



# Seeds For Thought

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A newsletter of the  
Master Gardener  
Foundation of  
Washington State

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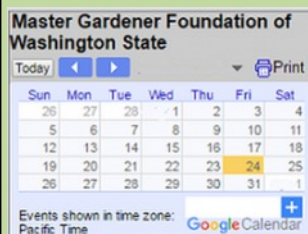
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Iris photo by Erin  
Landon Grays Harbor  
County Master  
Gardener

## From the President

~~Don Enstrom, MGFWS President



### ~~5~~ ~~3~~ ~~4~~ A Tale of ~~Two~~ Conferences

When Dickens wrote, "... it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope ..." he could have been describing the story of our State Master Gardener Foundation in recent years. In this article I will share some history of how our Advanced Education Conference (AEC) planning has evolved.

Our annual conferences are designed to provide advanced MG education, highlight the strengths & accomplishments of our county programs, provide a friendly social atmosphere for MGs from across the state, and provide opportunities for our counties to raise money. Until recently, a great fund-raising opportunity lay in hosting the conference, as the general belief was that hosting a conference could make a county a nice 5 figure profit.

MGFWS (the State Foundation) managed the process for becoming a host county, beginning with the issuance of a Request for Proposal. Interested counties would respond with their proposals leading to a host being selected and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) being signed by the County Foundation, the State Foundation, and WSU. Without getting too far into the weeds, WSU's role was primarily on the educational side, the host county did the heavy lifting, and the State Foundation received a share of the profits. Over time it became apparent that conference profitability was not guaranteed, and the host county carried the highest financial risk in the agreement. In response, the MOA evolved to having the State Foundation provide "seed money" to help fund the conference as well as take a greater share of the financial risk inherent in hosting the conference. (WSU has never had direct financial involvement in the AEC). While these changes were important in supporting the 2017 and 2018 conferences, it was becoming apparent that county interest in hosting conferences was waning and that the current approach to hosting and funding the AEC was not sustainable.

During this period, the State Foundation concluded that hosting of the annual conference needed to shift to the MGFWS. The Foundation had already evolved to a working board structure, with recruitment of chapter representatives and board officers focused on building an organization that could take on the challenge of hosting the AEC each year. This restructuring went (Continued on [page 6](#))

## WSU Master Gardener Program Update

~~Jennifer Marquis, Statewide Program Leader



The WSU Extension Master Gardener Program, with financial support from County Government, WSU College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resources Sciences (CAHNRS), WSU Extension, and local Master Gardener Foundations, seeks to address critical issues facing Washington State residents by engaging university-trained volunteers to empower and sustain diverse communities with relevant, unbiased, research-based horticulture and environmental stewardship education. WSU Extension Master Gardeners teach horticulture principles and practices for the development of healthy landscapes to protect our natural resources. A critical issue facing Washington residents that WSU Extension Master Gardeners address is access to clean, healthy food.

**Local Food:** Our program promotes the use of sustainable techniques for growing food to improve individual and community health and wellness. Washington residents have an opportunity to increase food security in the communities in which they live. A recent [NC State Extension](#) article by J. Dara Bloom and others attempted to clarify the research on local food systems. The bottom line is local food systems have the potential to yield environmental, economic, health, and community benefits, but there are important takeaways.

Local food production reduces the economic and environmental impact of growing, processing, packaging, and transporting food. The article breaks down these benefits and describes where we need to be mindful. In fact, transporting food only accounts for 11% of greenhouse emissions related to moving food. It is food packing that accounts for most of the greenhouse gas emissions relative to the food supply chain. It is also important to account for the economy of scale. How many short trips does it take in a local market to deliver food? Then there is the question about how local farmers grow food. Do they use conventional or organic methods? Regardless, there are pros and cons to each.

The individual and community health benefits are easier to see. People who have direct access to local food through farmer's markets, community gardens, or by growing their own eat more fresh fruits and vegetables than people who do not. People in these communities have healthy BMI's and are at less risk for diabetes. Community, home, and school



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## Seeds... Pass Them On!

