

# Weeder's Digest

All the dirt that's fit to print



Newsletter of the Whatcom County Master Gardeners

November 2005

Don't forget to attend the Graduation/Potluck at the Ferndale Senior Center on Thursday, November 10. Bring guests (kids included) and your favorite dish to share. The Foundation will furnish coffee, tea and juice; they will also furnish paper plates and utensils. We will announce the incoming officers of the Foundation for 2006, and will have as the featured speaker, Cheryl Greenwood Kinsley. This is always a fun event.

If you have not completed your volunteer hours – come to the graduation anyway and share a good time. We can then make plans to complete your hours.

There are many on-going activities that will be worked on during the winter, so contact the office or one of the board members to join a committee, or a volunteer activity. There are plenty of educational things to do that are fun also. Join up and give us your ideas.

Thanks to all of you who volunteered this year; this is what keeps our program going. Please remember to report those volunteer hours to the office because they are very important to you and to us.

*Thanks,  
Al McHenry*

## **Kristine K. Schlamp, IPM Coordinator WSU Extension, Whatcom County**

I am the new IPM Coordinator for Whatcom County, replacing Todd Murray who has now moved to King County. I am very excited about this, and look forward to working with the people of Whatcom County on pest management projects that concern us.

My background is well suited for this position; I hold a Master's of Pest Management degree from Simon Fraser University, British Columbia (BC) and have spent a lot of time in the field working on various pest problems. I have been exposed to a wide variety of systems, including urban, agricultural, horticultural and even forestry projects. I have worked with a variety of field crops including cranberries, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries and potatoes, as well as a variety of greenhouse crops including cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers.

This is not my first foray into extension work; while in BC, I worked at the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, as a pesticide information officer, which exposed me to a variety of agricultural extension work. I have also had the pleasure of teaching various courses in the Horticultural department at Kwantlen University College (BC).

With these experiences and skills, I am ready and willing to take on the challenge of applying myself to the agricultural concerns of Whatcom County. Throughout North America, new laws are being proposed that restrict or eliminate usage of toxic chemicals, therefore innovative ideas must be investigated. Prevention is the first step, while cultural and biological controls are now the driving force of the research industry. In this sense, IPM is a viable management strategy and is becoming increasingly important in landscapes and agriculture situation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 360/676-6736 or by email at [kschlamp@wsu.edu](mailto:kschlamp@wsu.edu).

## Tis the Season



By Faye Agner

November is here and with it comes the memory of the brightly colored leaves that fell in October that still have to be raked from our lawns. With this reminder that winter is near comes the realization that it is yard clean up time.

Leaves need to be raked and disposed of, ideally in a compost pile. In spite of the mild weather, it is time to prepare the garden for the winter season. It is time to dig and store tender bulbs. This includes dahlias and glads. This little chore needs to be cared for before the heavy frosts settle in.

Tuberous begonias should have reduced watering. As the leaves turn yellow and fall off, lift the tubers, shake off soil, and dry in a cool dry spot for several days. Now they are ready for storage in a cool dry place such as a shed or garage until spring when pink buds appear and it is time to plant the tubers once again

If you don't really feel like lifting your dahlias this fall, try making them an umbrella for them out of a thick layer of fern fronds. This will cause most of the water to run off. Be sure to put a rock on top to prevent the fronds from blowing away.

You can still plant your spring bulbs. Mix bone meal or bulb food in with the soil in which your bulbs are to be planted. For added interest and a longer blooming season, you might want to consider layering your bulbs. Plant the bulb at the recommended depths. Start with the deepest bulbs and work up to the shallower bulbs. Also be aware so the newer blooms do not mask the earlier blooms.

This is the time of year to choose your plants or trees for fall/winter color. You need to see them in color to know what color they will continue to show in the up coming years.

