

Birchwood Garden Club



Volume 22, Issue 5

Gazette

January 2010

January Meeting to Feature Kent's Garden and Nursery Staff

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its fifth meeting of the 2009-2010 season on Wednesday, January 6th, at 7:00 PM in the Whatcom Museum of History & Art. The speakers will be Ginny Crump and Nancy Henshaw and their staff at Kent's Garden and Nursery. www.kentsgardenandnursery.com

The group will present a three-part program:

Winter Pops for Your Pots,
Decorating With Winter Foliage, and
Gardening on the Phone!



Hooray For Houseplants

By Gail Haines

Did you know that houseplants are the best medicine for keeping us healthy? They not only improve indoor air quality, but can reduce stress so that physically and mentally we can better survive the dark days of winter in the great Pacific NorthWET!

Houseplants help people feel better! New research from Washington State University confirms previous studies that show the stress reducing benefits from just looking at plants. And doesn't everyone need some stress relief during these busy, end-of-year holidays?

Giving a plant to someone who is sick or to a friend going through a stressful time is not only appreciated, it makes scientific sense. Houseplants are no longer luxuries, but essential to health. Some can even purify different toxic chemicals in the home. Here is a random list of plants that will improve indoor air quality by removing harmful chemicals:

Palms (Chrysalidocarpus, Rhapsis, Chamaedorea, Phoenix); **Ferns** (Nephrolepis); **Corn Plant** and **Dragon Tree** (Dracaena); **Rubber Plant** and **Weeping Fig** (Ficus); **English Ivy** (Helix Hedera); **Peace Lily** (Spathiphyllum); **Florist Mum** (Dendranthemum); **Gerbera Daisy** (Gerbera); **Dumb Cane** (Dieffenbachia); **Schefflera** (Brassaia); **Orchids** (Dendrobium and Phalaenopsis); **Spider Plant** (Chlorophytum); **Philodendron** (Philodendron); **Arrowhead Plant** (Syngonium); **Pothos** (Epipremnum); **Dwarf Banana** (Musa); **Chinese Evergreen** (Aglaonema)

The benefits of plants in the workplace and at home far outweigh the costs associated with maintaining them. Over 20 years ago NASA issued a report titled *Interior Landscape Plants for Indoor Air Pollution Abatement*. The report recommended that you use 15-18 good-sized houseplants in 6 to 8 inch diameter containers to improve air quality in an average 1,800 square foot house.

Since we can't HOE, HOE, HOE during this winter season, let's HO HO HO with HOuseplants for a very happy, healthy New Year!





If you want to reinvigorate a dull party, just bring up the subject of genetically engineered plants. It's a topic guaranteed to raise the decibel level in the room. The attendees don't have to be gardeners. In fact, chances are the less they know about horticulture, the louder they'll be. Of course when they start spouting phrases such as "It's against nature!" you'll know it's time to change the subject again and say, "How 'bout them Seahawks/Mariners/Sonics?" (Depending on the season.)

Genetic manipulation of plants by man has been going on for some 10,000 years. Two perfect examples are the garden pea and wheat.

As we all know, peas come enclosed in a pod. Peas have to escape from that pod if they are to germinate. So wild pea plants evolved a gene that makes the pod explode, discharging the peas out onto the ground. Occasionally there are mutant peas that don't explode. In the wild those mutant peas would die because their seeds would never get to the ground so only the popping pods would pass on their genes.

But... back when humans were transitioning from hunter-gatherers to farmers, the only peas available for them to harvest were the ones in the non-popping pods left on the plant. Once our ancestors began bringing wild peas home to eat, the ones they collected were the mutants. There was immediate selection for that single-gene mutation. Every pea variety cultivated today contains that same mutant gene for non-popping pods!

Wheat, as we know it today, came about in much the same manner. Wild


wheat seeds grow at the top of a stalk that is genetically programmed to spontaneously shatter when the seeds are ripe, dropping them to the ground so they can germinate. A single-gene mutation prevents the stalks from shattering. In the wild that mutation would be disastrous to the plant as no seeds on the ground means no germination.

But... those mutant seeds would have been the only ones available to be harvested and brought home by humans. When those mutant seeds were planted, the next generation of mutant seeds again became available to harvest and sow, while the normal seeds fell to the ground.

Thus, early farmers completely reversed the direction of natural selection: the formerly successful genes became useless, and the useless mutants became successful, creating the first major human "improvement" in any plants.

Was that "against nature"? Well, yes! In the strictest sense every technological advance in agriculture has been against nature. But was such manipulating a bad thing? Not if you lived 10,000 years ago and liked to eat. And not if you like to eat today either!



DEADLINE 

..for all articles, announcements, reports, etc. to be published in the February issue of the BGC Gazette...

JANUARY 20

Date For February Meeting Changed

Next month's BGC Meeting will be held on February 10th instead of February 3rd. This will accommodate those members who wish to take the Master Gardener Foundation bus to the Northwest Flower and Garden Show. Please mark your calendars so you don't miss the informative talk on Hardy Fuchsias.



