

# Weeder's Digest

All the dirt that's fit to print



Newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners

June 2005

We had a beautiful day for the plant sale, and it was very successful. We want to thank Diane Rapoza, her assistants and all the people who worked so very hard to make it a big success. Thanks also to everyone who donated plants so we would have something to sell. It all added up to a great day!

The name tags are finally here! New class members and the few veterans we ordered name tags may pick them up at the Master Gardener office.

Now is the time to plan your volunteer activities for this summer. Following is a roster of the volunteer coordinators to help you get signed up for activities. They are actively enlisting volunteers now, so give them a call and help them out:

Bellingham Public Library – Becky Curtis, 360/734-0656

Bellingham Public Market – Christine Morris, 360/671-3743

Northwest Washington Fair – Judy Boxx, 360/398-7591

Extension Office Clinic – Jill Cotton, 360/676-6736 (Monday mornings)

Hovander Demonstration Garden – David Simonson, 360/398-0462

MG Speakers Bureau and other public events – Pat Nelson, 360/312-8306

*Al McHenry,  
Program Coordinator*

## Bus Trip Going North.....

On Tuesday, June 21 we have a tour of the Langley, BC area planned. We plan to stop at Kwantlen College, Lamber Vriejmodt's "Free Spirit Nursery" and Gwen Odermatt's "Petals and Butterflies Nursery." We will leave from Ferndale Park and Ride at 8:00 a.m. and return around 5:00 p.m. You will need to bring your lunch and drink. Cost is \$18.00 for Master Gardeners in good standing, and \$25.00 for guests. For additional details see last month's newsletter or contact Chris Hurst 360/366-5501.

## English Gardens Tour

Here we are on day 10 of our Garden Tour of Britain having a wonderful time! We have been to nine awesome gardens—Hever Castle, Sissinghurst, Leonardslee, Sheffield Park, Iford Manor, The Courts, Hidcote, Rousham House and Saville.

But...to broaden our British experience, we have also visited Winchester, Salisbury, Stonehenge, Avebury, numerous Cotswolds villages and Oxford...and the pubs...oh, the pubs!!

Tomorrow, the 24th of May, we will go on into the London area where, in the next three days, we will visit Wisley, Kew and Hampton Court Gardens and finish with the Chelsea Flower show. Having a wonderful time—wish you were here!

*Pat Nelson and friends  
P.S. Much more to come in September!!*

### **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

Our spring has sprung a little early this year. We have had beautiful days and a few cooler nights. Many of the flowering shrubs have jumped the gun and bloomed early.

Again we face a water shortage due to lack of snow pack and warm weather and rain in the mountain causing an early run off. Keep this in mind when planning and planting your garden. Here are a couple of water saving tips. If you are unsatisfied with soaker hoses, try this. Take a half-gallon milk jug, poke a few holes near the bottom of each side with an awl and bury the jug about 6 inches into the soil, right side up, with holes facing the plants you want to water. During dry spells, fill up each jug about twice a week. The water will go directly to the roots. This works especially well in vegetable gardens for plants like melons, squash, tomatoes and peppers.

Another tip is a method of watering your lawn and making the water count by getting it down to the roots. Your lawn needs about an inch of water each week. To determine what an inch of water is, take several straight sided containers such as mason jars, soup cans, or any container with a mouth the same size as the body, and place them at about 4 inch intervals around the sprinkler in the area you're watering. Then time how long it takes the jars to all be filled with one inch of water (some will fill faster than others). If it takes, say 40 minutes for the slower-filling jar to reach the 1-inch mark, then irrigating that long will apply at least 1 inch of water to the lawn..

There is still time to thin apples. Wait until after the June drop, when trees spontaneously abort unpollinated fruit, then go through and break off excess fruit.

Container gardens seem to be becoming popular as a means of stretching your garden, or adding more space for vegetables. Among the crops that thrive in pots are beans, carrots, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, potatoes, squash and tomatoes.

Containers for vegetables should be placed where they receive at least six (6) hours of full sun each day. Containers help to overcome some of the problems of planting in the ground. Some of the problems are pests, such as gophers and soil-borne diseases such as fusarium wilt, nematodes, and verticillium wilt. Another advantage to containers is that the soil will warm more quickly and get your plants off to a quicker start.

When getting your containers ready for soil, make sure there are several holes in the bottom so that drainage can occur. Putting stones or broken pieces of pottery or pots in the bottom of your container doesn't aid drainage in fact it hinders the process. Instead, before you put soil in your container, place a coffee filter in the bottom to keep the soil from coming out.

Using soil from the garden is a mistake. Soil in containers will gradually compact, squeezing out the air needed for the roots. Your soil must be able to drain with ease. A suggested mix might be 1/3 garden soil, 1/3 sand vermiculite or perlite and 1/3 organic matter, such as compost, or peat moss.