Before picking out your new tree, you need to be able to choose a healthy plant. Some things to look at are:

- First assess the site of the planed placement of the new tree. Check the drainage of the soil in the area. Dig a hole 12 inches deep and 12 inches wide. Fill it to the top with water and watch how the water drains out. If the level drops more than 3 inches in an hour, your soil is fast-draining and sandy. If the water level only drops between 1 and 3 inches, the soil is loamy with good drainage. Less than 2 inch of water level drop after an hour means the soil is poorly drained clay. Now that you know what type of soil you have with which to work, you also need to make note of the light and wind conditions. Check the inventories of local garden centers. The experts should be able to tell which of their trees will do best in your garden.
- Next, check to see if the chosen trees are root-bound. Look to see no roots are growing out of the drainage holes on the sides or bottom of the pot. Now, press a long-bladed screwdriver straight down into the soil halfway between the trunk and the edge of the container. Keeping it vertical, gently pull the screwdriver outward. If it moves easily through the soil, the roots have plenty of room in the pot. If you encounter resistance, the tree is likely root-bound. Pass it by.
- Prepare the hole by digging a hole twice the diameter of the root ball. The type of soil you have determines how deep the hold should be. Clay soil needs a drainage basin around the bottom of the hole. This way the tree won't end up standing in slow-draining water. Make the hole deep enough so the top of the tree's root ball will stand 1 to 2 inches above ground level when it sits on a 4- to 5-inch tall mound built in the bottom of the hole. This mound creates a "moat" for collecting the slow draining water and keeps the tree's roots from drowning. Planting holes for the two other types of soil do not need the drainage mound in the bottom of the hole.
- To place the tree, remove it from the container and loosen any circling roots. Lower the root ball into the hole and backfill half way, adding 3 or 4 inches of soil at a time. To make sure the roots are in good contact with the soil pack layers firmly with your foot. Fill the hole with water and let it soak in. Finish backfilling, but use no fertilizer. Use the remaining soil build up a 4- to 5- inch-deep saucer around the planted area as a water basin. Fill the basin with water and let it soak in, and then add a 2-to3-inch layer of mulch to the saucer. Keep the mulch couple of inches away from the tree trunk to prevent disease and possible animal damage.
- Last step is to stake the tree for at least a year to allow new anchoring roots to develop. Happy Planting!

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## President's Message

### IT'S BEEN FUN!

November is graduation month. It is also the month that a new slate of Master Gardener Foundation officer's will be beginning their duties for 2006. You received your ballot in last month's newsletter. We will have a great group of people guiding us next year. The new officers will be introduced at the graduation pot luck dinner on Thursday, November 10 at 6:30 p.m., at the Ferndale Senior Center. **Please bring a pot luck dish to share!**

I have thoroughly enjoyed being your Foundation President for the last two years! It has given me the chance to meet so many wonderful people. This was made possible because of the numerous and varied projects in which the Master Gardener program participates. In the four years I have been on the Foundation Board I have seen significant changes and accomplishments. Each group of people that I served with brought new ideas and new strengths. We keep adding very committed people to our membership, people who understand our mission and work hard to make things happen.

As our representative to the State Master Gardener Foundation, which I will continue to be, I see how others are organized and how they function. Whatcom County is certainly one of the best and we should be proud of that. In that same light we should thank the Extension Center office staff which is always there to help. My colleagues on the State Board have been surprised by the involvement and support we get from the Extension office. We're lucky!

Master Gardener Foundation President-elect, Gretchen White, and I met when she was in training. I could tell then that she was a winner! Gretchen recently helped Jill Cotton with the 2005 class. When we were selecting a new president, I asked several students about her and they spoke VERY HIGHLY of her abilities. As our new president she will need your support, as I did, and I know you will encourage and help her as she learns the ropes.

Since this is my last President's column, I thank you all as a group, for your support and for your dedication to our mission of helping our community. It always amazes me that so many of you feel you don't know very much but when called upon to help in any capacity, you always step up to the plate and hit a home run! You all are so humble, knowledgeable, caring and giving. I am proud to be a member of such a great group of people.

*Linda Bergquist,  
MGF President*

### Tis the Season

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Now, back to basics, continue lawn care by keeping your lawn cut going into winter. Rake fallen leaves regularly off the grass. Leaves will smother the grass. A feeding in November will keep lawns green and nourish the roots during the wintertime. Remember, if you plan on fertilizing only once a year, November is the best time to do so. Applying some dolomite lime this time of the year could be very beneficial too. Beware; don't apply nitrogen fertilizer and lime at the same time!

