup>th</sup>. So make plans to join us there.

*Al McHenry*

## Hovander Happenings

~David Simonson

The annual Master Gardener Foundation picnic at Hovander Park August 12 was a well attended event. As usual, we were treated to a wonderful "food bag." Master gardeners are really "show-offs" when it comes to potluck cuisine! Besides the wonderful food, we had a beautiful summer evening to enjoy.

Those of us who work hard on the demonstration garden had an opportunity to give a tour of our projects. Many also took the opportunity to maneuver the "maize maze!"

The success of our demonstration garden is due in part to veteran Master Gardeners who volunteer time and expertise in heading up, or working with, the various projects: Dahlias, Dick Porter and Dave Manning; herbs, Elizabeth Bays; native plant garden, Christina Tawes and Kendra Bradford; perennials, Linda Berford and Ria Rekers; vegetables, Ron Cyr; and weed garden, Dick Steele. A big "thank-you" to these folks and our other volunteers who have made our demonstration garden the success it is today.

Workdays will continue Wednesdays and Saturdays 'til the end of October—so there is still plenty of time to put in hours. Wednesday's harvest have resulted in hundreds of pounds of produce going to Ferndale's food bank. We will have a major corn crop when we harvest all the corn we planted for the corn maze. The pumpkin patch is looking good, and we hope to have lots of pumpkins to give away on "Pumpkin Day" in October.

We've managed to keep our projects looking good even though we had such a dry summer. If you haven't seen our demonstration garden this year—please come out and take a look!

### **WSU Master Gardener Program Purpose Statement:**

To provide public education in gardening and home horticulture based on research-based information from WSU Extension.

### **WSU Master Gardener Program Slogan:**

"Cultivating Plants, People and Communities since 1973"

### **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 bulbs 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.

The key to success with bulbs is planting at the proper time. As a general rule, aim to plant about six weeks before the first ground-freezing frost in your area. The "sweet spot" is when nighttime temperature is in the 40 to 50 degree Fahrenheit range. Planting then will allow your bulbs enough time to put down roots and establish themselves. However, bear in mind that planting too early may encourage rot, fungus or disease. The first bulbs to plant, regardless of your zone, are daffodils, hyacinths, and camassia. Next come tulips, crocus, snowdrops, and iris. Last are paper white, narcissus and amaryllis. If you miss the optimal planting time, don't wait until next spring. Plant them anyway, even if it is January, or force them indoors. Or try planting them in pots and refrigerate them until spring.

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 poisons. 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 results usually 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, and to settle the soil around the bulbs, and to remove air pockets.

If you want to plant your daffodils once and then forget about them for a few years, opt for naturalizing bulbs. Specialists call daffodils that come back every year, especially ones in natural settings, "perennialized." They can live to incredible ages. They're the ones you want for rivers of blooms or meadows full of daffodils.

If you plan to create a naturalized area in your lawn, make sure it's a site you can leave unmowed for at least six weeks in the spring. The bulbs need to store up as much food as they can to make it to the next year.

Some favorites for perennial plantings are Birma, February Gold, Foresight, Ice Follies, Ceylon, Accent, Jetfire, and Actaea. A mixture of these bulbs will give you a range of color and blooming times.

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.

If you went to the trouble to keep your poinsettias alive all summer, now is the time to give it the dark treatment to encourage it to flower again. Keep your poinsettia in total darkness for fourteen (14) hours every night from now until buds set, usually within ten (10) weeks. Don't forget to bring it back out into a brightly lighted spot every morning to keep it growing and healthy. Remember that if your poinsettia is exposed to any light during the darkness period, flowering will be delayed for as long as a year. You may well be advised to put a big sign on the closet door that reads, "Don't you DARE open this door!!!"

Caffeine is good for your garden. Some of the coffee houses give away their spent coffee grounds on a first-come first-served basis for use in gardens and composting bins. One of the best uses for said grounds is in your compost bin. They are a good source of nitrogen, and combined with leaves and straw, they will get your compost pile cooking. The grounds can also be applied as a light top-dressing to acid-loving plants such as rhododendrons, azaleas, blueberries and hydrangeas. Do not exceed once per month applications. Caffeine is harmful to dogs, so forgo using the grounds in the garden if you have a puppy that might like to get a little buzz.

