



# Seeds For Thought

February 2022 Volume 22, Issue 1

A newsletter of the  
Master Gardener  
Foundation of  
Washington State

## In This Issue

*From the President* **1**

*From the Program  
Coordinator* **2**

*Forcing Branches  
for Spring* **3**

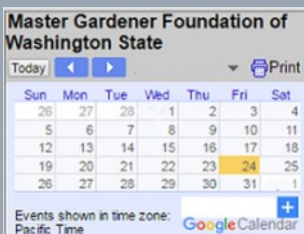
*Planning Pollinator  
Friendly Gardens* **4**

*Conference update* **5**

*Greenhouse Seed  
Starting* **6**

Visit our website:

[MGFWS](http://MGFWS.org)



Iris photo by Erin  
Landon Grays Harbor  
County Master  
Gardener

## From the President

~~Don Enstrom, MGFWS President



Not exactly a Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon moment, but I did make an unexpected association recently. Have you ever watched the PBS Mystery! series "Father Brown"? Happens to be the series is based on the short stories of Gilbert Chesterton. Chesterton is also the author of the 1929 book "The Thing," including what has become known as the Chesterton Principle.

Popularly quoted as "Don't ever take a fence down until you know the reason why it was put up," it is more generally stated as "... reforms should not be made until the reasoning behind the existing state of affairs is understood."

I've been thinking about the Chesterton Principle a lot in recent months. As I talk to state foundation members and county foundation leaders across the state, the conversation often turns to our program guidelines, agreements, and ruling documents, scant few of which anticipated anything like the extended pandemic we are in. As public health measures escalated, we began canceling meetings and activities, waiting for a return to normality. WSU Extension and our MG program coordinators have developed workarounds to maintain service to the public. We continue to develop our skills in video conferencing, online access, class video recordings, and other technologies to help keep the MG program alive. While these areas have done alright, other areas – recruiting trainees, mentoring, developing leaders, raising money, celebrating successes, bestowing recognition, etc. – have not fared as well.

We've learned a lot about our program during the pandemic and have a clearer picture of what does and doesn't work in maintaining a volunteer base that can effectively serve the public remotely. Some of these methods have worked so well that they may become our primary techniques. But we must be careful not to jettison our older methods and traditions that have fallen by the wayside due to their reliance on in-person interactions. And this is where the Chesterton Principle comes into play. If we are to remain a successful volunteer-driven program, we must ensure we are recognizing the importance of providing the traditional in-person social interactions the public appreciates and volunteers enjoy.

On a final note, it turns out Chesterton was not a perfect practitioner of his principle. At one point in his book, he criticizes a particular theory, describing any  
(Continued on [page 7](#))

## WSU Master Gardener Program Update

~~Jennifer Marquis, Statewide Program Leader



In 1973 a grassroots effort spurred a sociologic movement that changed the lives of individuals and communities around the world. Forty-nine years ago, WSU Extension trained the inaugural class of people to become WSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers. In 2023 we will celebrate 50 years of WSU Extension Master Gardeners, now nearly 4500 volunteers strong. We are in the very early stages of planning our anniversary celebration! The planning team is comprised of members of the Master Gardener Leadership Team, CAHNRS Communications, CAHNRS Development, and five volunteers representing NW, Central, SE, SW, and NE regions of Washington State. We are excited to lead the charge, and there will be opportunities to provide assistance and to join in the celebrations. Press releases, press kits, social media messaging, print materials, and much more will be available for each county to use to celebrate in unique ways.

Here is what we know so far. Four regional events at each of our four research stations will highlight and recognize volunteers, faculty, and staff for their commitment to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. The 2023 Advanced Education Conference will be the culminating event. Opportunities to celebrate all 86k extension master gardeners nationally and internationally at the International Extension Master Gardener Conference in Overland Park, Kansas, June 18-22, 2023, are forthcoming. Stay tuned for more information over the upcoming months! We will be asking for your thoughts and for your participation to make this an amazing anniversary. Please talk to your program coordinator or MGFWS representative to learn how you might be able to help - Happy 50th!