### WHO AM I?

I have some 250 species. Most are native to the West, some ranging from Canada into Mexico; some grow on highest mountains and some in the desert, others in forest glades, in foothills, on plains. A few are widely available, but most are sold only by specialists. Most of my species have narrowish, pointed leaves; those in basal foliage are larger, those on flower stems are smaller. I have narrow bell-shaped, lipped flowers from 3/4 to 1 1/2 inch long and most commonly seen in shades of salmon and peach to deep rose, lilac, dark purple, white, and rarely yellow. Hummingbirds like me.

Last Week: Skunk Cabbage

#### **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.*

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

## Viburnum Revisited

Family: Caprifoliaceae (Honeysuckle family), although some place viburnums in the

Adoxaceae family, with *Sambucus*

Genus: *Viburnum*,

containing more than 150 species

*In January 2005 I resolved to reflect from time to time on plants featured in past columns. Recently I had reason to revisit a 2000 column about Viburnum davidii, and in this month's column I report the results. Such as they are....*

Plants can be very confusing. Actually, the plants themselves are neither confusing nor confused; but sometimes the information about them can be both.

Let's say a question comes in to the Master Gardener office about *Viburnum davidii* and berries: *I want to plant Viburnum davidii, and I want to make sure I get those metallic blue berries. I've read that I need a male plant and a female plant. How do I tell the difference?*



*Viburnum Flower*



*Viburnum Fruit*

Whoa. Searching for information to answer this question properly can make any Master Gardener dizzy. Without a botanist on staff who specializes in the sex life of viburnums, coming up with the correct answer can be tricky.

The short answer is, *With most plants, you can't tell the difference between a male plant and a female plant, unless it's in flower. Even then, you need pictures to know for sure which flower is which.* This doesn't help the caller very much, because they want to buy their viburnums this weekend and this time of year, they're not in flower. So to be of service, the conscientious Master Gardener goes searching for more information.

My Plant of the Month column from 2000 is no help at all, because on this topic I offer just one single line: *Remember that plants of both sexes are required for berry production.* Most reference books written for the layman and recommended for use by MGs don't address the issue of "male" and "female" at all where viburnums are concerned. They merely describe flowers and berries and required growing conditions. A few offer some details: The American Horticultural Society's *Encyclopedia of Garden Plants* remarks about *V. davidii*: "If plants of both sexes are grown, female plants bear decorative, metallic blue fruits." *Taylor's* says this: "Plant 2 or more shrubs to increase berry set." Well, okay. That makes sense, does it not? But we still don't know male from female, do we? All we know at this point is that if we plant two of these evergreen viburnums, we have a 50 percent chance in each case of hitting the jackpot. But since the odds are per plant, we can still end up with all males, or more males than females.

Then we find this, from Virginia Cooperative Extension (specifically from Virginia Tech's department of environmental horticulture): "Roses and viburnums are examples of perfect flowered plants. This means that each individual flower has both male and female parts; stamens, which produce pollen, and a pistil, which contains the ovary(ies) which will produce the seed and hence the fruit. This

makes self-fertilization possible." Wow. That means the gardener doesn't have to worry about which plant is male and which plant is female. Each plant is both!

Problem solved? Well, not quite. Here's what Oregon State University's landscape guide to shrubs has to say about *V. davidii*: "Broadleaf evergreen shrub, 3-5 ft (1-1.5 m), forms low, compact mounds. Leaves

## Plant of the Month

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opposite, simple, thick, leathery, dark blue-green, narrowly, oval or slightly obovate, 5-15 cm long, 2.5-6.5 cm wide, conspicuously 3-veined, petioles usually less than 2.5 cm. Pink flower buds, in spring dull white flowers in 5-8 cm wide clusters appear. Small, 6 mm, oval, bright blue fruit held on red pedicels. **Need both male and female plants to obtain fruit.**” The emphasis, dear reader, is added by me.

