



# Seeds For Thought

February 2023 Volume 23, Issue 1

A newsletter of the  
Master Gardener  
Foundation of  
Washington State

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[MGFWS](http://MGFWS)

## From the President

~~Tana Hasart, MGFWS President



Writing this message is like writing the first paragraph in a novel – ideas that need shaping, paired with an unknown end result. Here is an introduction, a look back, and a look forward.

Aside from being the new MGFWS President, I am a Pierce County Master Gardener, military spouse, mother, grandmother, and higher education professional. Each attribute, as well as growing up in what would now be called a poor family, shapes my values and perspectives.

Our organization is strong because of significant contributions in the past. From board members to officers and partners, from early leaders and faculty to our most recent officers and president Don Enstrom, the MGFWS is viable because of your service and support. Thank you for creating opportunities for the MGFWS to grow and flourish.

This year will see us engaging in work on your behalf. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Master Gardener Program is a time to reflect, celebrate, and strengthen support for chapters and counties. The 2023 Annual Education Conference, scheduled in Tacoma, provides an opportunity to gather, learn, and share best practices. A successful Endowed Chair Campaign ensures our organization lives out its mission into the future.

So, what will you see as a focus for this year? My first priority is to listen at the local and regional level. Also “in the works” is adoption of MGFWS annual goals – a first draft to be shared with the Board in February, then with state MGs. Our focus as officers is to ensure we are a fiscal and best practice resource for you. I ask that you think about how you can inform, support, and strengthen **your** state foundation. Together we can make 2023 the most incredible year ever!



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## Happy Anniversary

~~Jennifer Marquis, Statewide Program Leader



[Happy Anniversary!](#) On February 5, 1973, the first group of volunteers started their training to become WSU Extension Master Gardeners. Students learned about botany and plant physiology, and about soils and soil-related health problems in that day-long class. Looking through the history of our program, I found that our founders, David Gibby and Bill Scheer, referred to the Program as a project. While this may seem inconsequential, I find it to be very telling. At the time, Bill and David didn't really know what they were starting. They truly viewed the training as a project with a defined start and end time. Little did they know that what they started was a sociologic grass-roots effort with widespread impact.

Nearly 50 years ago to the date of this publication, the Extension Master Gardener Program was born. Now in every state across our nation and in Canada, the United Kingdom, South Korea, and others, the Extension Master

Gardener program is 100K plus volunteers strong teaching research-based horticulture and environmental stewardship education to empower and sustain diverse communities. In the early years of the program, volunteers focused their efforts on plant and insect clinics to help homeowners with their garden and landscape problems. Today, plant and insect clinics remain a distinguishing service provided to communities free of charge, but now we know that gardening plays a key role in individual and community health and well-being, and our teachings have adjusted to meet needs.

From plant and insect clinics to demonstration gardens, which I like to call outdoor classrooms, to youth outreach, to community and school gardens and rain gardens, Extension Master Gardener volunteers teach people to grow their own food, about the importance of soil health, clean water, biodiversity, pollinators, wildfire preparedness, and climate change. They bring people together at community gardens so communities can make decisions about how to make sure their family, friends, and neighbors have healthy foods to eat. They teach people the importance of clean water and techniques like installing a rain garden to help filter and clean water before it goes into our oceans, lakes, and streams.

Extension Master Gardener volunteers are boots on the ground, non-regulatory community educators who bring people together to address global, societal, and community problems. Come learn more about who we are, what we do, and why we do it and celebrate 50 years of the WSU Extension Master Gardener program at one of our events happening this year. Our kick-off is at the Puyallup Research and Extension Center on April 8, 2023.

Regional events will be held on May 20, 2023, in Prosser at the Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center; on June 10, 2023, in Wenatchee at the Tree Fruit Research and



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## Jump Start Your Garden with Winter Sowing

~~Kelly Maupin, Skagit County Master Gardener

The dark days of winter are upon us. As a gardener, this is the time of year we pull out the seed catalogs and start planning for next year. If you're like me, you may already have been collecting and buying seeds throughout the summer and fall. Now is the time to prepare for winter sowing.

