

# N Master Gardener NEWSLETTER

July 2018

Cowlitz County

1946 Third Avenue, Longview WA 98632


**Extension Staff**

Phone: 360-577-3014

**Gary Fredricks**, WSU Cowlitz County Extension Director, Extension 3  
E-mail: garyf@wsu.edu

**Carlee Dowell**, Administrative 577-3014 Extension 0  
**E-mail:** [dowellc@co.cowlitz.wa.us](mailto:dowellc@co.cowlitz.wa.us)

**WSU Gardening Websites**  
<http://mastergardener.wsu.edu>  
<http://gardening.wsu.edu>  
<http://gardening.wsu.edu/eastside>  
<http://cowlitz.wsu.edu>

**HortSense Fact Sheets**<http://hortsense.cahnr.wsu.edu/>**PestSense Fact Sheets**<http://pestsense.cahnr.wsu.edu/>**Pest Leaflet Series**

<https://puyallup.wsu.edu/plantclinic/pls/>  
resources/pls-res.html

**WSU Educational Materials**  
<http://pubs.wsu.edu>

**In this Issue:**

Announcements &amp; Meetings

Garden myths take two- Alice Slusher

Did you Know? –Phyllis MacNichol-Collins

Locked in a Box-Anne Wolff

**Prepared by:** Carlee Dowell  
**Contributors:** Gary Fredricks, Alice Slusher, Anne Wolff

**REFLECTIONS FROM THE GARDEN: Doing good work!**

It was a late night last month and as I was getting ready for bed, my son arrived home from work. When I asked how his day had gone, he said he had stopped to help someone along side the road whose car was leaking water. He was there to get tools and water. I helped him collect water in milk jugs and we headed back. They had managed to get off the freeway, but had no options for help and still needed to drive 50 miles. It was a young couple with two very small kids and she was 7 months pregnant. After 90 minutes in the rain, my son managed to get the old hose off that had a three inch gash, wrap it in duct tape, replace it, add water and send them on their way. You could see the relief in the young mother's eyes as she gave my son a really big hug.

I hear stories of service all the time from those people in this county. A family that received a raised bed garden has recently been harvesting radishes. Many were eaten before they made it to the house and they are ready to plant another crop. Another lady stopped me in a store and was excited to tell me that her mason bee house is nearly full after setting it out this spring. A lady with tomato plants was thrilled at the success of already having small tomatoes when past plants have yielded little to nothing. The food bank passed along a thank you note for all of fresh produce that was donated. A man whose hedge was dying brought a sample into the clinic, learned how to treat it and was happy to be able to save the plants from destruction. The list goes on and on.

Hundreds of people have been helped by the Master Gardeners in the plant clinic, in workshops, at Farmer's Market and in a variety of other ways. The result is people's quality of life is much better because of the time and energy given unselfishly by MG volunteers.

Like my son, there were no awards handed out or newspaper articles, just a grateful thank you for touching a life and making it better. I hear the words Thank You almost daily in regards to people who have been helped by a Master Gardener volunteer. The community is far better because of your efforts and I pass along the countless thank you I have heard from those who appreciate everything you have done.

My thanks to all the Master Gardeners who have given so much of their time. Know that you do great work! May the well wishes of a grateful community nourish the garden of your heart and the weeds of apathy disappear.

# Meetings & Events

## MG Potluck & Garden Tour – July 31<sup>st</sup>

6:00pm @ Lucy Claxton Home  
1506 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Longview

## MG Award Committee – August 7<sup>th</sup>

10am – 11:00am @ WSU Extension Office  
1946 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave, Longview

## Jr. MG Committee Mtg. – August 9<sup>th</sup>

2pm – 3:00pm @ WSU Extension Office  
1946 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave, Longview

## MG Foundation Mtg. – August 14<sup>th</sup>

10am – 11:30am @ WSU Extension Office  
1946 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave, Longview

## MG Potluck & Garden Tour – August 28<sup>th</sup>

6:00pm @ Nancy Chennault Home  
953 Sandy Bend Road, Castle Rock

## - Article Opportunity -

If you specialize in a specific type of gardening, then why not share your knowledge by writing a short article for the newsletter? It's a great way to contribute, and help inspire fellow gardeners. Not to mention that the time spent writing can be turned in as volunteer hours!