Watering is an important consideration. Pots will need watering more often than will your garden. Never allow the soil to dry out completely.

Pests are something else to watch out for and to control. Aphids, mites and whiteflies will often be controlled by a good strong blast of water from your garden hose. If that does not do the trick, contact your Washington State University Extension Office. The Master Gardeners' office is open year round to offer assistance with your garden problems. They may be contacted at 360/676-6736.

The plant sale was again a huge success. You can help by starting now to gather seedlings of garden plants, starting cuttings, and generally propagate plants throughout the year. Offer to help your friends and neighbors divide iris for part of the resulting new plants

Terri Booth is planning on starting

a committee to go to various homes of master gardeners who are unable to dig plants for the plant sale and help them with this chore. She wants to begin this project in September and needs as many able-bodied volunteers to aid in this venture. There will be a pecking order for this service beginning with the ill or injured, the elderly, (80 years +) and then persons with very large yards. The more volunteers, the more persons they will be able to aid. This could be a fun project, getting to see other member's yards and making new friends in the process.

One of the causes of an unhealthy looking lawn is always mowing in the same direction. You are always walking in the same spot, packing the soil and the turf. This is your chance to display your artistic talent. You can make different patterns, think of the pattern on a baseball park. You can do a diagonal pattern, a checkerboard or any other pattern that suits your mood. Who knows? Lawn mowing can be fun!

### Who am I?

I am a genus of about 250 species of annual, biennials and perennials found mainly in mountainous areas worldwide, except in Australia and the Polar Regions. I am grown for my spikes, racemes, or occasionally panicles of shallowly panicles cup-shaped, sometimes hooded, spurred single to fully double flowers, often termed "florets". Mostly have fibrous or fleshy roots, although some are tuberous. My basal leaves, mostly to 8 inches long, are toothed and deeply or shallowly 3 to 5 lobes, occasionally 7 lobed. Grow my tall variety in a mixed border or island bed, and dwarf ones in a rock garden. All my parts will cause severe discomfort if you choose to eat me.

March was ajuga.

Karen Gilliam and Barbara DeFreytas have been chosen to be on the Cancer Society Garden Tour, Sunday, June 26, 11 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Tickets will be available at all the garden centers on June 1 or at the participating gardens. Further information Barb DeFreytas 360/384-6791.

## President's Message

Linda Bergquist,  
MGF President

### Sharing Our Expertise

The Whatcom County Youth Fair was held in April at the NW Washington Fairgrounds in Lynden. David Simonson, Ron Dinus, and Luana Schneider helped the kids graft pear trees. Pat Nelson helped them plant and arrange sedums in a beautiful dish and Karen Gilliam, Kathy Mitchell, and I mixed and formed hypertufa pots with them. We ALL had fun- even the kids! Helen Zylstra, (whose son, Ben, is one of our scholarship recipients) who organized the horticulture section of the Fair said to me "What I like about Master Gardeners is that they always show up, on time and really prepared." That's quite a reputation!

Our first ever Master Gardener Lecture/Workshop Series event, featuring David Simonson and his famous lecture "How to Grow Your Own Vegetables" was held on Saturday, May 21 at Tennant Lake in Ferndale. Our second event will be held on Saturday, July 16 at the NW Washington Fairgrounds in Lynden. Karen Gilliam, Judy Boxx and Dick Porter will be showing people how to prepare and show vegetables and flowers in hopes of winning a blue ribbon at the Fair in August. The Master Gardener Lecture/Workshop Series was developed as another way in which we help educate our community.

Our Plant Sale was FABULOUS! -We netted around \$14,000! Diane Rapoza, Teri Booth, and Kathy Reade, along with many, many, many wonderful Master Gardeners made the day INFORMATIVE AND PROFITABLE. Even though we need the profitable aspect of the sale, it truly is a learning experience. As a "floater", I was able to continually walk around the area and hear many "lively discussions" and see many books being consulted (especially on Friday, the set-up day) as plants were named and growing conditions were determined. Table managers were asked to make a list of their plants and make sure they knew as much about them as possible. Our informational signs that hang above our selection of plants were read by Master Gardeners and customers alike. David was explaining all the attributes of each of his MANY tomato varieties, to everyone. There was standing room only at seminars given by Pat Nelson (Potting Soil), JoAnne Roose (Container Planting), and Joyce Jimmerson's Compost Crew (Compost and Making Rain Barrels). It was lots of work, but again we educated our community and I know they really appreciated it. One Plant Sale customer said, "That's why I come to this sale. You have the best plants, at the best prices, and I learn what to put where in my garden."

### June Garden Tour

MG Foundation June Garden Tours – Thursday, June 9, Evening THE EVER CHANGING GARDEN! – Over 12 years and 48 years by friends and relatives of Master Gardeners.

