

# Weeder's Digest

All the dirt that's fit to print



Newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners

October 2005

Welcome to Fall! These cool mornings are sending a signal to our plants and to us that fall is here and is beginning to make the annual changes to our living. I am still waiting for the fall rains to start; they will be most welcome.

I am writing this prior to the annual Advanced Training, so I cannot report on its success. However, I know that it is sold out, and every detail has been worked out. So, we expect it to be highly successful.

Thanks to all of you who volunteered for the various summer activities. Our endeavors have been very well carried out and well received. Remember that we have on-going needs for volunteers during the winter, so don't give up the habit of volunteering.

The ballot for the Foundation Elections is on the last page. Please vote and return the ballot to the Extension Office. If you want to vote for someone not listed on the ballot, write-in votes are welcome. We do wish to thank those gardeners who accepted nominations and ran for office. We realize that it takes time to hold an office, and we appreciate their commitment. There are no losers here, only winners.

November 10<sup>th</sup> will be the annual Graduation/Potluck at the Ferndale Senior Center. Your spouse/companion and children are welcome. More information about what to bring, etc. will be in next month's newsletter. See you there!

*Al McHenry*

## October Foundation Garden Tour!

The October Foundation meeting is a Sunday Garden Tour! - Fall Colors in the Maczuga Garden. On SUNDAY, October 16, at 1:30, Terry and Dave Maczuga will share their gardens at 5050 Graveline Road. Remember their presentation on Dwarf Conifers in February! Now you can be there!

Directions: From the south take I-5 north to the Slater Road exit and turn right onto Slater Road from the offramp. Immediately turn left onto Pacific Hwy, then take the first right onto Graveline Road. Go through the stopsign at Sunset (about 1/4 mile from Pacific Hwy) down a short hill to their driveway on the right.

There is parking for about 10 cars; additional parking for 4-5 cars about 800 feet north on Graveline where Silver Creek passes under the road. From north county come south to Smith Road, then west to Graveline (first left after crossing Northwest). Terry recommends good walking shoes to take the full tour as by October some of the trails back to the creek can be a little slippery though there are boardwalks where it is wet. She encourages people to carpool. A rainstorm could cancel the tour, so call Loretta Hogg at 756-8449 for the status of the tour in case of bad weather."

### **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**

October has arrived and with it comes the season for the Boo Bugs. There are many ways of dealing with these pests, not the least of which is to have on hand a goodly supply of wrapped candy, a stock of patience and a ready smile. Be sure as you lay in your supplies that you choose a variety that is enjoyed by your spouse in the rare instance that your infestation is not as high as expected.

Fall is upon us. It has been another hot, dry summer. Rain and cooler nights are returning, much to the delight of the native Washingtonians. If you have a winter garden, you might want to think about a floating row cover to protect your plants from a hard frost or a sudden cold snap.

October is the month of falling leaves, and the work of removing them. They need to be raked up promptly to avoid having to work with a sodden mat that will smother the grass beneath. Remove any leaves from the road. They clog storm drains, leading to flooding and standing water. If the mush that results from cars driving over them finds its way into the drain, it is a rich nutrient source that contributes to algae blooms and rampant weed growth in our lakes and Puget Sound.

As colder weather sets in, be sure to protect your pets from antifreeze. It is deadly to pets, humans also, and has a sweet taste that is attractive to wild animals, domestic dogs and cats, even young children. If you add your own antifreeze, don't let the animals or kids near the containers and clean up any spillage. Inspect your cooling system for leaks. If you suspect you have one, ask your mechanic to do a pressure test and

repair the problem. There is a new, less toxic antifreeze which contains ethylene glycol, which is less toxic.

It is getting late for tomatoes. Fall rains and cold weather will soon ruin any tomatoes left on the vine. The old wives tale about hanging the plants upside down in the garage to make the green tomatoes ripen really doesn't work too well. The main idea is to harvest any fruits that have sized up and have at least a touch of red coloring before the dreaded tomato blight gets them. Once in the house, you don't need to place the tomatoes in a sunny spot to ripen them. All that is needed is warmth.

Now is also the time to cut back your perennials to about 4" to 5". Ornamental grasses need grooming. Pull out the straw-colored grass so the plant looks good during the winter. Use your fingers to comb out the withered leaves. Do not cut your grasses back until spring.

