

Seeds For Thought

2021 WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference Sets Record, Paves Way for 2022 Conference

C-J Nielsen, 2021 Conference Chair, Island County Master Gardener

The 26th WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference just completed would not have happened without volunteers. Dedicated. Talented. Stick-to-it folks on the conference planning team who worked on the design, development, and delivery for over two and a half years. Navigating the ever-changing narrative and timeline of the pandemic, this team of Master Gardeners nimbly worked from planning an in-person conference in Port Townsend (cancelled) to an in-person conference in Olympia (cancelled) to a virtual conference - *delivered!*

Record-setting in every way, the 2021 Conference offered Continuing Education opportunities to more than 435 attendees, the most ever. Special thanks to hard-working Master Gardener teams who designed the balanced educational program, located top-level instructors and speakers and attracted a superior group of sponsors, silent auction items and vendors. Importantly, many thanks to the dedication of over 35 instructors including WSU affiliates, WSU Master Gardeners, and horticultural professionals. These instructors delivered a broad range of Continuing Education classes focused on Garden Mastery, Growing Food, Master Gardener Skills, Garden Sustainability and Maintenance. All this was produced in a virtual setting thanks to a specialized production team, Social Enterprises, who created a seamless experience.

Altogether, amazing volunteer efforts supported this year's conference, and provided a healthy start for production our 2022 event. Mark Your Calendar! The Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State and WSU Extension can proudly announce that the 2022 WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference, "Together Again", will be held live at the Olympia Hotel on Capitol Lake, September 30-October 1, 2022.



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- What a conference!
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Feeding the Community

The Master Gardener Foundation of Benton-Franklin County (MGFBFC) created, funds, and maintains a 2.5 acre Demonstration Garden with 25 individual gardens, including a vegetable garden. Besides showcasing vegetables that can be grown in the Mid-Columbia region and testing different vegetable varieties, MGs donate all produce grown to Tri-City Food Banks. Garden Chair Dennis Fife instituted a succession planting program 5 years ago, increasing yields 3-fold. Fresh produce donations now average approximately 6,000 pounds annually, with 5,500 pounds donated so far this year with one harvest remaining. "We have some fantastic dedicated volunteers in the vegetable garden that make everything possible. We are also fortunate to have a commercial seed company and other commercial businesses that support the garden," stated Dennis. Rosemary Ruelas, Secretary of the Board of Directors for the the Tri-City Food Banks and Site Manager, Kennewick Food Bank, said, "The vegetables that we get from the Master Gardeners provide fresh and nutritious food to our clients. They are so excited when we tell them that this produce is from the Master Gardeners because they often do not have produce that is this fresh and tastes this good available to them. It is important to us as the Volunteer Staff of the Food Bank to be able to serve our clients good, nutritious food

and the Master Gardeners play an important part in our ability to do so."

Additionally, many local citizens participate in MGFBFC's "Plant a Row for the Hungry" program, using seeds provided by MGFBFC to grow and donate produce from their personal gardens to local food banks. Approximately 3,000 pounds of vegetables are donated annually through this program. MGFBFC also runs a major program called "Build-A-Bed, Feed-A-Family," which won the prestigious 2020 People's Choice Project of the Year award bestowed by the local chapter of the Project Management Institute. This program provides a way for low income families to grow their own food now and in the future by establishing community gardens and supplying tools, seeds, education, and continued MG mentoring to clients. In the past eight years, MGFBFC helped develop and sustain 53 food garden projects with space for about 735 gardeners under this program. These gardeners harvest about 74,000 pounds of fresh food annually. It's no surprise that MGFBFC programs are a major contributor to efforts to reduce food insecurity in the Mid-Columbia region.

Most Washington State Master Gardener Chapters donate the produce that they grow in their Demonstration Gardens to local foodbanks. We should be proud of this community support!

A few other examples:

Spokane : 281 Pounds

Snohomish : 4,620 Pounds

Pierce: 991 Pounds



Don Enstrom

From the President

After a 2-year hiatus, our State Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference returned for its 26th appearance this year. Looking at the attendance numbers and post-conference survey, it's clear that the AEC 2021 Team's energy, enthusiasm, and hard work in producing this first-time state foundation hosted conference paid off with record setting results in nearly every category. The outstanding quality of the instructors and speakers earned praise, and we were all inspired by David Perry's thought-provoking keynote presentation.

The conference kicked off Thursday evening with the State Foundation's Annual Meeting. The meeting opened with a delightful and entertaining visit by special guest Ciscoe Morris, a longtime Master Gardener and a beloved presence in Washington television, radio, and print. Ciscoe drew a large audience, which graciously stayed on Zoom for the significantly less entertaining business portion of the meeting. Ciscoe is a tough act to follow but we soldiered on, and in my opening remarks I presented a foundation "report card" focusing on our accomplishments and missed opportunities over the last year.