~~Phyllis Pugnetti, Yakima County Master Gardener



A class in the Heirloom Garden 9 weeks after breaking ground in 2014. Photo by Darrell Monroe, Yakima County MG

In 2014 Yakima Master Gardeners decided to create a Seed Library that would allow local gardeners to get free seeds, grow them, save seeds for themselves, and also return some seeds back to the library. We were especially interested in preserving the diversity of edible plants that are well adapted to our area. We grow open pollinated varieties, especially those from the Pacific NW, and with an eye toward unusual, rare, and endangered varieties. By its very nature, a seed library is a long-term project.

Before we could begin the library, we needed garden space. North Yakima Conservation District volunteered the use of a piece of land that is about the size of a large backyard garden. The area had previously been used for overflow parking. The soil was very compacted; growing bindweed, puncture vine, and cheat grass; and about one quarter of the garden is in shade. Not an ideal garden space—but exactly what we were looking for!

The challenges of this garden are what made it so desirable. It allows us not only to grow seeds for the library, and food for local meals programs, but also to use as an outdoor class room. We wanted to show that all gardens, including ours, come with challenges—and all can be improved with good garden practices.

Today we offer 215 varieties, about half are rare and very hard to find, and 140 varieties were grown full circle, from seed—to seed. A few local longtime gardeners, or their children and grandchildren, have made generous donations to the library from old family heirlooms that have been grown generationally. Heirloom varieties have wonderful stories that make the search for seeds well worth the effort.



Yakima Marblehead Squash. Photo by Darrell Monroe, Yakima County MG.

- Probably our greatest find is Yakima Marblehead squash, a true Yakima heirloom that was first documented in 1896 in a farm commodities price index for the Yakima Valley. It was a very popular winter squash for over 60 years and then for unknown reasons, fell into near extinction. We currently have these seeds in abundance and are happy to share them.
- A golden tomato with no name was grown for generations by Larry's family in Pennsylvania. He gave seeds to his neighbor, who gifted seeds to her friend, Gloria in Ellensburg. She grew this variety for many years to sell at the farmer's market. Gloria generously shared seeds with us. This variety can only be found in our library.
- Pellegrini and Rockwell bush beans are true Washington heirlooms that have been grown for over 100 years, almost exclusively on Whidbey Island. They are very rare outside Washington.

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## *Lessons from a Family Kitchen Garden*

*~~Barbara Faurot, Jefferson County Master Gardener*

What is a kitchen garden? From ancient traditions in Egypt, Babylon, and Mesopotamia to medieval monasteries to the “keyhole” gardens of Africa, kitchen gardens have served both the culinary and aesthetic needs of their communities. Today, family kitchen gardens are popping up in backyards, as they carry on the tradition of growing food for your table in a sustainable manner while adding visual appeal to the landscape.

Instead of straight rows of crops, plantings in a kitchen garden are designed to take advantage of different micro-climates and natural features to grow vegetables, fruits, herbs, and flowers as part of a beautiful landscape.

Mary Hunt and Mike Farrell have created a wonderful example of a kitchen garden in Port Townsend. The first thing I noticed when visiting their garden is the spectacular color and diversity--clusters of flowers, native shrubs, ferns, vegetables, fruit trees, herbs, and more. Underlying it all is a spirit of constant experimentation. As Mary says, “we try things, and keep trying things until something loves the place.”

A pole-barn sized fenced garden is set into the slope of the backyard. Here, there are individual raised beds and planting areas with herbs, vegetables, berries, grapes, columnar apples, and edible flowers. Pathways between the beds are easy to access and covered with straw for weed suppression. Next door, there's a greenhouse that looks pretty normal from the outside. But inside, there's a fish tank, vegetables growing from a bed of gravel, and a pleasant bubbling sound.

Mary explains that, in her “obsession” with growing organic food in limited space, she learned about aquaponics systems where fish and plants co-mingle their needs. Mary and Mike put together a system that “provides food year round, even during the limited light of a Pacific northwest winter.” Inside the greenhouse, their pet fish (tilapia and goldfish) provide fertilizer for the plants, and the plants provide oxygen for the fish. Three times a day water is filtered through the gravel and returned to the 300 gallon fish tank, recycling 95% of the water.