Early in the month, set out seedlings of arugula, kale, cabbage, purple-sprouting broccoli, kohlrabi and cauliflower. You can direct sow seed lettuce, radishes, spinach, and mustard greens for fall and winter harvest by using a row cover of some kind. Garlic, shallots, and some onions and potatoes for spring and summer harvest can also be planted.

September is also the time to dig and divide perennials such as cornflowers, garden phlox and foxgloves. Transplant them now so their roots will become established before winter. Label plants so you'll know what you're growing

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.

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 take, 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



## President's Message

**Linda Bergquist,** **What's Happening**  
*MGF President*

Whatcom County Master Gardeners are in the news thanks to Diane Rapoza and her work at Big Rock Garden Park. The Bellingham Herald (August 7) had a HUGE picture of Diane and a wonderful article about her docent program at the park. Diane started this project last August, and she does this valuable work in her "free time" between our plant sales! Every Sunday, through September, at 1:00pm, Kendra Bradford, Sydney Kohlmeier, Becky Curtis, Nadine Kaaland and Marilyn Boysen, all MG's but one, give tours through the garden. Big Rock Garden Park truly is a hidden treasure in Bellingham which we all should see, learn from, and enjoy.

Recently, we all received a postcard indicating our volunteer hours year to date, including continuing education hours. *This is important:* to maintain your MG member status as "current" you need to report your hours worked (25 required) and continuing education hours (5 required). Reporting your hours is also *extremely important* in helping us justify our program to County and the State governments for funding. Life Member recognition means you no longer have a minimum requirement, however it helps our program *immensely* if Life Members continue to report all volunteer hours.

The MG State Conference at Evergreen College in Olympia will be from October 14-16. A sixteen-page handout with all the necessary information, including the registration form, is now online at <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu>. This is also available at the Extension office for anyone without internet access. The \$150 conference fee includes five meals. An additional \$15 will be charged if you register after September 15, and the last day to register is October 1. Please let me know if you have any questions. I am maintaining a list of those who will be attending, so please let me know if you register.

The Northwest Washington Fair in Lynden was held last month – our booth was GORGEOUS! We had giant bugs, an antique lawn mower, and interesting old garden tools on the walls. We had great new signage and hand stenciled tablecloths. We certainly were educational with an area where people could try to identify different garden flowers, a great bug box with ten different bugs to identify, and a group of plants with common problems to diagnose. Both kids and adults loved it and there were prizes. Al McHenry was on hand to provide some useful demonstrations. Overall, twenty seven Master Gardeners staffed our booth from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday – Saturday. It was definitely a group effort. Thanks to everyone who helped out and to Gretchen White, Jill Cotton, Jack and Judy Boxx, Donna Berry, Nicole Evans, Linda Marrs, and Karen Gilliam for all their preparation and decorating work. A special thanks to Gretchen White for beautifully coordinating the entire effort. We had fun, too!

### September Garden Tour

Tour of Big Rock Garden with Diane Rapoza & Marilyn Boysen, Thursday, September 9 at 6:00 p.m.

Marilyn Boysen will be speaking on *Art at Big Rock Garden*. Diane Rapoza will be speaking on *Japanese Maples*.

Directions: Travel up Alabama Hill on Alabama to Sylvan (almost to Lake Whatcom) and turn LEFT (north) onto Sylvan. Continue several blocks to Balsam Lane and see the park entrance sign. Turn RIGHT and follow the single lane road to the parking lot at the end.

## Plant of the Month ..... By Cheryll Greenwood Kinsley

### Stonecrop

*Now you sedum, now you don't.*

Family: Crassulaceae  
(Orpine family)  
Genus: *Sedum*



I've been waiting for months to use that line, so I'm taking the liberty of foisting it off on you, my fellow Master Gardeners. It's now definitely a "do" time for sedums, as we all search about for unthirsty plants while many of our traditional Whatcom County favorites suffer in this atypically hot and very dry summer. Most of us are tired of hose duty by mid-August, and all of us are concerned about appropriate use of water in our landscapes. Recommending sedums to inquiring gardeners in our community is practically a public service, given the low maintenance requirements of these nonetheless interesting plants and their ability to survive with little or no supplemental water.

