

Weeder's Digest

All the dirt that's fit to print



Newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners

July 2005

In May you received a copy of the current roster, either by mail in the newsletter or via the internet (if you receive the newsletter in that manner). We would like for you to review that information and report any changes or inaccuracies to the office.

If you have checked out any books from our library please review the return date, and return all books that are over-due so others may share the pleasure of reading them.

The Northwest Washington Fair will be upon us in August. Judy Boxx is now accepting volunteers to man our booth. Let her know what date you want reserved for your time at the Fair. We are scheduled to be under the grandstands again this year. The dates are August 15 – 20. Remember, we need volunteers for set-up before and take-down after.

Don't forget to volunteer your time at Hovander this month. I know that July is a busy month with vacations and outdoor activities for the family, but it is also a critical time for the garden, so whatever time you can spare will be appreciated.

Keep sending in your time slips – we need them, Thanks.

Al McHenry,
Program Coordinator

July MG Foundation Garden Tours

Thursday, July 14 - **VISITING GARDENS DESIGNED BY SUSAN HARRISON**. As promised at our March meeting, Susan Harrison will be leading tours of two of her gardens.

Both locations have very limited parking so plan to travel with two or more friends. See more information below. At 6:30 we will meet at the Kaiser garden, located at 425 S. Clarkwood Drive. Go out Fieldston Drive in Edgemoor, turn left onto Clarkwood Drive. Keep winding to your right until you end up at the last cul-de-sac. You are there. The stone elephants (from her presentation) will be high overhead to greet you.

From there we will look at a garden on Chuckanut Crest Drive to which Susan will direct us. **WARNING:** The Kaiser garden is located on a promontory. This means steep stairs up to the house in the front and down to the ravine in back, with no railings. Care must be taken by each person.

Carpools: If only one or two of you are coming together, plan to be at the Fairhaven parking lot, closest to the gate, by 6:10 pm. We will create carpools and send you on your way. The Kaiser home is just five minutes from the park.

P.S. The Summer 2005 edition of Whatcom Magazine (Bellingham Herald) has an article about Master Gardener Merrilee & Fred Kullman's garden designed by Susan Harrison.

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

July, the month of the fourth of, summer is here and it is picnic time with fried chicken and strawberry shortcake.

Our gardens are now producing and we can enjoy the fruits of our labors as well as cut down on the produce cost at the local super market. What comes out of our gardens is fresher and better. Along with a feast for the tummy, there is also a feast for the eyes in the beauty of the wide range of colors and the diversity of blooms in our gardens and those of our neighbors. Now is the time to look around and see if there is something new you would like to see in your yard next summer.

To insure a good crop of large and juicy fruit the best thing you can do is to make sure they have adequate water. Mulch around the trees and use a soaker hose to give them a deep watering every week in hot weather.

Many of us are faced with the problem of our neighbor's pets and how to save our lawn and gardens and still maintain civil relationships with those around us. Cats can be managed using chicken wire or other wire with a small mesh. Wire cut in strips about four feet wide and placed over the newly planted rows will discourage them from digging in your nice soft, newly worked planted beds and gardens. If the aesthetics of strips of fencing in your garden bother you, be assured that the stuff doesn't have to stay in place for the season. Cats gravitate to loose, freshly worked soil. Once your seedlings are up and the soil has firmed, the animals seem to lose interest in your yard and will look elsewhere.

As long as we have to have weeds, we

might learn about some of their useful qualities. Ethnobotany records as quoted by *Garden Gate Magazine* tells us that plantain, for instance, can be used medicinally. It will provide immediate relief from mosquito bites, hornet stings and the painful itching of poison ivy. To use this soothing herb, simply rub the leaves between your palms until the moisture is released. Next, apply them to the affected area. The relief from the plantain is immediate and lasting, provides an organic alternative to commercial products and doesn't cost a thing. Many other plants are used to soothe insect bites or even repel insects. Lavender makes a pretty good insect repellent. If you do get a bite, lavender oil also takes away the irritation. Even the dark-blue berries of juniper can be crushed and dabbed on as an insect repellent. You never know what wonders are lurking in your own back yard!