*Seeds for Thought* is a quarterly publication of the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State (MGFWS)  
Published February, May, August & November

<b>Officer</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Email address</b>
President	Don Enstrom	Lewis	<a href="mailto:PresidentMGFWS@gmail.com">PresidentMGFWS@gmail.com</a>
Executive Vice President	Paul McKenna	Island	<a href="mailto:exvpmgfw@gmail.com">exvpmgfw@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	John Strong	Yakima	<a href="mailto:SecretaryMGFWS@gmail.com">SecretaryMGFWS@gmail.com</a>
Treasurer	Gilbert Plascencia	Yakima	<a href="mailto:plascenciag@hotmail.com">plascenciag@hotmail.com</a>
Conference Director 2022	Melody Westmoreland	Yakima	<a href="mailto:westmoreland9108@yahoo.com">westmoreland9108@yahoo.com</a>
Conference Director 2021	C-J Nielsen	Island	<a href="mailto:cjnielsen2@gmail.com">cjnielsen2@gmail.com</a>
Conference Director 2023	<Open>		
Development Director	Patty Dion	Yakima	<a href="mailto:DevelopmentMGFWS@gmail.com">DevelopmentMGFWS@gmail.com</a>
Past President	Kathleen Eaton	Snohomish/AZ	<a href="mailto:kmleaton@me.com">kmleaton@me.com</a>
WSU MG Program Leader	Jennifer Marquis	WSU	<a href="mailto:jgmarquis@wsu.edu">jgmarquis@wsu.edu</a>

## Bring Spring Indoors: Forcing Branches for Spring Blooms

~~Alice Slusher, Cowlitz County Master Gardener



Witch Hazel blossoms - Photo via [Pixabay](#)

Late winter is always hard for me. My brain knows it's winter, but my heart thinks it should be spring. To indulge my fantasy, I forced some paperwhite narcissus bulbs and have fragrant white clusters of springtime on my kitchen counter. But they're just about finished, and I need to see something bloom again! Have you ever tried "forcing" trees or bush branches to bloom indoors? It's really easy to do, and kids love to help and are fascinated watching the branches change from bumpy sticks to flowering branches. Give it a try—anything to get spring here a bit early!

**Choose your flowering bushes or trees:** You get better results from shrubby plants rather than trees. Although it's been a pretty mild winter, make sure the temp is above freezing to ease your branches' transition to a much warmer indoor environment.

**Making the cut:** You will need sharpened pruners to make a clean cut—never tear a branch from the tree. Choose accessible branches that won't mar the appearance of the bush when removed, or play it safe and choose branches from the back of the bush. They should be at least one foot long with lots of rounded flower buds. If the buds look like they're ready to open, that's even better—you won't have to delay gratification as long. The best way to cut off a branch is back to the base of the one you're removing, just a quarter-inch above the "branch collar," the thickened area where the branch attaches. If you're only cutting part of a very long branch, cut on the diagonal, just above a bud. This protects the branch from collecting water on the cut and is healthier for the bush.

**Indoor prep:** Trim off all excess twigs and shoots that will end up underwater. They will rot and foul your water. Next, place some lukewarm water in a pan, and make a fresh sharply diagonal cut at the end of the branch while the branch is submerged. It's thought that the underwater trimming prevents air bubbles from forming on the cut that might obstruct water uptake.

You can also make small vertical slits up through your cut with a sharp knife to increase surface area for absorption. Some people advocate smashing the end of the branch with a hammer, but that damages the vascular system and makes it difficult for water to be absorbed.

**Simulate spring in your home:** Place your branches in water and put them in a cool spot—between 60°-65°. They need indirect light, not full sun. Check the water often and replace it as needed. You may want to lightly mist your buds until the blossom color starts to peek out. Depending on the type of bush or tree and its stage of development when you cut the branches, it may take several weeks for the blossoms to open. In the meantime, it's fun to watch as the buds develop.

**Finally, your reward: spring blossoms!** Move your arrangement to bright indirect sunlight to enjoy the delicate color. To help your arrangements last for several weeks, move to a very cool place like your garage at night-40°-55°, mist frequently, and change the water weekly.

(Continued on [page 7](#))



## Planning Pollinator Friendly Gardens

~~Mary Dessel, Mason County Master Gardener

Mid-winter is known for its rainy, cold days with darkness descending by late afternoon. But even with the darkness, there are bright spots. It is a good time to pull back, go within, and plan your 2022 garden. I used to think that gardens were for growing vegetables; but after five years as a Mason County Master Gardener, I realize a garden is so much more. It is many different things to many different people.