"Drought tolerant" sounds very good right now, and few plants tolerate dry conditions as well as the more than 300 species of the *Sedum* genus native to regions in the northern hemisphere. Most sedums are perennials—there are a few annuals and biennials but they're seldom offered for sale except by collectors—and most of them are fully hardy here. There is a sedum for just about every situation in the garden. They offer foliage from many shades of green to blue to purple, as well as several variegated variations. The foliage of some species and varieties transitions from one color to another over the course of a season. Flowers can be white, pink,

lavender, purple, yellow, red, orange, bronze, or light green and are typically described as "starry." Sedums come in all sizes, from mat-forming ground covers that never grow taller than an inch, to two-foot-tall mounds, to stands of flower clusters that top stems reaching 30 inches. Many of us are familiar with *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy'—but don't forget other varieties of "showy stonecrop," including 'Pink Chablis', 'Carmen', 'Purple Emperor' and 'Brilliant'. There are so many other sizes and colors that you'll often find them in garden centers labeled simply as "assorted sedum." Of the small-leaved types, what you see is true to what you get. The sedum you choose for a ground cover will stay that blue or that green. It will spread out but not up, and it will reward you with flowers during the late summer. Some of the low-growing varieties will bloom earlier, but the foliage remains attractive all season. The clumping sedums—including the purple-leaved 'Vera Jameson'—are best cleaned up in late fall or early winter, but most gardeners choose to leave the flower heads on their showy stonecrop long after the first frost has robbed them of color. The dried blooms add more than a bit of visual interest to the late fall and winter garden.

Sedums are succulents, characterized by fleshy leaves to store the water they need to grow on. They also carry on some of their botanical activities at night. Consequently, they are very well adapted to thrive with almost no additional water, even during summers such as the one we've been gifted with this year. While many of them look incongruously tropical, they are actually very tough plants that accept whatever Mother Nature has to offer in the rainfall department—and they'll make do nicely if she decides to withhold rain entirely. They are not susceptible to diseases and few pests pay any attention to them. I have seen slug damage on some showy stonecrops, although it seems half-hearted compared to what slugs can do to plants with more tender leaves. But what slugs leave alone, the butterflies and bees enjoy.

You can keep them well supplied; sedum is one of the easiest plants to propagate. Just break off a leaf or a bit of stem and poke it in the ground. Water it until it shows signs of new growth. Sedums will thrive so long as drainage is good and the sun is abundant. Deep shade won't do, nor will soggy soil, particularly if it is very heavy. Sedums prefer some grit in their growing medium. They are known for performing well in scree gardens, in which plants are grown in crushed-limestone gravel. These are reputedly so forgiving of neglect that they've been called "one-hour-of-care-each-year" gardens, although whoever came up with that concept didn't take into account the time and knuckle-bruising labor required to pry weeds out of gravel. They *will* appear, and they *are* difficult to remove. If you choose to take another route entirely and forego the gravel, plant your sedum alongside other perennials, feature it in a rock garden, or tuck it into chinks in a rock wall. You can grow it in a dish garden, or learn from Karen Gilliam how to use it to make a beautiful living wreath. According to folk wisdom, you can hang sedum on your wall in midsummer to ward off lightning strikes and use it to foretell the outcomes of affairs of the heart. It also is reputed to have medicinal benefits and to boost energy—although personally, I think I'll stick to growing it as an ornamental rather than an edible. Goodness knows, there's enough zucchini to fill all the plates I have—and I'll happily resist the impulse to wash it down with sedum tea. I'll leave that in the "don't see it" category.

# Garden Friends and Foes ..... By Todd Murray

## Apple Maggot Up-date

**Order:** Diptera

**Family:** Tephritidae

**Species:** *Rhagoletis pomonella*

**Identification:** Apple maggot larvae are relatively nondescript maggots; they are cream-colored maggot-shaped larvae that grow up to ¼” when mature. Other worms inside apples can be confused with apple maggot, however caterpillars like codling moth feed in the apple’s core while apple maggot feeds on the fruit flesh. Copious amounts of frass can be found when apples are infested with caterpillars. Apple maggot adults are about ¼” long and are black-bodied. The pattern on the wing is banded with black markings. Using your imagination, the pattern mimics the silhouette of a pseudoscorpion or crab spider for defense. The head is light brown with reddish eyes. Females have four white bands across the abdomen while the males only have three. It is easy to identify these flies to family but very difficult to identify the species. There are some commonly occurring fruit flies that look similar, if not exactly like, the apple maggot such as the snowberry maggot, walnut husk fly and cherry fruit fly.