So we’re back where we started, right? Well, maybe not. In our search we’ve learned the difference between perfect flowers and imperfect flowers. It has nothing to do with good looks or pest resistance or anything else of that sort. No, perfect flowers have both male parts and female parts. There are two kinds of perfect flowers: one in which both parts do their part, so to speak; and one in which one or another of the two parts is infertile.

Then we have imperfect flowers, which has either male or female parts, but not both; and whichever is there, is fertile.

We’ve also learned the terms **monoecious** (separate male flowers and female flowers on the same plant) and **dioecious** (flowers of only one sex on each plant). OSU literature tells us that monoecious and dioecious plants have only imperfect flowers. Aha! Logic (according to OSU) then dictates that all flowers on both monoecious and dioecious plants have either male or female parts, but not both, and whichever is there, is fertile. Then we read the description by Virginia Tech’s College of Natural Resources of *V. ellipticum* as monoecious, with perfect flowers. Arrgh!

This is where our heads start to spin, our office hours are up, and we leave the question about berries and *V. davidii* for the MGs on the next shift so they can have a go at it. Or we give it to Al. Who may (or may not) pass it to Craig.

My conclusion? Questions coming in may be challenging. Our search for the correct answer may leave us more confused. We have access to experts who can help (remember the MG mantra: “I don’t know but I’ll find out.”). It’s better to pass the question along to a more experienced authority than to give the wrong answer. And sometimes it ‘s very hard to be sure what the right answer is.

But often a short answer will do, so long as it’s not misleading. That may be all the client needs. In this case, we can try something like: “You know, there’s a great deal of conflicting information about this and I can’t quite sort it out. But what I can say is, you can’t tell the difference between a male and a female plant unless they have flowers or fruit. If you must plant right away and no flowers or fruit can be seen, plant several and take your chances, if you’d like. But remember, it’s a gamble. The surest way is to take a cutting from a plant you know is a male or a female because the person who grows it knows for sure. This cutting will be a “clone” of the parent plant and will have the same sex. Or, you can check the tag carefully. Many plants are sold “unsexed”: that means you can’t be sure which is which. But some growers are now producing clones and they are marked accordingly. Chances are good the tags are correct.”

You see? This entire column might’ve been only one paragraph long.

All photos in this article courtesy of Oregon Landscape Plant Database <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/index.htm>



Weed of the Month ..... By Laurel Shiner

# Water Primrose

*Ludwigia hexapetala*



**THREAT:** Water primrose is an aquatic plant, native to South America and the southeastern United States. It has been introduced to other areas of the U.S. and to Europe, as an ornamental, due to its bright yellow flower. Since this plant reproduces from plant fragments, as well as by seed, it can spread easily and quickly. Aside from being spread by water, this plant is also spread by waterfowl and human activity (such as shipping and recreational boating). Water primrose creeps along shorelines and forms dense mats of vegetation out into the water that can impair flow and restrict shoreline activities.

**DESCRIPTION:** Water primrose is an aquatic, perennial plant that prefers shallow areas and can tolerate slow moving water. The plants have slightly hairy, alternate,

willow-like leaves and bright yellow flowers, which usually have 5 petals. Flowering stems can rise up to 3 feet above the water surface and the plant blooms throughout the summer. The white roots are feathery at the nodes and are suspended in the water. The plants form dense mats that creep out from the shoreline, sometimes leaving little or no open water. Water primrose can be confused with other introduced aquatic primrose species.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Control methods are not well known for this species. Like all aquatic weeds, control is difficult and eradication may be unrealistic. To prevent the spread of any of these plants, trailers, boats and fishing gear should be carefully inspected to avoid transporting plant materials between water bodies. Water primrose can be manually or mechanically removed, but care must be taken to prevent plant fragments from escaping and further spreading the plant. Covering with opaque material or the use of herbicides may be effective.



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

## Extension Spring Training Schedules

### Master Gardeners

Do you have a friend who is interested in the Master Gardener program? Let them know the 2006 training begins March 2. There is still space available so have them apply now! We are only asking 60 hours of volunteer payback time for more than 90 hours of class time.