Now is the time many of us are browsing through plant catalogs looking for plants to enhance our gardens. However, as you are selecting plants, you have an opportunity to go a step beyond. You can select beautiful plants that you will enjoy but will also be preferred by our pollinators.

Eighty-five percent of our plants reproduce due to insect pollination. In return for pollination service, pollinators are rewarded with nectar and pollen. Bees are the most efficient pollinators as they actively seek out pollen to feed their young. Adult bees utilize nectar as a source of energy.

The garden that I am dreaming about for 2022 will have vegetables to eat but will also be filled with flowers for our native pollinators.

Since pollinators play a really important role in the success of your garden, how do we go about creating a pollinator friendly garden?

- We can help pollinators find and use plants by planting them in clumps rather than as single plants. Planting in clumps helps to conserve the pollinators energy and promotes success.
- Include flowering trees. Think how many blossoms cover a broad-leaf flowering tree such as big leaf maple or Pacific dogwood.
- Think native! Our pollinators have coevolved with our native plants over thousands of years. They have adapted strategies for successful pollination. Include plants such as red flowering currant, Oregon grape and broad-leaf lupine.
- Plant a wide variety of plants that bloom from early spring into fall to serve as a food supply for our native pollinators. Bumble bees need to find available food starting in early spring as the Queens emerge. They need food to sustain their colony during the summer months and to feed the new Queens in the late fall before they enter a state of diapause or rest during the winter months.
- Think about the colors you offer the pollinators as you plan your garden. Bees see colors differently than we do. They choose flowers with blue, purple, and yellow petals. They cannot see red.
- Select flowers that are aromatic such as lavender that will favor pollinators.
- Avoid pesticides, in particular the neonicotinoids.

Our pollinators are in a state of decline. Let's see if we can help them by selecting flowers that serve as a pollinator friendly food source for them and bring enjoyment to us as well.



Bumblebees on Phacelia -  
Photo by Alice Slusher, Cowlitz  
County Master Gardener

## 2022 WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference Update

*~~ Melody Westmoreland, Conference Chair, Yakima County Master Gardener*

TOGETHER. AGAIN.

It's raining, it's snowing, in some places it's flooding – but the Planning Committee for the Advanced Education Conference (AEC) 2022 is working like the sun is shining. AEC2022 will be held September 28-October 1<sup>st</sup> so please mark your calendars and save the dates, we hope to see you there!

At this time a final decision has not been made as to what form the Conference will take. The Planning Committee is working through the pros and cons of virtual, in-person, and hybrid formatting. And it goes without saying we are still at the mercy of the ups and downs in a Pandemic World. We can make our best assumptions and the possibility remains that things will change between now and September, perhaps multiple times.

We have secured a reimbursement grant in the amount of \$2500 from the City of Olympia as part of their LTAC funds. We are actively seeking sponsors, vendors, and contributors to the event, please reach out and let us know your thoughts on who might fill these roles.

We have confirmed our Keynote Speaker as Benjamin Vogt. Dr. Vogt will be speaking about “A New Garden Ethic” – check him out online, you won't want to miss this presentation. The program development team is working hard to compile a group of folks that will provide timely information, interesting topics, and leave those who attend wanting more. We all have our favorites that we want to see year after year, there'll be one or two of those in addition to some instructors you might be hearing for the first time. What I can guarantee is that it's going to be good.

We are always looking for a few more people to help out with advance planning and would love to have you join our team. Everyone has their own talents and all can be used – please email me at [westmoreland9108@yahoo.com](mailto:westmoreland9108@yahoo.com) with your interest or give me a call/text at 509 907 7894.

I'll be sending something to each issue between now and September, and maybe one follow-up after the conference is complete. Send me your thoughts, I'd love to hear them!