Rose cane borers are a pest that needs vigilance and care. If you notice some dead or wilted leaves in the middle of a healthy rose bush, it may be rose cane borers. The open wound left after pruning gives several different boring insects the perfect spot to lay their eggs. After the eggs hatch, the larvae burrow into the soft pith of the cane. As they work their way down into the stem, foliage wilts and eventually the cane turns brown and dies. To get rid of the borer, cut the rose canes back in 1-inch increments until you find the caterpillar. Continue to cut until there's not a hole in the center of the stem. Once you reach a solid area, you'll need to seal the wound. One of the easiest and least expensive products you can use is glue. After pruning, simply dribble waterproof wood glue on the cut until it's completely sealed. Some will run off, but enough will stick to keep the borer out. To prevent infestation on other roses, seal all pruning cuts with glue immediately after cutting the canes.

As far as maintenance goes, keep after slugs and snails. Go hunting in the shaded parts of the garden for the little creatures. Hand pick them in the evening or after a rain. You can also make good use of slug bait.

Make sure there is NO standing water in your yard. Mosquitoes can breed in as

little as one tablespoon. There are already cases of West Nile Virus showing up in other areas. If you find dead birds around your yard, dispose of them by picking them up with a shovel. Please do not pick them up with unprotected hands.

Chrysanthemums also need attention this time of year. Give them a dose of high-phosphorus liquid fertilizer (often called a bloom formula) every three weeks until buds start to show color. When the first blooms open, feed weekly.

Fuchsias also need attention. Remove faded flowers to keep new ones coming. Expect bloom to slack off during the hot weather before bouncing back in the fall. Sustain fuchsias in containers with liquid plant fertilizer every two weeks.

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

Fertilizing landscape plants after mid-July, with a high yield nitrogen fertilizer should be avoided for our area, 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 also 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 or a late fall or winter harvest are beets, cabbage, kohlrabi, lettuce, peas, radishes, scallions, spinach, Swiss chard and turnips. Look for more information next month on the planting of your winter garden.

Remember, as you go about dividing, moving, sorting your plants and bulbs, to set some aside for the plant sale.

President's Message

Linda Bergquist,
MGF President

THANK YOU!!!

Two words that just don't seem to be enough.

Master Gardeners are such very special people. I feel fortunate to be a member of such a wonderful, thoughtful group. I have felt your quiet support since my husband's death and it brought me great comfort. I knew I could count on any one of you if I needed help in any way and this gave me the strength to give support to my children when they were having trouble dealing with their grief. When you have great backup you can do anything. Continuing my duties as your president also helped keep my mind on things other than my own sadness.

Your generosity and thoughtfulness in giving me a wonderful day at the Heronswood Nursery AND the most gorgeous olivine stone garden sculpture was completely unexpected and very much appreciated. Since I have been unable to tell you, in person, how much it means to me (without tears flowing), this note is the best way for me to sincerely thank each of you.

UPCOMING MASTER GARDENER ACTIVITIES

Thanks to Christine Morris and many master gardeners, especially our new members, we have a very professional presence at the Saturday Farmer's Market in Bellingham.

Bill Baldwin, Dave Manning and Joe Kelly have planted the Economic Garden at Hovander Park in Ferndale. Signage is the next step.

On Tuesday, July 12, Judy Boxx, Karen Gilliam, and Dick Porter will be giving the second of our Lecture/Workshop Series presentations. They will show adults and children how to increase the chances of winning a blue ribbon when entering vegetables and flowers in the NW Washington Fair in Lynden this August.

Again, two simple, but heartfelt words: Thank You.