I first tried the winter sowing method last winter. It appealed to me because I can be a lazy gardener and I liked the 'set it and forget it nature' of this method of seed starting. I began with a few gallon jugs and before I knew it the number had blossomed to 40! I give full credit for this technique to Trudi Davidoff, who pioneered the method in upstate New York over 20 years ago.

The advantages of winter sowing include no need for lighting, no trays, tables, or shelves required, minimal required watering, upcycling containers, seedlings are weed free, and minimizing the risk of not dampening or hardening off well enough because seeds are stratified and germinate in their 'milk jug' environments naturally. The process is so easy--let me share it with you:

### Materials you will need:

- Clean translucent milk or juice jugs without lids
- Other large, clean, rigid clear plastic containers like those used for roasted chicken, or salad greens with lids
- Utility knife or scissors
- Potting soil without moisture control or fertilizer
- Poly or duct tape
- Plant markers
- UV-resistant, waterproof marker
- Coffee filters
- Seeds
- Spray bottle and water bottle with holes in cap (for watering)



You can be creative if you use containers other than jug-type containers, make sure you can cut vent holes in the lids for air transpiration and widen these as the plants grow! Photo by Kelly Maupin

### Steps for Winter Sowing

- 1) Turn the jug/container bottom up and cut or burn multiple small drainage holes in the bottom. I recommend adding multiple bottom-side drainage holes because in our climate having only one center drainage hole didn't work well. To do this, I use an old glue gun, making sure to have good ventilation when burning plastic. A utility knife or drill will also work for creating drainage holes.
- 2) Use a ruler to measure and mark a cut line 4" from the bottom of the jug. Mark the line with a marker all around the jug.
- 3) Using a utility scissors or knife, carefully cut the jug along the line you have measured, leaving a hinge at the back of the jug under the handle so that the top portion will flip open while still attached.
- 4) Place a coffee filter in the bottom of the jug (to keep the slugs out and hold soil in) and add pre-moistened potting soil to a level just below the hinge line.
- 5) Label the container with the plant name and date in three places using a no-fade, UV, water-resistant marker. Label the bottom of the jug, the top of the jug, and the plant marker in the soil. Household Sharpie-type markers are not recommended because the info will fade after months of being outside.

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## 2023 Advanced Education Conference

~~Debbie Benbow, 2023 Conference Chair and Chelan County Master Gardener

Planning for the 2023 [WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference](#) is well underway. Our Planning Team Leads have been meeting since fall and are in the process of developing the program, creating a new website, and more. Stay tuned for exciting news over the next few months.

In the meantime, there are several team positions to fill. If you or someone you know are interested in serving in this rewarding endeavor, please reach out to me (Debbie Benbow) at [debjeanbenbow@gmail.com](mailto:debjeanbenbow@gmail.com) or call me at 509-669-4822.

- **Online AEC registration using Eventbrite**

We're looking for someone to assist John Strong with Eventbrite Registration for the 2023 AEC. It involves basic computer skills.

Important is regular routine attention to emails for notice of registrations and questions. Eventbrite is simple to administer for anyone who has basic web browser computer skills. There is also very robust online help in Eventbrite. A desktop or larger laptop computer is helpful. The interface is a bit large for tablet screens.

Preparation for on-site conference check-in includes producing rosters of attendees and name badges. Very helpful is comfortable knowledge of Microsoft Excel and Word. Attendee information comes from Eventbrite in .csv format, which is easily used by a spreadsheet program like Excel. A good method for printing name badges is the MailMerge feature in Word.

- **Procurement Lead**

Do you or someone you know have lots of great contacts and a knack for seeking donors? Are you a member of service groups such as Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.?

Costs have gone up, and for the AEC to continue we need sponsors. We have developed a [Sponsorship Package](#) to be used for soliciting funds, vendors, exhibitors, and auction items.

- **Vendors/Exhibitors Lead**

We're looking for someone to lead a team to solicit vendors and exhibitors for the AEC. This is an exciting year for businesses to get involved with Extension Master Gardeners as we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

- **Program Development**

Cathi Lamoreux is our Program Development Lead. Join her team to help recruit instructors for the AEC. As a team member you would be the point of contact for a small group of instructors from start to finish.