Melody Westmoreland  
Conference Director, AEC2022



## Seed Starting Learnings at our Greenhouse

~~Bob Taylor and the Greenhouse Team, Lewis County Master Gardeners

Lewis County Master Gardener Foundation purchased a used 20' X 30' double poly greenhouse in 2015 and dedicated it in 2018. The greenhouse was already equipped with both an automated electric heater and cooling fan system. After we purchased it, there was a considerable amount of time spent selecting a location, finally settling on a high fenced-in area next to our existing the Demo Gardens on city property in Centralia. It wasn't until 2021 that we utilized the greenhouse to grow plants for our Spring Plant Sale. We grew both edibles and flowers from seed. We also boosted the growth of selected existing potted plants from raised beds we have around the outside of the greenhouse. We are sharing our learnings about seed starting and growing vegetables and flowers in a heated greenhouse. The heater came on at 50 degrees and the fans at 80 degrees to keep the plants at an optimal growing temperature.

**Starting seed mix:** Anyone can buy seed starter mix, but it can be expensive when you are starting at large volumes. We decided to try mixing our own recipe; 4 parts backyard sifted compost (you need to be very vigilant when making your own compost to avoid weed seeds, use only non-herbicide treated grass clippings, keep the mix one part green to 3-4 parts brown (nitrogen-carbon). By sifting compost, you end up with a fine mix, which is much more attractive (we used ¼" wire mesh)). To the compost add 2 parts peat moss, 1 part vermiculite, and 1 part Perlite. Make sure your mix is well moistened. We ended up making about 10 cubic yards for our growing season. We used a 3-pound coffee can as our "measuring cup."

**When to start seeds:** We all know how to read seed packet directions. We learned that timing adjustments are needed due to the heating system. Our Tomato and Tomatillo plants went crazy. We have never offered tomato plants with red tomatoes and large tomatillos at our mid-May Plant Sale. Large, meaning 4' tall and requiring 2 ½ gallon pots with hardy stakes.



Potting up tomatoes - Photo via Pixabay.

**Heat mats:** We started all seeds on heat mats. The heat mats were on a 12 hour on and off timer. We will move towards 16 hours on and 8 off timing during February and March this year. Under each heat mat, we had 1" thick pieces of Styrofoam, which were free from the recycling efforts at our local Solid Waste and their special Styrofoam collection events.

**Watering:** We utilized a team approach to monitor and water. Interesting learning... not all Master Gardeners use the same "finger-tip dampness test" to determine if seed starts need water. As a result, we had both dryness and drowned several seed starts. When you find starts the next day in a pool of water, it is not a good situation. The dryness was caused by "hot spots" in our heat mats. Don't get

(Continued on [page 8](#))



(Continued from [page 1](#))

adherent to be “ ... like a lunatic who should carefully water his garden with a watering-can, while holding up an umbrella to keep off the rain.” Had Master Gardeners been around in 1929, we could have explained that his so-called “lunatic” was a gardener avoiding rain-splashed fungi, because we know - when it rains, it spores!

Warm Regards - Don

(Continued from [page 3](#))

**Best choices:** Here are some of the easiest branches to force indoors. Keep in mind that some of them, depending on the variety and the stage of development, may take between 2 and 5 weeks to bloom.

Forsythia, witch hazel, Cornelian cherry, fothergillas, Bradford pears, cherries and plums (both fruiting and ornamental), flowering quinces, beeches, willows, birches and alders for their graceful catkins, lilacs, magnolias, rhododendrons azaleas, and serviceberries. Maples are surprisingly beautiful when they bloom—give them a try.

Don't be afraid to experiment—last year, I trimmed my dappled willow bush—the one with early summer white and pink speckled leaves. It has stunning bright red new-growth branches. I cut a bunch of thin branches and just brought them in to enjoy the colorful twigs. After about a month, not only did tiny green leaves appear, but roots had formed in the water. I stuck them in the ground, and have new little bushes! Not the best way to propagate a plant, but hey—it's a willow, and willows don't need much encouragement.

Our Plant and Insect Clinic is now offering a monthly look at garden tasks and problems you should be scouting for in your yards and gardens. Check out our *Gardening Tips: Month-by-Month* on our website: <https://www.cowlitzcomq.com/gardening-tipsmonth-by-month>



Cherry blossoms - Photo via [Pixabay](#)

(Continued from [page 6](#))

overly excited about donated heat mats... check them out.