Plan to meet at 6:30 to tour the Asian garden of Terry and Jackie Lehmann on Gala Loop, off Britton Road, (directions below). This has been a 12 year project possibly originating from his Bonsai collection.

You will be fascinated with what he has attained on a small city lot – such as the cornered Gunnera! Then we are off to Bob and Shirley Rapoza's home on Yew St. Road, close to Lakeway. Some of their plants came with the home almost 50 years ago. It is a garden of perennials, shrubs and tall evergreen trees which include the largest Bonsai in Bellingham. Learn the tricks of keeping 15 year old Koi and how to outsmart the raccoons and slugs. The foundation meeting will be at the Rapoza home, following the tour.

Directions: Terry & Jackie Lehmann, 3811 Gala Loop. From Britton Road, go east on Hillsdale Road, then left onto Brownsville, and a right onto Gala Loop. The Lehmann house is the second on the left. Street parking is available. Shirley & Bob Rapoza. 1104 Yew St. Road. (East side of street and top of the hill with lots of flowers. There is no street parking on Yew so you have to park on nearby Alvarado Dr. – east side of street and north of the Rapoza home. Then walk a short distance up the hill. OR park in a small lot just south of the Rapoza home. There is a short asphalt entrance. It is across the street from the nearby fire hydrant. There is also some parking in the Rapoza driveway. Car-pooling is encouraged. It is extremely generous of the Lehmanns and Rapozas to open their gardens to us.

## A Big Thank You to all who volunteered or donated to our Plant Sale.

Not only did we exceed our monetary goal, but we had a good time doing it!

Master Gardeners prove not only to have green thumbs but have helping hands as well. With so many willing and capable volunteers the plant sale was the best ever. I have received many comments from both Master Gardeners and the public that we were more organized and had more and better plants than ever before. Good Job everyone! —And Thank You for your support.

If you have any ideas, concerns, comments or would like to be included in next year's plant sale planning or leadership please contact Diane at 360/676-9563 or [r.rapoza@comcast.net](mailto:r.rapoza@comcast.net).

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

## Sunrose

Family: Cistaceae  
(Rockrose family)  
Genus: *Helianthemum*

A sunrose by any other name is... beautiful. And "sunroses" are in fact known by many other names. There are quite a few hybrids and cultivars bred for our gardening pleasure from more than 100 species native to Mediterranean Europe, Asia, and the Americas. *Helianthemum canadense*, commonly called "frostweed," is one of fourteen species native to our continent. For many years it was more popular as a medicinal herb and wildflower than as a garden ornamental. Now it's a protected plant in at least two states—Kentucky and Tennessee—and its status is monitored in several others. The California native *H. greenei*—the island rushrose—enjoys Federal protection, although that may not be sufficient to save it from being lost, at least in its wild state. North American native sunroses are threatened by loss of habitat, to be sure; but they also fall victim to unrestrained harvest by collectors driven by the demand for them as herbal remedies and supplements. Responsible herbalists now cultivate plants grown from seed and mark their packaging accordingly.



Our region has no native sunroses—consider the word "sun" and think of our cold and wet climate—but we can grow cultivated varieties, mostly from species native to Europe. They're perennial subshrubs, although they tend to be relatively short-lived, thriving for only five years or so before dying out. But what carefree beauty they provide all through their short lives! I've had them in my garden for years, with decidedly mixed results—which were entirely my fault.

I tried and tried to grow *Helianthemum* 'Henfield Brilliant' at the feet of one of my dwarf maiden grasses because I loved the look of the brick-red flowers against the variegated leaves of the grass. Every year I planted it, and

every year it would die. After going through this cycle about three times early in my experience as a Pacific Northwest gardener, I finally figured out that the growing conditions spelled out for *Helianthus* are *not optional*. I had the right plant for the look I wanted, but I kept trying to persuade it to grow in the wrong place. It was in full sun—good to go, there—but the drainage was poor, it turned out. The setting that suited the grass did not suit the sunrose at all. No matter how much I wanted the effect, the plant just wouldn't cooperate. As Master Gardeners know, plants seldom go along with our arrangements unless it suits them to do so.

Right plant, right place: it's true. And it's especially true where sunroses are concerned. They absolutely insist on full sun and poor soil that drains very well. If you give them the conditions they want, just stand back. One small start in a four-inch pot will spread to three feet in just a couple of seasons. My favorite now is *Helianthemum* 'Wisley Pink', which has very gray leaves and perky pink flowers with clear yellow eyes. If you're looking to find one for yourself, go with the genus and cultivar name. You may—or may not—find the species noted on the tag. If it is, it might be *appeninum*. Then again, it might not. Tags being what they are, just look for 'Wisley'. There's also a 'Wisley White', which is beautiful in its own right but doesn't seem to flower as profusely. So you'll want to pay attention to the "pink" part of the name to be sure you get what you want.