As we get closer to the Conference dates, there will be more positions to fill.

We are looking forward to seeing a full house at the Conference!



Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State



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Extension Center and in Mount Vernon at the Northwestern Research and Extension Center. The culminating event is the WSU Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference sponsored by the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State, September 27-30, at the Marriott in Tacoma. Mark your calendars, be on the lookout for event information and plan to join in the fun.

If you cannot join in the celebrations but want to learn more, please go to our website <https://mastergardener.wsu.edu> and read about our program priorities or about how to become an Extension Master Gardener. Find the [50 Years and Counting](#) resources and the tools and SWAG available to purchase. Find information about how you can contribute to the future success of our Program. We are raising money for an endowed faculty chair who will be fully dedicated to the WSU Extension Master Gardener program. Under [get involved](#) on our website, check out the [frequently asked questions](#) or the [how to donate](#) page to help us reach our goal of \$1.5 M. Cheers to each and every Extension Master Gardener and to all those who attend our workshops and classes. We can and do make real and important differences in our communities one person, one community, one yard, and one garden at a time. This golden anniversary will be one for the record books.

**CORRECTION TO NOVEMBER 2022 Issue:**

In the article Winter Charm of Hellebores, the author, Barbara Faurot was listed as a Mason County MG. She is actually from Jefferson County. Sorry about that Barbara.

Additionally, the photo caption for False Hellebore, was omitted. The photo was taken by Ben Legler.

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6) Plant your seeds to the recommended depth on the packaging and moisten them with water from a spray bottle.

7) Tape the jug closed using clear poly or duct tape around the circumference. Place jugs in the sun, a SE location is best. Snow or rain will do some of your watering for you, but make sure your spot has good drainage so they are not sitting in water.

8) Check for moisture in the jugs at least once a week. Peek inside the jug, looking to see if the soil looks moist. Another way to check for adequate moisture is noticeable condensation on the inside hips of the jug. In the early days, I only watered about once a month. If they need watering, use the water bottle you've prepared with the holes in the lid, squirting a little water on to wet the soil. As the seedlings germinate and grow and the weather warms up, open the containers during the day and close them at night.

9) When seedlings have pushed out their true leaves after the initial cotyledons, and the weather has warmed as needed, transplant them into the ground or a 4" pot.

## **What to Plant and When**

*December through February:* For our zones, this would start around December 21st, on Winter Solstice when the daylight is at its shortest. Examples of hardy annuals and perennials that can be started in winter include coneflower, columbine, sweet pea, lupine, native grasses, lavender, hollyhock, spinach, kale, thyme, oregano, and parsley.

*March through April:* Tender annuals and vegetables can be started. Examples include cosmos, zinnia, marigold, alyssum, lobelia, impatiens, beets, broccoli, basil, cilantro, and lettuce. Using this method, wait until April to start tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, melons, squash, and pumpkins.