**Up-potting:** As the seedlings started to grow to about 2-3" tall and had 3-4 true leaves, it was time to up-pot from the small cell potting size to 2" 4-6 pack size pots. We found an ordinary kitchen fork to be the best tool for lifting seedlings. We added 2 cups of clay soil to our mix to not only give the starts a familiarity to local soils but also to add tilth to the mixture. Also, the seedlings were taken off heat mats, and we started to add half-strength liquid fertilizer to the watering mix. In most cases, this was at the 3-4-week date from the initial seed planting. Not all seeds are ready for a 4-6 pack, so labeling the up-potted seeds is critical. We use old Venetian blind slats cut into 4-5" inch lengths as our label stakes. Make sure you date every step for informational purposes and improving next year's success.

Some seeds will go through several up pottings such as tomatoes. When we got to gallon size for tomatoes, it was at that point we added calcium in the form of crushed eggshells to prevent end-rot.

**Pollination:** Growing seeds outside is not a problem; pollinators will find the flowers. In a greenhouse or closed environment, you need to hand pollinate or introduce pollinators. We chose hand pollination using cotton swabs and new make-up brushes. Very common Plant Clinic question from those clients growing in greenhouses- Why didn't I get any Tomatoes? Pollination and watering are great opportunities to inspect for disease and cull any infected plants.

**Staking:** Usually at the gallon size is when we started to stake the plants. Some plants may need them at the 4" pot size. We had a variety of stake sizes and lengths. Due to our cost's consciousness, we were able to scavenge several old pallet boards to cut into ¼" X ¼" or larger stakes as appropriate. Any type of twine will work but the best trick is to first tie the twine to the stake and then loop it around the stem, sometimes in multiple places. Tying twine to the stake first prevents it from sliding down the stake.

**Fertilizing:** Mentioned earlier, we started with a weak water-soluble fertilizer, about ½ strength. Only when we reached the final, either 4" or gallon pot size, did we introduce a ½ to 1 tablespoon of granular balanced fertilizer like 10-10-10. Water soluble fertilizer was once a week and granular once every 6 weeks. Usually only one dose is needed.

**Trimming:** Plants do not grow uniformly. Every now and then a little trimming is necessary to present an attractive plant. Sometime pinching will do, and sometimes small clippers are best.

**Pests:** The biggest pests' problem we had were mice. They will devour seeds and starts. A little peanut butter in spring traps were the most successful. We simultaneously tried both "sticky pads" and the round entrapment devices. The only other pests we unknowingly brought in with the outside plants were slugs. Using both slug bait and hand picking kept damage to a minimum.

**Record Keeping:** Keep track of your progress and action notes, especially timing, what's happening and what to consider next year. A good recap of your notes makes detail planning easy for next year. That information coupled with Plant Sale results, comments from customers and fellow Master Gardeners will help your "continuous improvement" efforts.

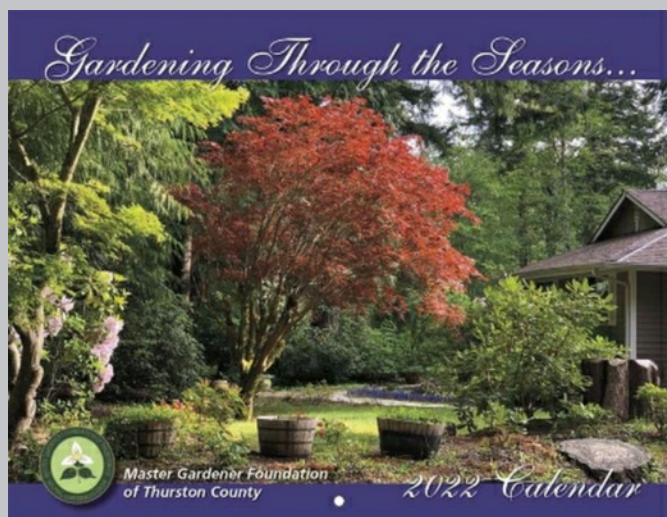


## King County Master Gardeners Resume Gardening Classes for 2022

It's not too early to think about your garden. The Master Gardeners of King County will launch their 2022 gardening classes and workshops in January 2022. Whether you're a beginning gardener or a veteran of many seasons, you're sure to find a class of interest. Growing Groceries classes begin on Wednesday, January 19, and the popular Bellevue Demonstration Garden Saturday Workshops will start on Saturday, January 22. All classes will be presented on Zoom and registration is required.