Our strength remains in our chapter-centric organization, with all representatives serving as voting member of our working board. We've filled open board and committee positions and tuned up our ruling documents, and thanks to the success of the 2021 conference, we've replenished our financial reserves. Regretfully the hard work and effort that has been focused on driving this progress has come at a cost – a lack of progress in building an enduring endowment to ensure a perpetual source of funding for our program. Thanks to a small but dedicated group of volunteers, the endowment has grown to about \$44,000 over the last 5 years – a nice sum, but far short of the \$2,000,000 envisioned by the foundation when the endowment was created. To drive the endowment growth we desire, we need to turn our record of strength, stability, and contribution into a compelling story that will attract the attention of our supporters and their gifts. supporting achievement of our vision – providing a whole of county chapters that is greater than the sum of their individual efforts.

State Foundation Progress!

We've filled open board and committee positions, tuned up our ruling documents, and thanks to the success of the 2021 conference, we've replenished our financial reserves.

Turning to our deliverables, our greatest accomplishment this year is the Foundation's successful assumption of AEC responsibilities, providing a groundbreaking virtual AEC conference. The recognition committee made great strides in strengthening our awards program, ensuring objectivity and increased visibility of the program through formal presentation ceremonies and publicity. We've also made progress in facilitating communication and unifying leadership, progress driven by our chapters working together to multiply the effectiveness of their participation in state-wide programs. Progress in these areas continue to grow as we lock in recent gains and build organizational strength. In summary, we look forward to a 2022 Advanced Education Conference that builds on the success of AEC 2021, we continue to focus on recognizing outstanding Master Gardeners supporting and strengthening our state-wide program, and to seek communication and sharing opportunities, we renew our support of our endowment, and encourage all chapters to fill open representative positions and join us in realizing the MGFWS dream!



Jennifer Marquis
WSU Master Gardener Extension Statewide Coordinator

Each quarter Jennifer provides detail on one of the seven Priorities for Washington State Master Gardeners. This information helps all of us to better understand their importance as well as our role in furthering these important priorities across the state.



Priority Area of the Quarter



Water is a limited and precious resource.

Water conservation starts in home gardens with an individual understanding that we all have a role to play in caring for the water that connects us to the landscape. Clean water, especially water that is usable by humans for consumption, is a non-renewable resource. It is estimated that home landscapes can triple the average homeowner's water consumption during the growing season. Water conserving design principles coupled with efficient irrigation delivery systems play a role in water conservation.

Putting into practice water conserving principles in home landscapes means that our streams and rivers will have increased flows that support plant and animal life. Healthy soil and installation of rain gardens will slow runoff, which helping to decrease urban flooding and ultimately leading to healthier waterways. Practices such as xeriscaping, planting drought tolerant plants, installing rain barrels, building healthy soils, and mulching conserve water, save money and support a healthy and beautiful landscape. Consumerhort.org has a number of publications outlining the benefits of plants and horticulture. Check out [Consumer Horticulture Benefits Our Environment](#) to learn more.

WSU Extension Master Gardeners teach about 250 classes and workshops and connect with nearly 4000 people to teach and answer questions about water conservation and rain gardens annually. These classes and connections help people understand that conserving water benefits people, agriculture and the environment, ensures that everyone knows that each of us has a role to play in water conservation, and provides people with specific techniques and practices that they can use in their yards and gardens to save water, save money and benefit the environment.

The WSU Extension Master Gardener Program, with financial support from County Governments, WSU College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resources Sciences (CAHNRS), WSU Extension and local Master Gardener Foundations addresses 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.

Why the Conference?

What did you think of this year's Advanced Education Conference? We had the most attendees ever!

"Why do we have an educational conference?"

"It seems to be expensive!"

Let's see if we can answer some questions for you.

There are approximately 4,000 Master Gardeners in Washington whose mission is to:

"Engage university-trained volunteers to empower and sustain diverse communities with relevant, unbiased, research-based horticulture and environmental stewardship education."

We Master Gardeners teach thousands of people to grow food every year, protect pollinators through Integrated Pest Management and appropriate use of insecticides. We help people identify and manage landscape problems through plant clinics offered across the state. Volunteers are capable to provide these services because we receive science-based education from Washington State University faculty and staff.

What is an Endowment?

Once Master Gardeners complete intern training, how do we stay current and knowledgeable to continue to provide our communities with information they need and want?

We continue to educate ourselves!

If we didn't enjoy learning, we would not likely be Master Gardeners, but it is sometimes hard to find time and the classes, whether online or in person, to get educational hours that are required in areas that we find interesting and relevant to our individual communities.