Adult apple maggot flies. (UC Statewide IPM Project)



Apple maggot larvae feeding inside apple flesh. (UC Statewide IPM Project)



Codling moth caterpillar feeding inside apple core. (G. Menzies)



Damage evident from apple maggot larvae. (UC Statewide IPM Project)

**Life History:** There is one generation of apple maggot per year in the Northwest. Apple maggots overwinter in the soil in the puparium stage, the transitional stage between larva and adult flies. Adults will emerge from the soil in late June to early July. This emergence will last through September. Peak flight of the adults usually occurs around the end of July or early August. The female inserts an egg underneath the outer skin of the apple. Females can lay, on average, 300 eggs per 30 days of adult life. Apple maggots prefer apples (*Malus*) as hosts but apple maggots have been found on hawthorn (*Crataegus*) and other fruit trees such as plum and cherry (*Prunus*). Pending on temperature, the egg will hatch shortly and the maggot larvae will begin feeding. The larval stage can feed anywhere from two weeks to a month inside the fruit. Rarely will the larvae exit the fruit while it is still on the tree. The fruit undergoes rapid decay from the larval damage and will fall from the tree. After which, larvae exit the fruit and pupate in the soil for the duration of winter and spring. A small proportion of the population will not emerge as adults for an additional year, thus making apple maggot control at least a two year process.

**Damage:** Ovipositional (egg-laying) wounds are seen as small dimples or pin-pricks on the skin of the apple. This can cause deformation of the developing fruit or cause rapid decay of the area on softer varieties. The developing maggots tunnel throughout the fruit feeding on the ripening tissue. As the infestation progresses, brown squiggly lines appear on the fruit as the apple undergoes rapid ripening and decay. Infested fruit is unmarketable and unappetizing for most people. Early maturing and thin-skinned varieties of apples are more susceptible due to their timing and tendency of softer flesh.

**Monitoring & Management:** The Washington State Department of Agriculture monitors apple maggot populations every year. For the past few years, they have detected apple maggot in Whatcom County. Its presence makes it difficult for our local commercial apple growers to export fruit and threatens local orchard livelihoods. Whatcom County has a Horticultural Pest and Disease Board that was developed to protect local agriculture from the introduction and spread of serious pests, such as apple maggot. The pest board has the ability to work with local communities to keep pests at bay from neighboring agriculture. By state law, landowners are expected to manage these pests of concern, or in some way reduce the threat by removing the pests from their property. For landowners with apple maggot, host removal is the preferred method for control.

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## Common Reed

### *Phragmites australis*

**THREAT:** Common reed, or phragmites, is found on every continent except Antarctica. Although common reed is native to North America, a non-native genotype from Europe has been introduced and has become invasive. Common reed grows along the edges of still or slow moving, freshwater, brackish or alkaline water bodies (ponds, sloughs, slow moving streams, roadside ditches). It can form dense stands and continuous fringing belts along the water. The invasive form can outcompete native wetland plants, eliminating wildlife habitat and sometimes physically altering wetlands by trapping sediment. Common reed reproduces both by large quantities of wind and water dispersed seed and by rhizomes. Rhizome fragments can be moved by water or in contaminated soil or equipment. Once a new stand is established, it spreads primarily through vegetative means. In eastern Washington, common reed is taking over areas where purple loosestrife, another invasive wetland plant, has been killed by biological control methods.

**DESCRIPTION:** Common reed is a large perennial grass that grows up to 16 feet tall. It has a rhizomatous root system, allowing it to spread vegetatively. The hollow stems can be up to 1 inch in diameter, and leaves are flat and stiff, growing up to 2 feet long. The thin ligules have a fringe of hair-like structures along the top. Flowers are borne in large (1-2') feathery panicles, which are purplish when in bloom, and changing to grayish or straw-colored as the seeds mature. Common reed flowers between July and September, and seeds are shed from November to January. Young plants in newly colonized sites may remain small for a couple of years before assuming the usual tall growth form. After seed set, the above ground portions of the plant die, and new shots emerge from the root system in the spring.