If you have an article you'd like to share, please email them to-  
Carlee Dowell  
[dowellc@co.cowlitz.wa.us](mailto:dowellc@co.cowlitz.wa.us)

**For more information on upcoming events please visit the MG Calendar:**

[https://teamup.com/kseaaaf848d1\\_5584493/](https://teamup.com/kseaaaf848d1_5584493/)

## Gardening Tips from our Local Master Gardeners

What piece of gardening advice would you give a new gardener? This month's advice is...

*"When planting a tomato, put some egg shells in the bottom of your hole. This will give the plant enough calcium to prevent blossom end rot."*

- Sara Pursley

*"Tomatillos are easy to grow and they make wonderful salsa, but you will need two if them if you want the husks to fill with fruit. They need to cross pollinate and although they are distantly related to tomatoes, they will not cross pollinate with them."*

<https://www.rodalesorganiclife.com/garden/backyard-guide-raising-tomatillos>

- Billie Bevers



Look for more MG garden tips next month!

## Bug Bytes    Gardening Myths, Take Two

-Alice Slusher

Last month we talked about busting some common garden myths. I've been getting lots of feedback from folks, including other Master Gardeners. Many of them were surprised, as I was when I first found out, that one should not put stones in the bottom of a plant container, because it actually disrupts the flow of water, instead of improving drainage like we had always believed. Other MGs reported that their husbands just don't believe that watering plants in the middle of the day does not burn their leaves, or that mixing compost and fertilizer in a planting hole for a new tree is a really poor idea and harms the tree in the long run. In fact, the day I wrote the article, I came home to my husband dumping compost into the planting hole of our new apple trees. Sigh. Sometimes you just have to pick your battles. This wasn't one of those times... It's hard to give up long held beliefs, even if they do fly in the face of scientific research.

I used to hate it as a kid when Mom would tell me to do something, and in answer to my whiny "Why?" would say, "Because I told you so." I'll try to give you some reasonable answers to justify why the following common "facts" aren't correct. Let see if I can come up with some more!

I've noticed that garden catalogs, and even Costco, are selling cute little "bee houses." We hear a lot about preserving our pollinators, and many folks think this might be the best way to do it. Well, the truth is, unless we're talking about properly constructed mason bee habitats and honey bee hives, most bees are ground dwellers. If you have the room, leave a sunny and flat area of bare ground, a small pile of sand, or some old creviced wood to attract those busy solitary bees. Another fact to consider is that there are many other kinds of pollinators out there, as well as beneficial insect that we'd like to invite into our gardens. Plant a variety of flowers in and around your veggie garden to provide season-long flowers. Aside from our nearly maintenance free native plants, some choices to consider are cilantro, dill, sweet alyssum (plant as a border away from the garden), coreopsis, yarrow, sunflower, and tansy. Keep in mind that some of the little bee-like buzzers on your flowers may look like bees, but they don't sting.

Here's one that I hear all the time—Epsom salts cure everything, or at least prevents a problem that occurs in tomatoes and other vegetables, blossom end rot. So many folks I talk to around here swear by it. Well, the truth is, Epsom salts contain calcium, which is a nutrient that may be low in our



soil, but it also contains magnesium, a mineral that is abundant in our soil here. If there is an imbalance of nutrients in the soil, it can actually block the ability of the plant to get what it needs, and too much magnesium will prevent the plant from getting enough calcium. If a soil test shows that you have too little calcium, don't add Epsom salts—add calcium carbonate, and follow the directions on the label. Another long-held belief is that crushed eggshells add usable calcium to the soil. Unfortunately, that's just not so. The main reason that tomatoes get blossom end rot is because of inconsistent watering. If the soil gets too dry between watering's, the plant is unable to take up and use the existing calcium in the soil. So go ahead and use your Epsom salts, but only in your soaking bath to soothe those sore gardening muscles!