Extra Pots:

Contrary to our usual state of affairs at the greenhouse, we now find ourselves burdened with an overload of smaller size, and mostly round, pots. They would be ideal for using as "starter" pots for seeds, cuttings, plugs, etc. Their small size makes them impractical to use for plants for the plant sale. They will be available for anyone who wants some until the 27th of July. After that date we will dispose of any that are still at the greenhouse. Please contact Chris @ 360/366-5501 or Jean @ 360/384-8023 for the exact location of these pots.

Attention, Attention:

Now is a good time to start those shrub cuttings for next years plant sale.

Upcoming Advanced Training Seminar

On Friday, September 30, the four speakers will include a Seattle Times columnist, author and former MG coordinator; Entomologist and Extension Liaison to the EPA; Raintree Nursery owner; and Biologist and Landscape architect. Save the Date!

Who am I?

I am a genus of more than 200 species of evergreen or deciduous, mainly semi-woody to woody, twining leaf-climbers and woody-based herbaceous perennials widely distributed over the globe. I have showy blooms of a rainbow of colors and a wide variety of shapes. I will sometimes reach a height of 30 to 50 feet. I attach to host plants or supporting structures by means of my leaf stalks. I am grown for my abundant flowers, sometimes followed by decorative, filamentous, silvery gray seed heads.

Last month was delphinium.

Plant of the Month By Cheryll Greenwood Kinsley

Heliotrope

Family: Boraginaceae
(Borage family)
Genus: *Heliotropium*
Species: *arborescens* or
peruvianum

We all enjoy flowers that have a sweet fragrance. I think that's why peonies are such favorites: they smell as good as they look. But their bloom time is short, and over by summer. What can we plant that has a continuous show of pretty flowers with a sweet scent that lasts well into fall?

Roses are perennial favorites, but many of them bloom intermittently and a few of the new ones have no scent at all. Besides, they take lots of care. We may be unwilling to give them what they need or unable to provide them with enough space to grow. So we choose a good-looking little plant that's scaled just right for containers and we grow it in a hanging basket outside a window or in a pot by the door so we can appreciate its flowers and fragrance all summer.



Like many traditional cottage-garden flowers, heliotrope was prized by our grandmothers. For more than a few years it was hard to find in the marketplace but now it's available just about everywhere. There are named varieties galore, with flowers in white and pale lavender. But I prefer the species, the old-fashioned kind with dark green, crinkled leaves and deep purple flowers. It's most dependable, both in ease of care and reliable fragrance. Reminiscent of vanilla, the heliotrope's scent gave rise to its common name used years ago: the cherry-pie plant.

Heliotrope has also been called "turnsole," after its tendency to turn its flowers and leaves toward the sun over the course of each day. And at night it readjusts itself to face eastward, to be ready for sunrise. That tendency is at the root of the name heliotrope, too. It means to move with the sun.

In fact, heliotrope wants plenty of sunlight, at least through mid-day. The positioning it prefers is full sun in the morning but some shelter in the late afternoon, lest its leaves burn. Beyond that, it appreciates rich soil kept evenly moist—easy to manage, in a container—and regular feeding with a diluted, water-soluble fertilizer that's higher in phosphorus than nitrogen. Look for a formulation that "encourages blooms." The one I use is 10-60-10: something I would *never* apply to plants in the open ground, but it suits my containers just fine. In the full heat of summer, I water my heliotropes every day and give them a feeding once each week. That's one of the nice things about growing pretty plants in containers. Even in times of drought, there's plenty of water left over from household use to keep the plants happy, and they can be fed extravagantly so they'll put on their best show. My heliotropes will be tuckered out by late September and they'll end up in the compost pile to make their contribution to next year's garden that way. Yes, I could take cuttings. And yes, I could go to the trouble of trying to keep them alive indoors. But neither is worth the trouble, particularly when I can buy new starts next spring for less than 2 dollars at any nursery center I care to visit.

Heliotropes get along fine with other plants in containers, so long as they're adequately fed and frequently watered. They don't respond to crowded conditions by developing powdery mildew, and they're not prone to pests. What they do require is frequent pinching when they're young.