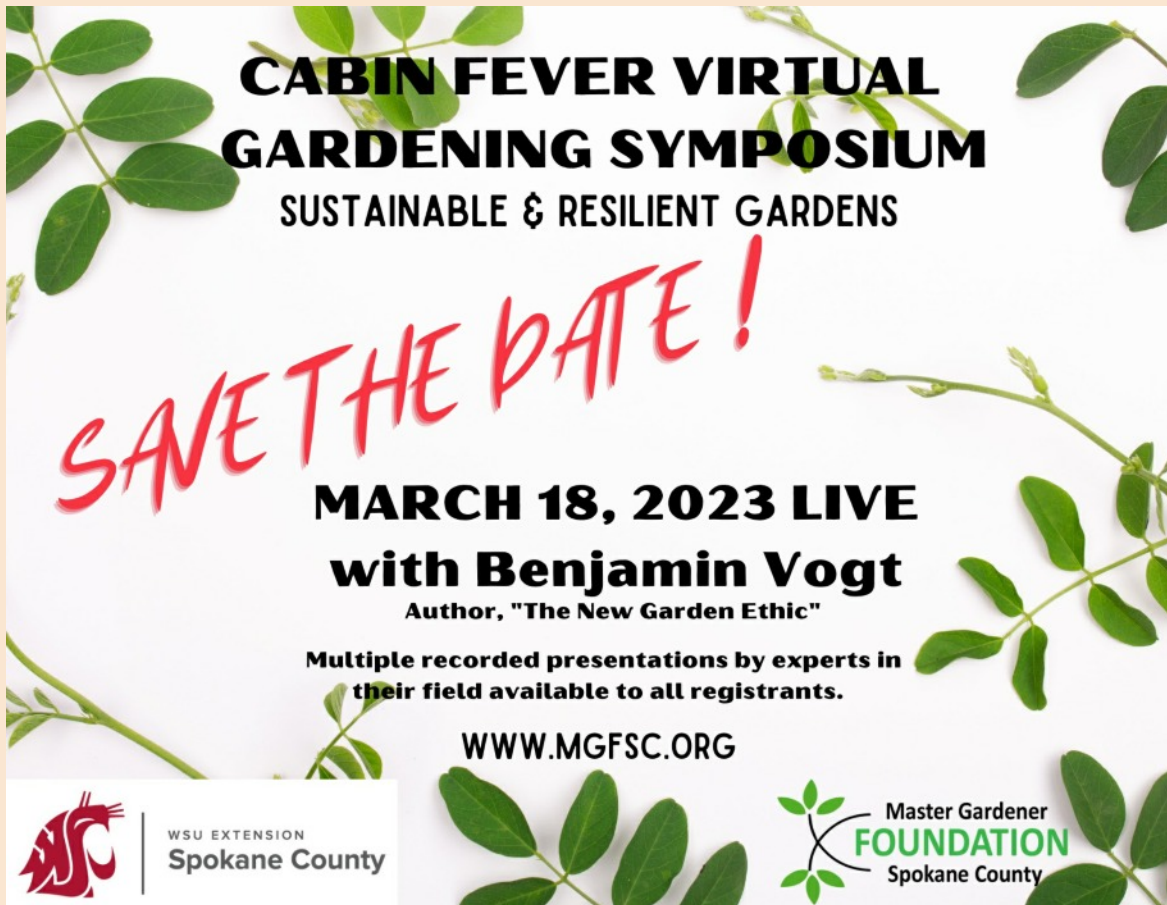
When I started, I originally focused on starting perennials. Later, I sowed annuals and other seeds I had collected around my yard or traded with friends, but be careful not to plant late tender annuals like cosmos and zinnias too early. Pay close attention to the general planting dates outlined above. Despite planting some of these tender annuals too early, I still had a nearly 90% germination rate overall.

From last year's trials, I also learned green algae can grow on the surface of the potting soil. This year I will add more drainage holes and use potting soil that does not contain moisture control products since PNW winters are typically 'a bit moister' than the winters in the eastern US where this method originated.

Another important reminder, not all seeds will germinate by May. Don't be disappointed, be patient. Some seeds like columbine, milkweed, and others can take months or longer so don't throw those milk jugs out too quickly--you may be surprised by what germinates late. As the days and nights grow warmer and the plants get bigger, you'll open up the jugs.

## **RESOURCES:**

- Starting Seeds in Winter, Lori Voll-Wallace, PennState Extension [www.extension.psu.edu/starting-seeds-in-winter](http://www.extension.psu.edu/starting-seeds-in-winter)
- Winter Seed Sowing, Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, Illinois Extension [extension.illinois.edu/news-releases/winter-seed-sowing](http://extension.illinois.edu/news-releases/winter-seed-sowing)




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### 2023 Thurston County Master Gardener Foundation Plant Sale Schedule Announced

Thurston County Master Gardeners are fortunate to maintain a permanent year-round nursery in West Olympia on land leased from the City of Olympia. Our Plant Sale team works year-round to tend the numerous beautiful plants in the nursery. The varieties are many, including substantial shrubs, trees, perennials, grasses and native plants.