October is also time for mums. You will find them in just about any color in the garden centers and the super markets. You can either toss the plants out when they finish blooming in November or you can turn your investment in to a half-dozen new mums next spring. Should you choose to save your mums, plant them this fall in a sunny well-drained spot with moist, fertile soil. Next spring, just as the mum's new growth starts, dig it up and use a sharp shovel to cut the root ball into six equal pieces, each with a bit of stem and root. Replant the pieces in your garden and give them a drink of water. They should do just fine. Remember to pot any extras for the plant sale.

Of course, all gardeners have a compost operation going, and now all the taken up annuals, and the trimmings from perennials, can be added to the compost pile. However, if you noticed diseased plants or leaves on these plants, then it is better not to add it to the compost.

It is time to stop deadheading your rose, and allow it to form seed-bearing hips. Your rose will know that it raised a family, and can kick back and begin to harden off for the long, cold winter.

Romance time for slugs mating and egg

laying. Apply the safe new slug baits to eliminate the slugs before they lay hundreds of eggs that will keep you busy next spring.

October is also the month for garlic planting. It's easy to grow. Plant the biggest cloves, fat side down, 2 inches apart in well-composted soil, making sure to get it into the ground by the end of the month. Don't plant grocery store garlic; buy cloves from your local nursery to reduce the chance of fungus disease.

Try planting a spring surprise in your winter container. Create this surprise by planting spring bulbs in your winter container. Begin with a frost-proof pot that is at least 9 inches deep. Place bulbs on a 3 inch soil base after mixing in the appropriate amount of bulb food. Cram in as many bulbs as possible but don't allow them to touch each other or the sides of the pot. Some bulbs, such as tulips have one side that's flatter than the other. Plant the flat side toward the side of the pot to cause the foliage to grow outward rather than crowding the center. Cover the bulbs with soil, and plant above them with evergreen perennials, colorful grasses and winter flowering annuals. Make sure there is space between the root balls and along the side of the container to allow the tulips to slip through. Next spring enjoy the welcome added touch of color.

To over-winter your tender perennials, they need to be protected from the harshness of a cold winter. Referring to Martha Washington Geraniums, fuchsias and the like, the easiest method is to put your tender perennials in an unheated garage for the winter. Leave fuchsias and geraniums in their pots, or dig them out of your garden, put the plants in a box and cover the roots with compost. Water just enough to keep the root balls from going totally dry. Cut the branches back to about 8 inches tall. That will remove most of the leaves, and keep your garage cleaner. Transplant and cut back farther in spring, and with a little luck, you'll have healthy geraniums and fuchsias to give you a head start on next year's garden.

Over seeding onto an established lawn

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## President's Message

Linda Bergquist,  
MGF President

### PAT YOURSELVES ON THE BACK !

We all know that Master Gardeners are really good gardeners. Often, that expertise leads to an award. Here are some recent examples:

#### Whatcom In Bloom

- Whatcom Master Gardener Foundation was awarded First Place in the Public Agencies Category for the Demonstration Garden at Hovander Homestead Park in Ferndale. The Demonstration Garden consists of the area around the house including the Perennial Garden, Herb Garden, and Dahlia Garden. David Simonson accepted the award on our behalf and was able to show it to a cheering crowd during our September Foundation Meeting. All of us should be very proud of this award.
- Shelly Jepson, a member of our 2005 class, won two awards for her garden.
- The Lake Whatcom Residential Treatment Center won an award in the Community Garden Category. Master Gardeners Diane Rapoza and Debbie Earl, another 2005 class member, helped some of the residents plant, water, and weed the award-winning garden, and they just finished planting bulbs for next spring. It is great garden therapy.

#### Bellingham Herald - LEISURE GUIDE

- The fall issue mentions Docent Tours of Big Rock Garden Park, led by Master Gardeners Becky Curtis, Diane Rapoza, Marilyn Boysen, and Viola Thorpe, another 2005 class member. During the summer three other 2005 class members, John Whitcraft, Nick LaValley and Gwyn Maness gave tours too.
- Carol Schuette, another Whatcom Master Gardener, gave a tour on Sept 17<sup>th</sup> of the landscaping around Anthony's Homeport. She identified the grasses, perennials, and annuals and explained how she kept them looking so great.

#### NW Washington Fair

Susan Burri made the areas around the fair buildings, containers, and planters sing with her gorgeous planting combinations. Many people at the fair mentioned how beautiful these areas were. We were proud to tell them it was Susan's hard work, making sure to also mention she was a fellow Master Gardener.