**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Common reed can be controlled using cultural, mechanical and chemical means. It is critical to monitor any controlled site in subsequent years to prevent reestablishment of the plant. Common reed can be controlled using a carefully timed program of cutting for multiple years. Cutting is most effective when done in the middle of the summer (end of July). Cutting at the wrong time will encourage growth and increase stand density. Cutting can also be used in combination with herbicide application. All cut material must be removed from wetland areas to prevent resprouting. Draining, dredging, flooding, grazing and mowing may be used with some success but need to be carefully timed. A combination of mowing and discing has also been used. Hand pulling of small infestations can be effective in sandy soils. Laying of black or clear plastic has also been used with some success. 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*

### Garden Friends & Foes

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For apple lovers, chemical control is unfortunately a necessity once apple maggot is present in an orchard. Chemical treatments can be timed to target the flying adults. Local garden centers and farm supplies offer apple maggot traps and lures for monitoring adult flies. Insecticide treatments are timed when the first flies are trapped. Visit Hortsense (<http://pep.wsu.edu/hortsense/>) for the latest recommendations to manage apple maggots. Sanitation of orchards can reduce populations and help deter apple maggot. Clean up apples around the base of the tree as they fall. Early varieties should be cleaned up two or three times a week while later varieties should be collected at least once a week. To attempt to break the cycle of infestation by apple maggot, remove all apples from the tree before August for at least two years in a row. Destroy or dispose of apple in a manner to avoid re-infestation. Composting infected apples may not kill all the larvae developing. To insure apple maggot is not a problem for you or neighboring apple enthusiasts, remove any neglected or unwanted trees. With a little effort, we can go on enjoying some of the best tasting apples in the state.

For more information about apple maggot management see: <http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb1928/EB1928.pdf> or <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/homehort/pest/maggot.htm>

For a detailed description about the Whatcom County Pest and Disease Board, visit: <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/boards/horticulture.jsp> or <http://www.mrsc.org/mc/whatcom/whatco02/Whatco0228.html>

**'Tis the Season**

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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.

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 Irisses, if you didn't get to it in July or August.

Remember the plant sale when you are dividing your perennials.

**WHO AM I?**

Hi—I am widely grown for my beautiful flowers and my scent. I have either single or double flowers. My long-stemmed double variety is widely used by florists. I am often referred to as the funeral flower. I have over 300 species and an extremely large number of hybrids, many with a high garden value. Most of my kind form attractive evergreen mats or tufts of glasslike green, gray-green, or blue-gray leaves. I come in shades of pink, rose, red, yellow and orange; many have rich, spicy fragrance. My main bloom period is, for most, spring into early summer; some of my kinds rebloom later in season or keep going into fall if faded flowers are removed.

Last month was Sweet William.

**Britain in the Spring—**

If you have been losing sleep over whether or not to join us on our Spring garden tour, come to a meeting where we will discuss—How long in London, where in Kent, and how much of the Cotswolds will we cover. We will be meeting at my home on Tuesday, September 14 at 7pm.

Call me and let me know! Or let me know at the next foundation meeting.

*Fair Pictures clockwise from top right: Joyce Jimerson & Nancy Bonnickson setting up the Master Composter booth. John VanMiert & Donna Berry discuss the Master Gardener booth. Two pictures of the Master Gardener Booth. John VanMiert and Nicole Loberg in the Master Gardener booth.*



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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## Dates to Remember:

September 2 .....	10 a.m. to noon .....	Monthly Foundation Board Meeting Extension Office
September 9 .....	6:30 to 9:30 p.m. ....	Monthly Foundation Meeting See article for details
September 24 .....	All Day .....	MG Advanced Training Bellingham Technical College
October 14-16 .....	All Day .....	WA State MG Conference Olympia
Wednesdays .....	8 to 9 a.m. ....	Master Gardener breakfasts Babe's in Ferndale
Wed. & Sat. ....	9 a.m. to noon .....	Hovander Work Parties