We changed our sale process in 2022 to multiple dates instead of the one-day mega-sale that we had offered in the past. This presented the opportunity for our volunteers to provide personal shopping assistance to our customers in a relaxed situation. This new process worked well for the volunteers and for the public! It worked so well that we are pleased to announce that our Plant Sale Nursery in West Olympia will again be open to the public multiple days in 2023.

The first sale of the year open to the public will be on Wednesday, April 26, 2023. Then, from May through October 11, 2023, the MGFTC will hold plant sales on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays. Plant sale hours run from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The Plant Sale Nursery is located on Alta Street in West Olympia, directly behind Yauger Park. Our Dirt Works Demonstration Garden is directly adjacent to the Nursery. We hope that our MG friends will come by when they are in Olympia on these dates to say hello and partake in our amazing variety of premium plants! For more information check the Foundation's website at [mgftc.org](http://mgftc.org).

## WSU Extension King County Master Gardeners Workshops and Classes for 2023

Learn something new or brush up on your gardening skills in 2023. The WSU Extension King County Master Gardeners will offer their popular series, Growing Groceries classes and Bellevue Demonstration Garden (BDG) workshops, beginning in January 2023. Gardeners of all ages and skills can find a topic of interest. Growing Groceries begins its fifth season on Wednesday, January 18. BDG Saturday Workshops begin on Saturday, January 21. WSU Master Gardeners and guest speakers present from their own experience and include up-to-date science-based information from WSU Extension. All classes are presented on Zoom and are open to anyone across the state and beyond.



**Growing Groceries:** This series focuses on fruit and vegetable gardening, offering topics like backyard fruit trees, vegetables from around the globe, soil quality, early spring vegetables, container vegetables and more. Classes are presented on specific Wednesdays, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Registration is required and there is a fee of \$7.50 for each class. Gardeners can also purchase the full series at a discount. (A limited number of financial need fee waivers will be available for individual classes.) Classes will be recorded and available to all who register. Please visit <https://mgfkc.org/education/growinggroceries> for the class descriptions, schedule, and registration information. The Master Gardener Foundation in King County uses the class fees to support WSU Master Gardener Program activities in the county.



**Bellevue Demonstration Garden Saturday Workshops:** The workshops will cover a variety of topics, including landscaping for wildlife habitat; peonies; soil preparation for hot, dry years; growing tomatoes in the PNW; rock gardens; container vegetable gardening and more. Workshops are presented on two or three Saturdays a month, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on the Zoom platform. Registration is required and there is a fee of \$7.50 for each class. (There will be a limited number of financial need fee waivers available for individual workshops.) Two series subscriptions of 10 workshops each, January 21–May 6 or May 20–October 14, will be offered at a 25% discount. Most workshops will be recorded and available to all who register. Please visit <https://mgfkc.org/education/bdg-workshops> for workshop details, schedule, and registration information. The Master Gardener Foundation in King County uses the workshop fees to support WSU Extension Master Gardener Program activities the county.



25th Anniversary  
**Yard &  
Garden**  
Virtual Lecture  
Series 2023

Tickets are on sale for the 2023 Jefferson County Master Gardener Foundation's 25th Anniversary Yard & Garden Virtual Lecture Series. The lectures are offered in a live webinar format, and will run on six Saturday mornings: February 11 and 25, and March 4, 11, 18, and 25.

The lineup includes notable gardeners, authors, and educators on a wide range of topics: taking a deep dive into forest life, growing vegetables all year long, tips and tricks of the flower trade, why and how plants are selected for Great Plant Picks, putting out the welcome mat for beneficial insects, and what climate change is doing to life in the garden. Details on speakers and topics can be found at [jcmgf.org](http://jcmgf.org).

Each lecture will run from 10 a.m.– noon. Lectures will last about 90 minutes with a 15-minute break at the half. Each event will be followed by audience Q and A. Talks will be recorded and available for three weeks after each presentation.

The price for the entire six-lecture series is \$60; single-event tickets are available for \$12. Tickets may be purchased from [2023YardAndGarden.eventbrite.com](http://2023YardAndGarden.eventbrite.com)

Ticket sales help support Jefferson County Master Gardener programs. The event is co-sponsored by Washington State University's Jefferson County Extension Service.