#### Lydia Place

Several planting boxes were constructed under the guidance of Leslie Clark and Sharon Evans, members of our 2005 class. Karen Hamalainen helped on construction day too!

As you can see, Whatcom Master Gardeners are *award-winning* gardeners.

Three important notes:

1. In this issue of the Weeder's Digest you will find the Slate of Officers for 2006. They will be introduced at our Graduation Dinner on November 10<sup>th</sup> at the Ferndale Senior Center!
2. **REMEMBER-We will NOT have a Foundation meeting on October 13<sup>th</sup>.**
3. There will be a garden tour for Master Gardener Foundation members, family, and friends on Sunday Oct 16. Check elsewhere in this issue for details!

## Who Am I?

~Faye Agner

I'm a genus of two robust, marginal aquatic perennials, with short rhizomes from N. E Asia and W. North America. I have basal clusters of large, ovate-oblong, glossy, mid-to dark green leaves, and yellow or white spathes that surround spadices bearing small, bisexual green flowers. I am one of the first harbingers of spring and quite colorful. Because of my distinctive odor, I doubt you would want to go into the swamp to pick me for a table bouquet.

August was rose

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

### Camas

Family: Liliaceae  
Genus: *Camassia*  
Species: *quamash*

The spring-blooming bulbs most likely to capture our attention are exotics: they're not native to our region or even to our continent. Daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, and crocus all come from central Europe or Eurasia. We tend to forget that North America has its own array of extraordinarily beautiful plants grown from bulbs, many of them native to our western region. These thrive in our soils and appreciate the cycle of wet winters and dry summers characteristic of the place they—and we—call “home.”



None of our native western bulbs is more important to our region than the one known variously as camas, camassia, small camas, quamassia, quamas, and camas lily. For years it carried *Camassia esculenta* as its botanical moniker; you'll still find it listed under this name in many reference books and plant lists. But *Camassia quamash* is now its official name; although as many point out, the two terms share a certain redundancy.

How important is camas? Noted botanist Leslie Haskin went so far as to write in 1934: “There is more romance and adventure clustered about the camas root and flower than about almost any other American plant.” Tribal wars and family feuds erupted over disputes about ownership of camas fields, which were so extensive they were described as looking like large, deep-blue “lakes.” Native people had a set of sophisticated management techniques to tend the wild fields. These included inherited ownership and responsibility for particular camas beds; clearing rocks and brush and burning weeds; cultivating the soil to keep it loose; transplanting the best bulbs; practicing sustainable harvesting methods, including selective gathering; and removing death-camas bulbs (*Zigadenus venenosus*) so they wouldn't be mistaken for the edible variety.



Camas bulbs were important food staples as well as central elements of celebratory feasts. Most early explorers credited camas with saving them from extreme hunger or worse. Later, settlers declared them worthy replacements for other, more familiar comestibles. Native people layered camas bulbs with moistened grasses in pits and roasted them for “two nights and a day.” Settlers learned to stew camas for nearly as long, until it became soft and sweet. Then they used it to make the western equivalent of the pumpkin and squash pies they remembered from home.

Today, the swaths of deep blue are gone. We can only imagine one stretching from Sehome Hill north to Ferndale. We seldom see camas growing in the wild. But we can still enjoy it in our gardens, for its beauty if not for its food value. Plant a few bulbs this fall, about six inches deep in a prepared bed that gets full sun through winter and spring. Next year you'll spot the narrow leaves in very early spring and within what seems like just a few days, the small, starchy flowers will erupt from the fast-growing central stalk. Most of your camas will have blue flowers, although one or two white ones are apt to sneak in over time, even if you plant the named varieties that are more readily available in the marketplace every year. They now come in all shades of blue and purple—and *Camassia quamash* ‘Blue Melody’ even has variegated leaves.

Photo: William & Wilma Follette  
@ USDA-NRCS PLANTS  
Database / USDA NRCS. 1992.  
Western wetland flora: Field  
office guide to plant species.  
West Region, Sacramento, CA.

One of the nice things about camas is its tendency to disappear very soon after it blooms, even though it will return in a year. The stalk will dry quickly and so will the leaves. You can clean them up and tidy their beds while daffodils and tulips are still taking their own sweet time to yellow and dry out. Another advantage is that deer dislike camas and are apt to leave yours alone. Even without being nibbled, however, its quick fading means camas will leave holes in your border early in the season. Be sure to plant them among perennials that emerge later in the spring and fill out over the summer. Many people find daylilies perfect for this.