Put your *Helianthemum* in poor, sandy soil where it won't get much water but will get full sun. It will hold its leaves all year and bloom continuously from early April through June. Each flower lasts only one day but there are plenty more waiting in line to show up on stage. You don't have to deadhead the blossoms, although you can shear the entire plant lightly when all the blooms fade.

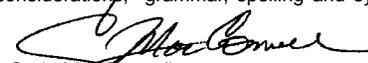
And if a carpet of pretty flowers against great-looking foliage weren't enough, few weeds make it through *Helianthemum*. Pests and fungal diseases pass it by and deer won't bother it. Now, who could ask for anything more?



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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Craig MacConnell  
Horticulture Agent

## Weed Alert!

~Jenifer Parsons, botanist  
Washington State Department of Ecology

### Reed sweetgrass

*Glyceria maxima* (C. Hartm.) Holmb.

Synonyms:

*Glyceria spectabilis* Mert. & Koch

*Molinia maxima* Hartman

*Glyceria aquatica* (L.) Wahlb., non J. & C. Presl

*Poa aquatica* L.

Common names:

reed sweetgrass, tall manna grass, reed grass

Native Range:

*Glyceria maxima* is native to temperate Europe and Asia

Introduced Range:

*Glyceria maxima* is sold as an ornamental plant, including a variegated variety with striped leaves. It has been introduced to several countries including Australia, New Zealand, and North America. In Canada it is most widely distributed in Ontario, but is also known from Alberta and Newfoundland. In the United States it is known from Wisconsin and Massachusetts.

Known from Washington:

Known only from one location at a private pond in Snohomish County.

Biology:

*Glyceria maxima* is a large perennial rhizomatous grass. It is classified as an obligate wetland plant (occurs almost always (estimated probability 99%) under natural conditions in wetlands), and will grow in water up to 2 m deep along the margins of rivers, streams and lakes. In deep water it can form large floating mats attached to the bank. The stem length can reach up to 2.5 meters. It produces a vast root system reaching to about 1 meter deep with rhizomes that form sprawling mats. The rhizomes can make up 40-55% of the plant's total biomass.

*Glyceria maxima* goes dormant in winter, regrowing from buds along the rhizomes in spring. It prefers well aerated water, and

growth slows as water goes anaerobic. The shoots of young plants can be either vegetative or flowering. On established plants with rhizome mats the majority of new shoots are just vegetative. This trait allows it to quickly colonize new areas by producing seed from young satellite plants while increasing the density of established plants to the exclusion of other species.



Key identifying traits:

- *Glyceria maxima* is a large perennial grass, growing up to 2.5 m tall, often reddish on the lower part of the stems
- Extensive rhizomes produce a mat of stems
- Leaf sheaths have prominent midribs, visible transverse veins, feel slightly rough and are closed to near the top
- Ligules are membranous, smooth and rounded, 5-7 mm long.
- Leaf blades are flat, to 40 cm long and 0.7 to 2 cm wide. The leaf margins are rough to the touch when a finger is run from the tip to the base.
- Inflorescence (flower stem) is produced in the spring and summer, it is open and branched, up to 45 cm long. It is made of many yellow to green or purple tinged spikelets.
- Spikelets are narrow, 5 – 12 mm long

Threats and Rationale for Prohibiting:

*Glyceria maxima* is sold as an ornamental plant, and in some parts of the world it was also introduced as forage. However, it can contain dangerous levels of cyanide, and has caused poisoning of cattle. It is considered a weed of significance in Tasmania, and also causes problems in other areas of temperate Australia. In Tasmania it has become capable of establishing and spreading on roadsides in the absence of permanent standing water. It is a weed of concern in New Zealand. In southern Ontario *Glyceria maxima* is considered a Category 1 Invasive Exotic Species (“an aggressive invasive exotic species that can dominate a site to exclude all other species and remain dominant on the site indefinitely”). In Washington it is only known from one small private pond in Snohomish County. It is dominating this site, and shows great potential as an invasive species.

*Glyceria maxima* in Snohomish County pond – early spring growth



If you know of any locations of this plant in Whatcom County, please contact the Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board at 360/354-3990 as soon as possible.

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### Dates to Remember:

- June 2 ..... 10 a.m. to noon ..... Monthly Foundation Board Meeting  
Extension Office
  
- June 9 ..... 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. .... Monthly Foundation Meeting  
See article for details
  
- June 21 ..... All Day ..... Foundation Bus Trip  
Canada (see article)
  
- Tuesdays ..... Evenings ..... Bellingham Library Clinic
  
- Wednesdays ..... 8 to 9 a.m. .... Master Gardener breakfasts  
Babe's in Ferndale
  
- Wed. & Sat. .... 9 a.m. to noon ..... Hovander Work Parties
  
- Saturdays ..... 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. .... Bellingham Farmers Market Booth