The State Foundation to the rescue!

In 2016, the State Foundation held Strategic Planning sessions that reinforced their role in providing high-quality ongoing education for Master Gardeners across the state. An Advanced Education Conference hosted by the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State ensures that we volunteers have opportunity to learn current information on topics that are important and relevant to our communities.

Since a state-wide conference with respected and knowledgeable educators is expensive to produce, how do we make it available to all Master Gardeners in Washington? ***We need a reliable source of income!***

We know what it costs to produce the conference. We have data. We need to keep the cost to attend as low as possible so folks from across the state can participate. If we had about \$80,000 per year, we could do that! ***We need an endowment!***

An endowment is a donation to a nonprofit organization, which uses the resulting investment *income* for a specific purpose. Endowments typically keep principal intact while using the investment income for the organization's efforts. We determined that we need a \$2 million endowment to generate approximately \$80,000 per year. It will be managed by the Endowment / Financial Department at WSU. With this amount, we will be able hold an



annual educational conference that is more affordable for attendees and managed by the state foundation (MGFWS).

Good news! We are making great progress toward this lofty goal! We are ahead of our plan and working hard to exceed that progress. We hope that you have a better understanding of this important fund and might consider helping out. For ideas, please visit our [web page](#) by clicking [here](#) and stay tuned for other opportunities!



C-J Nielsen, Master Gardener of the Year!

For years, C-J has contributed significantly to the success of programs in King and Island Counties and the State Foundation. As the Director of this year's Conference, she organized and led an all-star team through the pitfalls thrown us by COVID. In the end, due in no small way to her efforts, an excellent virtual conference with premium quality instructors was enjoyed by more than 400 attendees.

C-J's efforts began with planning a 2020 conference in 2019 to be held at Ft. Worden in Port Townsend. COVID prohibited that conference and C-J quickly helped us transition to a 2021 conference. We hoped to hold that in Olympia, but by early spring, we felt that an in-person conference would likely be prohibited, and the difficult decision was made to transition to an online experience. Without C-J's leadership and steady hand, these changes and interruptions would have been even more difficult.

It is not an exaggeration to say that C-J's knowledge, skills, experience, creativity, organization, energy, warmth, can-do attitude, work ethic, leadership, and commitment to the Master Gardener program have been instrumental in our progress toward making our state-wide "whole" truly greater than the sum of our individual county programs. For this we thank and honor her!



C-J Nielsen, Island County
2021 Master Gardener of the Year

An important part of the State Foundation's role is to recognize Master Gardeners from across the state who exhibit their special skills and dedication to benefit and/or showcase the state-wide program.

Susan Inlow-Romaine, Media Award!

The pandemic forced Master Gardener programs across the state to supplement their traditional print and broadcast strategies with an increased web presence and to embrace Zoom and other communication technologies – with varying degrees of success.

In selecting Susan for this award, the Awards Committee was impressed with her many accomplishments:

Her unique ability to strategically integrate multiple communication technologies to make "the whole greater than the sum of the parts".

Her early commitment to supporting, publicizing, and growing the MG program across the region, earned her the 2016 Intern of the Year Award.

Her amazing success at maintaining a Master Gardener program presence on TV, radio, and in print publications.

Her success in creating and sustaining partnerships with other civic organizations to multiply the effectiveness of your program's efforts.

Susan Inlow-Romaine
Benton-Franklin Counties
2021 Media Award





Jim Kropf
**2021 Ed LaCrosse
Distinguished Service Award**

Jim Kropf Ed LaCrosse Distinguished Service Award

This Lifetime award recognizes someone who has had a significant statewide (or broader) impact on the WSU Master Gardener Program or has acted on behalf of the MGFWS. Nominees need not be Master Gardeners (MG).

As the Northwest District Extension Director, Jim has provided strong and continuous support of the Master Gardener Program and the Master Gardener Volunteers for over four decades.

He has created and maintained Master Gardener training materials, including material and programs that form core elements of the Master Gardener curriculum. He has served in various leadership positions within the Extension organization, always maintaining close and supportive connections with the county programs. He has been active in numerous organizations where he has used his association and leadership to positively influence policies and practices that impact Master Gardeners across the state and country.

Jim's work has been recognized with awards that have helped distinguish the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. He has acquired significant grants that have funded work supporting WSU Master Gardener priorities, curriculum training and continuing education.





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Master Gardener
FOUNDATION
Spokane County

Save the Date!

March 12 2022

*Tending gardens
Nurturing hope*

***Cabin Fever Annual
Gardening Symposium***

*Featuring Nationally acclaimed authors
Doug Tallamy PhD & John Albers PhD
with Spokane Garden experts*



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