Growing inside Mary's 25x40 foot kitchen garden: Berries, leafy greens, root vegetables, beans, herbs, apples, and more. Photo courtesy Mary Hunt.

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## 2021 WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference Update

~~ C-J Nielsen, Conference Chair, Island County Master Gardener

We hope everyone is still holding the dates September 30—October 2, because here's **great news** for Master Gardeners across Washington State and beyond! The 26th WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference will be **Virtual**.

In addition to being a safe alternative in this crazy year, here's what this means for everyone:

- Join other gardeners from near and far to learn from leading instructors and researchers.
- Choose from a lineup of 30 great classes and learning opportunities offered in six sessions...with plenty of interaction options with instructors and presenters.
- Enjoy an inspiring Keynote presentation by world-renowned garden photographer and visual storyteller, David Perry.
- Join live Chat Parties and moderated small group discussions.
- Access recordings of classes you weren't able to experience live ... all included in your registration.
- Choose from creative and entertaining optional pre-Conference Tours ...virtual experiences you won't want to miss!
- Check out the Conference traditions: Marketplace and Silent Auction — all enjoyed from the comfort of your home.
- And ...No extra costs for travel and hotel.

**Learn and Grow!** This year's Conference is presented by the Washington State Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State and offers an exciting range of approved CE/Continuing Education. Classes are focused on Garden Mastery, Growing Food, Master Gardener Skills, Garden Sustainability and Maintenance, taught by a broad range of topic experts and WSU educators. Registered attendees will be able to record 10 hours of CE credits during the conference, take advantage of recorded classes totaling 36 CE credits, AND enjoy custom-designed optional virtual pre-Conference tours for additional CE.

Get Ready! **Registration Opens June 1.** Meantime, take a look at the fabulous lineup of classes and make plans to attend. Registration information, all details, and class and instructor information can be found on the 2021 WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference website at [mglearns.org](http://mglearns.org), with regular updates posted. It's going to be a great Conference!



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slower than hoped and a State Foundation hosted 2019 AEC proved beyond our reach. Efforts continued unabated, however, with the new goal of a 2020 Conference providing room to breathe.

The 2020 Conference Team was amazing. A true blend of capable MG volunteers from across the state, supported by the successful 2017 Yakima & 2018 Wenatchee AEC Teams. Conference planning moved quickly, a venue was selected, contracts were signed, marketing was in full gear, reservations were being made, rooms were being rented, all was good. And then COVID.

The writing was on the wall – the conference had to be rescheduled. Amazingly, 80% of our instructors and essentially all the Conference Team volunteers agreed to remain on board for AEC 2021, committed to making the first MGFWS hosted AEC a success. Unfortunately, COVID did not get the memo. The Team tried to keep options open by maintaining parallel virtual/in-person paths, but time ran out and the decision to go virtual was made. It has been a learning experience, but I am confident the Team is going to put on a great conference!

Our next challenge is in staffing the 2022 Conference. We have a head start in having already selected and contracted for the venue, but we need a 2022 AEC Director on board ASAP. Several of the 2021 AEC leaders have agreed to stay on, filling some of the most critical roles. So, if there is such a thing as an easy conference to organize, this is it!

We have learned that time is your best friend in planning a conference. To this end, we've already named Kathy Brenberger as the Director of our 2023 AEC. As the 50th anniversary of the International Master Gardener Program having been created here in Washington State, the 2023 AEC promises to be the best conference yet!

It is tremendously rewarding to serve on the MGFWS board and the Conference Committees, working with so many dedicated MG volunteers. I invite you to join our upcoming June board meeting and learn more about opportunities in the State Foundation!

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gardens can help bring people closer to their food and to their neighbors. This coming together of people raises awareness around food insecurity and empowers communities to make informed decisions about how to ensure their families, friends, and neighbors have consistent access to healthy foods.

In any given year, the most popular classes, demonstrations, workshops, and field days offered by WSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers statewide are related to local food. Each year, thousands of residents ask food gardening questions in our plant clinics and attend food gardening courses or participate in our community gardens. The produce grown in our demonstration and community gardens, where we teach sustainable food gardening practices, is donated to local food banks to the tune of 60,000 pounds a year.