**Growing Groceries:** Classes are presented on specific Wednesdays, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Initial classes cover the basics of gardening; later classes present information on specific plant families or garden problems, each class building on earlier presentations. Registration is required and there is a fee of \$7.50 for each class. Gardeners also have the option to purchase the series of 11 classes at a discount. (There will be a limited number of financial need fee waivers available for individual classes.) Visit <https://mgfkc.org/education/growinggroceries> for schedule, class, and registration information. The Master Gardener Foundation uses the funds collected to support activities of the Master Gardener Program in King County.

**Bellevue Demonstration Garden Saturday Workshops:** Classes are every Saturday, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., January 22 to mid-October. The workshops cover a wide variety of gardening: vegetables, composting, specific plant varieties, garden pests, efficient watering, and more. There is a \$5 fee for each workshop, with the option to register for a quarterly series of classes at a discount. (There will be a limited number of financial need fee waivers available for individual classes.) Visit <https://mgfkc.org/education/bdg-workshops> for schedule, registration information, and the January-March workshop descriptions. Registration is required. The fees help the Master Gardener Foundation support the activities of the Master Gardener Program in King County.



Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County is happy to announce that we have published our second annual garden calendar. This year we chose to feature photos taken by our members of local gardens. Some are of public gardens; some are of our own home gardens. We included timely gardening tips that provide monthly reminders for gardeners on each page.

A calendar committee, chaired by Foundation President, Barbara Baker, collaborated on monthly Zoom meetings for the bulk of 2021 to produce this calendar, reviewing submissions by members and choosing the photos to include. By securing sponsors for individual months and for the calendar in general, we were able to pay for the publication costs. Therefore, all sales (at \$15 per calendar) provide a profit for the Foundation. We are excited by the results of our endeavor and are already planning for the next edition.

The calendars are available at a price of \$15 each, through the Foundation at [MGFTC.org](http://MGFTC.org).

## Mason County Master Gardeners

Annual winter  
gardening  
workshops  
on Zoom

# Through the Garden Gate 2022

[register here](https://www.mgfmcc.org)

[www.mgfmcc.org](https://www.mgfmcc.org)

\$15 for series



**January 29**

9:00 – 10:30 am

*Managing your bountiful fruit trees*

- Fruit tree pruning
- Insect strategies



**February 5**

9:00 – 10:30 am

*Landscaping for a drier climate*

- Firewise landscaping
- Drought-tolerant gardening



**February 12**

9:00 – 10:30 am

*Bringing life and color to your garden*

- Attracting birds
- Creating DIY suet blocks
- Adding color to your landscape

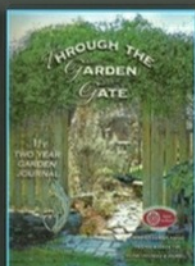


**February 19**

9:00 – 10:30 am

*Planting veggies anyone?*

- Vegetable gardening basics
- Favorite garden tools



Door prize  
at each workshop

*Through the Garden Gate:*  
*My two-year garden journal*

kendall.carman@wsu.edu \* 360-427-9670, ext 682  
<https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/master-gardener>  
[www.facebook.com/masoncountymastergardeners](https://www.facebook.com/masoncountymastergardeners)  
[www.mgfmcc.org](https://www.mgfmcc.org)



WSU EXTENSION  
**Mason County**

Cooperating agencies: Washington State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Mason County. WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Reasonable accommodation will be made for persons with disabilities and special needs who contact Kendall Carman at 303 N 4th Street, Shelton, WA 98584, 360-427-9670, ext 682, or [kendall.carman@wsu.edu](mailto:kendall.carman@wsu.edu) at least 2 weeks prior to the event. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension Office.





## CABIN FEVER MARCH 12 2022

Doug Tallamy "Nature's Best Hope"



Virtual Gardening Symposium

14 Regional Garden Experts

Sustainability. Stewardship. Resiliency.

All are welcome



WSU EXTENSION  
Spokane County



Master Gardener  
FOUNDATION  
Spokane County

**Registration Opening Soon [www.mgfsc.org](http://www.mgfsc.org)**