One of the reasons Chief Joseph led his people away from their homeland was to protest the destruction of tribal camas meadows by settlers' plows and livestock. As camas went, so went the west.

*Continued on last page*

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

### Friend or Foe?: A New Rust of Blackberries



Upper and lower leaf of infected Himalayan blackberry. Photo (ODA)



Infected evergreen blackberry fruiting buds and flowers. (Photo T. Peerbolt)

In the spring of 2005 a very mixed blessing arrived in the Pacific Northwest. The Oregon Department of Agriculture discovered a fungal rust causing significant damage to the scourge, Himalayan blackberry, *Rubus discolor*. The rust was identified as *Phragmidium violaceum*, which was not known to occur in North America.

The blackberry rust is native to Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Various strains of the blackberry rust exist, and each strain can cause different amounts of damage to the weedy Himalayan blackberry. The rust has been used as a biological control agent against weedy blackberry species in Australia, New Zealand, and Chile, and in some cases is very effective at killing blackberry plants.

biological control agent against weedy blackberry species in Australia, New Zealand, and Chile, and in some cases is very effective at killing blackberry plants.

Blackberry rust has been considered as a potential biological control agent for invasive blackberry species in the Pacific Northwest. However, there is concern about its ability to infect our desired *Rubus* species, such as commercial evergreen blackberry and related crops. Since its discovery in the Pacific Northwest, the Oregon Department of Agriculture and commercial growers have found the rust infecting weed and crop plants in 14 counties in Oregon and one site in Washington State. It has not been found in the Puget Sound counties, but keep an eye out for it! The disease can spread rapidly in favorable conditions and we will likely have it soon, if it's not here already.

**Identification and Lifecycle:** The rust undergoes sexual reproduction in spring via three different spore types. Beginning as early as November, the rust can continue to produce multiple generations throughout the next growing season as "golden summer spores." Golden summer spores rely on wind to disperse to other plants.

New growth is most susceptible to rust infection. The rust over winters on infected leaves as black, sticky teliospores.

Infected leaves have small purple-red spots on the upper surface; while the underside will have yellow-to-creamy-white pustules. You may also see the black teliospores on the leaf's underside. Other green tissues can be infected, such as unripe berries, flower buds, and stems. As the infection progresses, leaves drop, and the entire cane can become defoliated in severe cases. Other native rusts occur on blackberry but are not as damaging.

#### For more information, visit:

Oregon State  
Department of  
Agriculture: [http://  
egov.oregon.gov/  
ODA/PLANT/  
alerts\\_index.shtml](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/alerts_index.shtml)

Northwest Integrated  
Pest Management  
[http://  
www.nwipm.info/  
blkrust-05.htm](http://www.nwipm.info/blkrust-05.htm)

Bushes infected with rust still produce edible fruit. Jenny Glass at WSU's Plant Diagnostic Clinic, does offer the good advice to wash berries off before eating them; it never hurts to do so anyway, given all the other critters that visit blackberry bushes.

**Management:** Currently federal, state, university researchers and commercial berry growers are testing the susceptibility of different *Rubus* species, especially the commercial varieties. Blackberry growers are likely to adopt fungicide applications to slow the disease's progression through susceptible fields. If you have a favorite blackberry bush, regularly prune off infected tissue and dispose of it. Do not let infected leaves drop or stay on the canes.

In other areas of the world, the rust can reduce the foliage by as much as 50% in a five-year period. The inability to hold onto leaves and the vulnerability of new growth can severely inhibit blackberries' usual talent for prolifically producing daughter plants and new suckers. Some strains of the rust appear to be very effective biological control agents against weedy blackberries.

## Spartina

*Spartina alterniflora*, *Spartina anglica*, *Spartina densiflora*, *Spartina patens*



**THREAT:** There are several types of *spartina* of concern in Washington State. All are saltwater grasses capable of invading shallow coastal areas. *Spartina alterniflora* (smooth cordgrass) and *Spartina patens* (saltmeadow cordgrass) are native to the Atlantic coast of North America. *Spartina densiflora* is native to South America, while *Spartina anglica* is a hybrid between *S. alterniflora* and a cordgrass native to England. Of these species, *S. alterniflora* is the most common in Washington while the other three are more restricted. Depending on the species, spartina grows from above the spring high tide line to about 6 feet below mean high water. On the west coast, *spartina* invades tidelands, forming grass stands that exclude all other vegetation. The dense root systems trap sediments, changing the elevation of the tidelands. The entire ecosystem of the tidelands can be disrupted, impacting shellfish, fish and bird habitat, native vegetation and water drainage. These plants spread both vegetatively (except for *S. densiflora*) and by seeds, which are spread by water. *Spartina* was introduced through contaminated ballast water, as a packing material for oyster spats and/or by intentional plantings for erosion control. *Spartina* has been found in Birch Bay in Whatcom County, and *Spartina anglica* is present in all adjoining counties and in Boundary Bay, British Columbia.