It may seem heartless, but pinch them anyway. We know that pinching stimulates growth, and that lesson is particularly true where heliotropes are concerned. If you don't steel yourself and do it, you'll end up with a spindly plant with one or two long-lasting flower heads, and that's it.

There are two approaches to pinching a heliotrope. One is to remove side shoots until the plant attains the height you have in mind—it might make it to 20 inches—and then start pinching back the top growth. This is not what I do, because I prefer bushy plants. My technique is to pinch back the tips all over the plant early on, which forces lots of new side growth. I wait longer for flowers, but I get more of them eventually. Removing faded blooms promptly results in a continuous show of pretty flowers starting in July and lasting till fall. Their fragrance is heavenly.

Weed of the Month By Laurel Shiner

Silver Lace Vine

Polygonum aubertii



THREAT: Silver lace vine, also called silvertine, fleecflower or Chinese fleecvine, is a native of Asia, introduced to North America as a garden ornamental. It has escaped cultivation, and has been seen growing wild in the Seattle and Portland areas. Silver lace vine grows rapidly, growing up and over surrounding vegetation and structures. It can grow in a variety of environments, in full sun to partial shade, and is drought tolerant. Silver lace vine spreads by rhizomes and can be difficult to control. In Europe, this plant has formed hybrids with Himalayan knotweed (*P. polystachyum*), another invasive knotweed. Silver lace vine is currently on the state noxious weed board's monitor list.

DESCRIPTION: Silver lace vine is a perennial deciduous vine in the knotweed family. The wiry, twining stems are fast growing and can reach 25-35 feet. The simple, ovate, alternate leaves are 1.5 to 3.5 inches long. Mature leaves are bright green in color, while new growth is reddish. The numerous white fragrant flowers are 0.2 inches in diameter and are borne in 6-inch panicles. Flowering occurs throughout the summer and into early fall.



MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Control methods for silver lace vine are not well researched. Other related polygonums are best controlled with herbicides. Mechanical control may be effective for this plant, especially for individual plants, but any rhizomes left in the ground may resprout. To be effective, control work must be continued, as needed, throughout several growing seasons. Contact the weed control board for chemical recommendations.

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

Still deciding where to volunteer?

The Farmers Market Booth is in desperate need of help. Four volunteers are needed every Saturday through October. The Farmers Market runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. We have both morning and afternoon shifts available. This is a really fun time. For more information on dates and times contact Christine Morris at 360/671-3743.

Hovander has work parties on Wednesday and Saturday morning from 9 a.m. to noon. As always, the more the merrier! Contact David Simonson at 360/398-0462.

We still have openings in the office clinic as well. The schedule is available online at <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/volunteer/gardener.htm>. If you are interested in volunteering there please call 360/676-6736 or email karrimac@wsu.edu.

Also we have the Bellingham Public Library clinic on Tuesday afternoons. If you are interested in volunteering there contact Becky Curtis at 360/734-0656.

Balcony and Rooftop Gardening

Take your gardening to new heights with balcony or roof gardening

~by Penny Koch, taken from the VanDusen Master Gardener Newsletter

For gardeners living in an urban setting, balcony and rooftop gardens are often our only gardening option. Although this kind of container gardening has its limitations, they are not insurmountable. Our main constraints are the weight of containers and soil, the source of water for irrigation, exposure to the wind and temperature extremes, orientation to sun or shade, and the choice of plants that will survive in containers in such conditions.



Consider the weight of containers and soil

Before planning a balcony or roof garden, it is best to check with the building manager or strata council to ensure the deck will adequately support the weight of containers and soil. Check also that there are no restrictions on such plantings or on the use of elevators for transporting soil, plants or small trees. If there is no elevator, consider what weight of bags of soil and pots you are prepared to carry up the stairs and the weight of discarded soil and plants to be taken down for disposal.