How many of you routinely lime your lawn in an effort to get rid of moss? How is that working out for you? Probably not too well. The real trick is to make your lawn unfriendly to moss. We all know that moss likes shade and moisture—just look at the walkway or roof on the north side of your home. In the lawn, however, you often have an opportunity to improve soil drainage and create a sunnier exposure by pruning or cutting down trees and shrubs. You can also plant shade-loving grass or



ground covers in those areas. But the bigger problem isn't our acidic soil, it's that grass loves nitrogen, and if you provide it with good nutrition, and lots of sun, it will out-compete the moss. Fertilize four times a year, twice in the spring, and twice in the fall to get a lush lawn that leaves no room for moss. So get out there and get growing! Here's hoping for fair skies and sunny days!

## Did you know?

There are two kinds of sunflower: Striped and Black Oil.

Sunflowers are planted in 8 of our states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, California, Colorado, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Texas.

Black oil sunflowers are primarily used to make oil for cooking and salads, and it's a "good for you" oil. Sunflowers turn to follow the sun until they bloom.

Sunflowers grow deep roots, which can be as deep as 9 feet.

Receipt: Sunflower Kernel Crunch Balls

- 12 oz. chocolate chips
- 1 cup chow mien noodles
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup salted, roasted sunflower kernels

Melt chocolate chips in the top of a double boiler over hot water. Stir in noodles and kernels. Drop by teaspoon on waxed paper. Makes 24

## Locked in the Box

-Anne Wolff

As Master Gardeners, we pride ourselves in thinking outside the box. But what happens when we get locked in the box?



This is how Roxanne, Alice and I ended up locked in the box.

It all started when a very nice older lady came into to the Plant and Insect Clinic on a busy Monday morning. She had the most interesting looking round, brown pod. She had found it on the ground and was curious. We took her information at set out on our ID mission.

Roxanne, Alice and I immediately thought it was a gall (an abnormal outgrowth of plant tissues caused by various pests) a closer look left enough doubt in our minds that Roxanne suggested cutting it open. We carefully cut through the papery shell revealing a spongy cream color flesh. Definitely not a gall. This required further investigation, so we sprang into Master Gardener detective mode.



We meticulously scoured our Master Gardener Resources, brainstorming and bouncing ideas off each other. A seed? A nut? What family? We looked at pictures, searched the internet. We even broke off tiny pieces to investigate under the microscope.

Our resources exhausted, we had to admit we were stumped. We did the only thing left to do. We took a picture of our find and Alice submitted it to the Plant ID forum at the University of British Columbia for identification.

A couple of days later we got our answer.

Three simple words. "Perhaps an Avocado?"

If only we had been thinking outside the box!

## Did you know?

Fun things about tomatoes:

- Eating cooked tomatoes act as a kind of internal sunscreen by helping to block UV rays, according to researchers at the University of Manchester in Newcastle, England.
- You can save seeds from hybrid tomatoes, but you won't grow tomatoes exactly like the ones you started with. To get identical tomatoes, grow seeds harvested from heirlooms.
- The government classified tomatoes as a vegetable in the late 1800s so it could be taxed under custom regulations.
- According to the UDA, Americans eat 22-24 pounds of tomatoes per person per year. About half of that comes from ketchup and tomato sauce.
- A whopping 93% of American gardeners grow tomatoes in their yards.
- China is the #1 producer of tomatoes around the world. US is second.
- Forget orange juice: Florida grows more tomatoes than any other state.

-Provided by Phyllis MacNichol- Collins