**DESCRIPTION:** The four *Spartina* species of concern are all deep-rooted perennial grasses, which grow in salt-water areas. These plants can be difficult to identify.

Contact the local weed board to assist with the identification of any suspicious or invasive grasses found in coastal areas, especially any grass growing on tidal mudflats. *Spartina* stems sprout from the root system in the spring, and depending on the species, can grow from less than 1 foot to 6 feet tall. These plants reproduce both by whitish rhizomes (except *S. deniflora*) and by seed, flowering from June to September. However, plants do not necessarily flower every year, and some do not flower for long periods of time. Depending on the species and age of the infestation, plants can occur as single tussocks, in *Spartina* meadows or in circular spreading patches.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** *Spartina* can be controlled using mechanical and chemical means. Small infestations can be hand dug but care must be taken to remove as many as the roots as can be located. Hand digging can create disposal problems due to the large amount of sediment (usually mud) that must be removed with the roots; this material must be removed to upland areas, away from the intertidal zone. Covering plants with black plastic has also been used successfully for small infestations. The covering should be put in place in spring, securely held in place over and beyond the infestation, and left in place for at least one year. Repeated mowing can also be used to weaken plants in small infestations, and to prevent seed formation. Mowing can be used in combination with chemical treatments for larger areas. In Washington, aquatic application of herbicides can only be done by licensed applicators. Currently, there are state programs addressing the control of *Spartina*. Contact the weed board for information on these programs or chemical control. Permits may be required for *Spartina* removal projects planned in aquatic habitats.



## Gardens of Italy

FYI—If anyone would like information about the ‘Gardens of Italy’ tour next May, call Pat Nelson at 384-0408.

## Pumpkin Day at Hovander

~David Simonson

“Pumpkin Day” is Saturday, October 15, from 9 till noon. We’ve contacted group homes in Whatcom County to come out for pumpkins. We’ll have pumpkins for children, also, so bring your children, grandchildren, etc.

We’ll need Master Gardener volunteers to assist—so plan to attend. Bring hand pruners or loppers to cut pumpkins from the vines. Volunteers should plan to be at Hovander by 8:45 to begin preparations. Halloween-type treats would be in order for break time!!

A big “thank you” to all volunteers who helped plan and maintain all Hovander demonstration garden projects this year. You can all be proud to be “Whatcom in Bloom” award winners!



*Pumpkin Day 2002*

## Plant of the Month

*Continued from page 4*

Other native bulbs also became scarce as their habitat gave way to agriculture and later, development. In the nick of time, these beauties caught the attention of plant breeders in Europe. They’re working to restore native western bulbs to prominence, if only in domesticated settings. You’ll see a wider selection more readily available every year. Today, our own *Camassia quamash* is finding favor in gardens around the world. But as you and I know, there’s no place like home.

## Tis the Season

*Continued from page 2*


can do a lot of good. A thicker lawn is less likely to be bothered with weed invasion and fall is a good time of year to work on lawn renovation. If you can rake and mow you lawn before scattering the seed, you’ll have better luck with the renovation process. Yard maintenance companies can be hired to aerate, thatch or overseed lawn and fall is a good time to get to the grass roots of lawn improvement.



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.

**WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY**  
WHATCOM COUNTY EXTENSION

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

  
Craig MacConnell  
Horticulture Agent

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

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### Dates to Remember:

- October 6 ..... 10 a.m. to noon ..... **Monthly Foundation Board Meeting**  
Extension Office
- October 13 ..... **No Regular Foundation Meeting**  
See article on first page
- October 16 ..... 1:30 p.m. .... **Terry and Dave Maczuga Garden Tour**  
See article
- October 15 ..... 9 a.m. to Noon ..... **Pumpkin Day**  
Hovander
- November 10 ..... 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. .... **MG Graduation/Potluck**  
Ferndale Senior Center
- Wednesdays ..... 7:45 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 3 p.m. .... **Bellingham Farmer's Market**