Wooden pots or planters are attractive, but a wooden half-barrel full of moist soil can weigh 100kg. Ceramic pots are also heavy and may crack during a winter freeze. Plastic pots, through less attractive, are practical, lightweight, and can be camouflaged by hanging plants or by placing smaller pots around their bases. Use the largest plastic pots practical, since most plants will outgrow their pots in two or three years. Larger pots also protect tree roots better during winter freezes. Place large pots on wheeled supports to ease moving. Also consider placing containers on "pot feet" or grids to protect the deck.



Potting up your plants

The potting medium should allow good drainage. Avoid garden soil that is heavy and full of pests and weed seeds — these will appear even when sterilized soil is used. Instead, use a lightweight combination of potting soil, peat moss or preferably coconut fiber,

and perlite or vermiculite mixed with compost. Commercially prepared container potting soils with fertilizer are also available. Leave space at the top of the pot to add mulch or compost in the fall to help overwinter perennials.

Signs that a plant is outgrowing its pot include roots emerging from drainage holes, soil drying too quickly, or water remaining on the surface long after watering. When repotting, use a plastic sheet on the deck to minimize the mess and a wet/dry vacuum for spills and for clearing dead leaves in the fall. Choose a container that is wider at the top than at the base to allow plants to be repotted easily. All containers also need drainage holes so roots do not become waterlogged; a base layer of landscape fabric will prevent soil from leaking out the drainage hole. When repotting, cut vertically through the plants' encircling roots and prune them back; then cut back upper growth to match. For perennials, add a slow-release fertilizer once in the spring and use liquid 20-20-20 fertilizer when planting. For annuals, use 20-20-20- at diluted strength every few weeks since it leaches from the pot with every watering. As plants grow, prune the more vigorous ones so they don't outgrow their pots so quickly.



Plan for exposure to wind and temperature extremes

Balconies and rooftops, especially at higher elevations, are much more exposed to wind and temperature extremes than ground-level gardens. A balcony on the 18th floor will have an ambient temperature several degrees lower than at ground level. Exposure to sun and wind dries pots quickly, with smaller pots being more vulnerable, so that watering may be needed at least once or even twice daily in hot weather. Plants on a shady, less exposed balcony will need less water.

A trellis with climbers such as lonicera, clematis, sweet peas, or scarlet runner beans may provide some wind protection but additional winter protection will be

needed. Freeze-thaw cycles, especially if the soil is saturated with rain, are particularly damaging. Mulch in the fall and insulate pots with styrofoam chips or newspaper wrapped in burlap to protect the roots during the winter. Pots can also be grouped together for protection from the wind and from freezing.

Limit irrigation with drought-tolerant plants.



If there is no tap on the balcony or rooftop, consider the problem of carrying containers of water up to keep the plants happy.

Drought-tolerant plants will generally survive better in windy, sunny conditions. Many local native species fit this category, but in pots, even these plants will need regular water since pots dry out quickly, even in winter. Make sure the drainage from the deck is adequate. If overhanging planters are used, be sure the water does not drain onto the neighbor below.



Plant according to sun or shade orientation

The amount and duration of sun during the day, or a shady northern exposure, will dictate the choice of plants that will thrive. Surrounding tall buildings may limit the duration of sun. Some plants, such as clematis, many of which do well in containers, need sun; however, they like their roots in the shade, so cluster smaller plants at the base of the pot. Climbers supported on a trellis or mesh bring height to the balcony or rooftop gardens and add flowers and greenery at more than deck level. Shelves or plant stands can also maximize the use of limited space. Even some small trees, especially slow growers or dwarf varieties, may do well in large containers and provide height interest. Finally, don't be afraid to experiment to determine what will thrive in your particular space.

Please refer to the accompanying list, on the next page, of drought-resistant plants for sun and shade that I have had success with in my balcony and rooftop gardens. Many of these are slow-growing cultivars that do well in the container gardening necessary in this setting.