### Master Composters

Whatcom County's Master Recycler/Composter program is offered one time per year beginning in March. The 2006 class will be held on Wednesday evenings 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Payback time for this class is 35 hours.

### Master Food Preservers

Always wondering what to do with the harvest from your garden? The Master Food Preserver training will be held on Saturdays starting March 4, from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. ending April 22. Payback time is 40 hours.

### Watershed Masters/Beachwatchers

This class will be being offered again this spring starting in March. This class offers more than 100 hours of training, including field trips for 100 hours of payback time.

To find more information on these classes go to <http://whatcom.wsu.edu> or call the Extension Office at 360/676-6736

## Garden Friends and Foes ..... By Kristine K. Schlamp

### Disease Control for the Fall

While you are out enjoying the crisp fall weather, it would be a good idea to pay particular attention to disease control in your garden or landscape area. Horticulturalists who sustain vigorous plants often use a combination of common sense (not necessarily so common) tactics to keep wilts, rots, leaf spots, and a plethora of similar diseases under control. Now, that you have spent the last couple of months fertilizing, watering and pruning (to name a few duties) and your garden looked wonderful, its time to pay particular attention to details so your work in the Spring may be lessened. Use the following strategies:



- Bacterial and fungal organisms produce spores and structures that are specifically designed to overwinter in your garden. Remove fallen leaves to reduce leaf spot diseases, such as black spot of rose and photinia leaf blight. Remove and destroy all your annuals. For vegetable gardens, remove crop debris that collected over the summer months. This includes tomato, potato, cucumber, melon and squash vines, as well as fruits and tubers. These basic sanitation steps will reduce diseases such as early blight and septoria leaf spot of tomatoes.
- If you didn't do so in the summer, now would be a good time to walk through your garden and record each plant's location, especially vegetables. This will help you plan for next season's planting strategy. Diseases often build up in areas where the same vegetable has been planted in consecutive seasons. By rotating crops, farmers use this technique to keep disease incidence down.
- For those of you with fruit or nut trees, pruning will help reduce diseases such as fire blight and black knot. Proper pruning methods require you to prune at least six inches (15 cm) below the last visible sign of infection. After each cut, clean and disinfect your tools to prevent spreading the disease. Also remove any old fruit that remains hanging, or has fallen from the tree. Rake and destroy fallen leaves to reduce sources of inoculum of diseases such as brown rot and apple scab.
- New homeowners or people that have introduced new plants to their existing landscape should examine their plantscape with a critical eye. Overcrowding plants can encourage disease pathogens, so always plant new shrubbery at the recommended spacing to ensure adequate air circulation. Plants that are close to their neighbors don't dry out as quickly and are vulnerable to disease attacks. Also, remove any dead or diseased branches.



Now that you've raked, picked and pruned, what should you do with all this plant refuse; compost it? Although most foliar pathogens are destroyed, some soil borne pathogens will persist in rotting crop refuse. To eliminate these, proper composting methods are essential. A high temperature needs to be maintained for an adequate period. If the high temperature cannot be maintained, the plant refuse should be destroyed. For further information on composting, see <http://www.whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost>.


Finally, on those cold blustering days when you are flipping through garden catalogs, in front of a roaring fire, select varieties suitable to your site conditions. If possible, decide on cultivars that are disease-resistant. Understanding the needs of your plants as well as the needs of disease organisms will help you minimize losses, and make your garden an 'easier place to grow in' for both you and your plants!



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](mailto: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:

- November 3 ..... 10 a.m. to noon ..... Monthly Foundation Board Meeting  
Extension Office
- November 10 ..... 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. .... MG Potluck/Graduation  
Ferndale Senior Center
- November 24 & 25 ..... All Day ..... Thanksgiving Holiday  
Extension Office Closed
- December 23-26 ..... All Day ..... Christmas Holidays  
Extension Office Closed
- Wednesdays ..... 8 to 9 a.m. .... Master Gardener breakfasts  
Babe's in Ferndale