As a WSU Extension Master Gardener, please help the members of our communities understand the role they play in food security by teaching sustainable food growing techniques and by sharing the environmental, economic, health, and community benefits to local food.



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- Borlotti Lamon beans arrived in Spain from the New World in 1508. In 1530 the Pope sent a gift of seeds to villagers in northern Italy. Written records show that they have been grown in small villages on the Lamon Plain continuously since 1530.

If your Master Gardener group has a demonstration garden, we encourage you to grow seed for at least a few rare or endangered varieties, and then pass the seeds along to other gardeners in your area. We can't possibly provide all the seeds you need; but when we have enough inventory of any of our rare varieties, we are happy to share. For a PDF copy of our 2021 seed catalog go to:

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2083/2021/01/Seed-Catalog-2021.pdf>

Any questions about seeds or the library can be sent to Phyllis Pugnetti at: [Phyl@Tieton.com](mailto:Phyl@Tieton.com)



**www.mgfmc.org**

Mason County Master Gardeners 2021  
**Online Plant Sale**

order dates  
May 1–May 12  
pickup dates  
May 13, 14, 15

Mason County  
Master Gardener Program  
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f/masoncountymastergardeners \* [www.mgfmc.org](http://www.mgfmc.org) <https://extension.wsu.edu/mason> \* 360-427-9670 ext 680

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Their aquaponics experiment is in its third year, producing tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, chard, and green bush beans inside a 5'x20' growing space. In the summer, additional pots in the greenhouse produce peppers, squash, and eggplant. In winter, the aquaponics system continues to produce a variety of leafy greens. (More information on aquaponics can be found at the USDA's [National Agricultural Library](#))

Uphill from the greenhouse--all created since last summer--are cherry, peach, and pear trees, berries, more herbs, and flowers. Next to the backyard forest is a simple yet beautiful espalier to grow Fiji, Honeycrisp, and Gala apples.



Perennial favorites with long bloom cycles, including (front) gold yarrow and meadow sage, and (back) purple rock rose, red valerian, and lavender next to the greenhouse. Sculpture by local artist Kim Simonelli. Photo courtesy Mary Hunt.

The big lesson learned is that you can do a lot in a small space without pesticides or waste. The principles of the traditional “keyhole” garden still apply today:

**Experimentation:** Keep trying new things, using seeds and plants from a variety of local sources. The WSU Master Gardener Seed Library is a good resource to learn about seed saving and seed sharing <https://extension.wsu.edu/jefferson/master-gardener-seed-library/>.

**Sustainability:** Improve soil tilth, water usage, and drainage with raised beds and home composting (a central composting basket is found in traditional African kitchen gardens). Create outer walls or fences from local or recycled materials.

**Connection:** Get inspired by learning from and sharing with neighbors. Mary learns from fellow

volunteers with the Quimper Community Harvest gleaners and the Raincoast Farms Food Bank. To help people bring fresh food from a food bank or farmer’s market to their kitchens, she has created a series of “Snapped Up” recipes, focused on local whole plant foods <https://l2020.org/local-food/snapped-up-recipes/>.

Mary’s and Mike’s garden is scheduled to be on the 2021 Jefferson County Master Gardener Foundation’s Secret Garden Tour on June 19, subject to the state’s COVID guidance. Check <https://jcmgf.org/secret-garden-2021/> for updates.

Barbara Faurot is a Jefferson County Master Gardener and Master Pruner, working with other volunteers who serve as community educators in gardening and environmental stewardship.

Published in the Port Townsend Leader June 10, 2020



# From the Ground and Up Gardening Workshop

**Saturday, June 19, 2021**

*Presented by WSU Pierce County Master Gardeners.*

This year, we're adjusting to the challenges of COVID-19 and are bringing informative classes and inspiring instructors to you virtually.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Be Inspired by two  
keynote speakers:

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Executive Director,  
Elizabeth Miller Botanic  
Garden  
&  
**Susie Egan,**  
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