Plants for a Sunny Balcony or Rooftop

Perennials, shrubs and small trees

Acer campestre 'Compactum'
A. griseum
A. palmatum cultivars
A. tataricum subsp. ginnala 'Durand Dwarf'
 Achillea
 Arabis
 Artemisia
 Cistus
Cimicifuga racemosa 'Brunette'
 Clematis of all kinds
 Cornus
Cotinus coggygris 'Golden Spirit'
Cryptomeria japonica 'Sekkan-Sugi'
Daphne 'Briggs Moonlight'
 Eryngium
Euphorbia polychroma 'Midas'
 Ficus
 Hebes
 Iberis
Ilex crenata 'Mariesii'
Kalmia latifolia
 Lavandula
 Lewisia
 Mahonia
 Origanum
Penstemon digitalis 'Husker Red'
 Pernettya
 Perovskia
Pieris japonica
 Potentilla
Ribes sanguinum 'King Edward VII'

Rosa 'Mutabilis'
R. nutkana
 Sedums
 Sempervivens
 Small Fruit Trees
Verbena patagonica

Annuals

Allysum
 Aquilegia
 Begonia
 Nasturtium
 Nicotiana
 Pelargonium
 Petunia
 Salvia
 Tagetes

Vegetables

Bush beans
 Lettuce
 Peppers
 Pole beans
 Tomatoes

Herbs

Basil
 Fennel
 Mint
 Oregano
 Rosemary
 Thyme

Plants for a Shady Balcony or Rooftop

Perennials, shrubs, and small trees

Alchemilla
 Buxus
 Dicentra
 Epimedium
 Gaultheria
 Geranium
 Helleborus
 Hosta
 Lamium

Lonicera
 Sarcococcus
 Saxifragia
 Verbascum
 Verbena

Annuals

Begonia
 Impatiens

Hovander Happenings

~David Simonson

By mid-June all demonstration projects are progressing nicely. One of the big jobs—planting the corn maze has been completed. The pumpkin patch is in and growing with 42 hills including six pumpkin varieties.

Bill Baldwin's new project, "Economic Crops," is planted. This project includes wheat, corn, cotton, rice and soybeans. They will have a signboard explaining this project.

We will need continued volunteer turnout throughout the summer to maintain projects. The corn maze and pumpkins will require lots of weeding! We're working Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. till noon.

Plant of the month

Continued from page 4

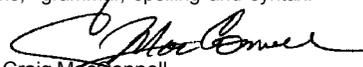
Nothing about the heliotropes we grow here can turn invasive. There is a creeping heliotrope—*Heliotropium amlexicaule*—that has become a plant pest in some warm-winter areas of the world. It's caused problems by invading forage fields, because it's poisonous to cattle. That attribute is shared by *Heliotropium arborescens*—all parts of the plant are poisonous and will cause gastric distress in humans and animals. So just enjoy its scent and don't eat it. Turn to a *real* cherry pie for that pleasure, another of summer's favorite treats.



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@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.



Master Gardener Office:
 1000 N. Forest St., Suite 201
 Bellingham, WA 98225
 360/676-6736


 Craig MacConnell
 Horticulture Agent

WSU WHATCOM COUNTY EXTENSION
1000 N. FOREST STREET, SUITE 201
BELLINGHAM WA 98225-5594

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
BELLINGHAM WA
PERMIT NO. 85



Dates to Remember:

July 4	All Day	July 4th Holiday Extension Office Closed
July 7	10 a.m. to Noon	Monthly Foundation Board Meeting Extension Office
July 14	6:30 to 9:30 p.m.	Monthly Foundation Meeting See Article for Details
Wednesdays	8 to 9 a.m.	Master Gardener breakfasts Babe's in Ferndale
Tuesdays	Evenings	Bellingham Public Library Clinic
Wed. & Sat.	9 a.m. to noon	Hovander Work Parties
Saturdays	9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Bellingham Famers Market Booth