Flower and Garden Show Bus Scheduled

By Gail Haines

The Master Gardeners Foundation has scheduled a bus trip to the Northwest Flower and Garden Show on Wednesday, February 3. Master Gardeners and guests are invited. All BGC members qualify as guests.

The bus will leave promptly at 8:30 AM from the Target Upper Parking Lot at Bellis Fair Mall just off Bakerview Road. Please plan to arrive by 8:15 AM.

Ticket prices are \$40 for Master Gardeners and \$45 for guests. The price includes the show entrance fee and bus ride. Once you commit by check, it is your responsibility to give or sell your seat if you are not able to attend. I will keep a "waiting list" if we sell-out. Make checks payable to Master Gardeners Foundation.

Mail payment and names of attendees to:

Gail Haines
412 Park Ridge Road,
Bellingham, WA 98225

For questions or more information please contact Gail Haines, (676-1344)

mghaines@comcast.net

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Meeting Minutes

Submitted by Kaye Dykas



Loretta Hogg called the December 2, 2009, meeting to order with 30 persons in attendance.

SPEAKERS: Richard Nevels and Sheryl Navato-Niles from the WSU/Whatcom County Watershed Master Beach Watcher Program gave an informative presentation on Rain Gardens. The publication, *Rain Garden: Handbook for Western Washington Homeowners*, was given to those in attendance. The material is available on-line from WSU Extension Pierce County at

PierceCounty@wsu.edu.

REFRESHMENTS: A variety of mouth watering desserts was provided by Anne Erickson and Lillian Nelson.

BUSINESS MEETING

Old Business:

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved. The Treasurer's Report showed that as of mid-November, we had a balance of \$2,086.74.

Mark Turner reported that Whatcom Horticulture Society has decided they no longer wish to be included in the shared purchase of a Projector. The Native Plant Society is still interested. The members then voted to increase our share of the purchase to \$500 in order to purchase now. Mark will arrange for the purchase and the machine will be in Mark's care at his house as he is a member of both groups.

Loretta spoke with Rae Edwards, Volunteer Coordinator of Whatcom County Parks. Rae said that with prior notice she can provide us with volunteers to assist in the maintenance of the Bellingham Public Library and Whatcom Mu-

seum of History and Art gardens we are currently maintaining.

The Meeting Cancellation Phone Tree Committee is now prepared to notify you if a winter storm forces us to cancel a meeting.

New Business:

January's meeting program will feature speakers from Kent's Garden and Nursery. (See page 1)

February's meeting date changed to second Wednesday. (See page 2.)

Master Gardener Foundation bus to the Flower Show. (See page 2.)

Gail announced that she will be out of the country during our Plant Sale and that other people are needed to step forward and share in the organization of the Sale.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.



2009-2010 OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

President—Loretta Hogg
Vice-President—Gail Haines
Treasurer—Sandy Gurosko
Secretary—Kaye Dykas

Circulation—Ira Penn
Garden Tours—Sheri Lambert
Historian—Dick Harris
Hospitality—Kathy Jacobson
Library Garden—Loretta Hogg
Membership—Judy Lewis
Museum Garden—Kathy Jacobson
Newsletter—Ira Penn
Plant Sale—Gail Haines
Programs—Tamara Hall
Publicity—Susan Metcalfe
Raffle—Laura Chandler
Sunshine—Norine Morrison
Webmaster—Tom Sparks

Ask The Garden Guru



Dear Garden Guru:

I have great soil in my yard and my plants seem to do well. But these days it seems that all I hear about is raised beds. Should I be considering them? Thanks!

Chip

**This month's Garden Guru is
Lillian Nelson**

Dear Chip:

You have great soil, your plants are doing well and you wonder if you should consider raised beds. Perhaps you have been swayed by the many who have taken over the berms in Bellingham to raise "recession gardens."

I have had a large raised bed vegetable gardens for 12-plus years. The reasons for starting them where the usual ones: poor soil (clay over hardpan), lousy drainage, and a cool area (the soil in raised beds warms-up earlier in the spring). Also, I just plain liked the look of them.

Through the years I have discovered a few other advantages. The outer boards serve as a barrier for the lawn creepers of grass, buttercup and clover. A string weed whacker keeps the outer edge neat. The boards also deter those enclosed cultivars that want to take over the world such as Mints, Raspberries, and Japanese Lanterns.

I used regular 2"x10" fir construction boards rather than treated lumber. Arsenic and veggies were not a combo that I was comfortable with. With that choice was the acceptance that they would eventually rot and need replacement. Depending on the size and shape of your garden, the price can add up.

As with any garden design and decision, the choice is yours alone.

IRA PENN, NEWSLETTER EDITOR
PO BOX 362
BELLINGHAM, WA 98227

Notice

The Birchwood Garden Club (BGC) is open to everyone in Whatcom and Skagit Counties who supports the objectives of the organization. BGC meets the first Wednesday of each month from September thru May. Annual membership is \$10 for an individual, \$15 for a family, due in September. Membership applications are available from the website: www.birchwoodgardenclub.org.

The Birchwood Garden Club Gazette is published monthly, September thru May, by the BGC. Articles, inquiries, letters to the editor, or other comments should be directed to the Editor, Ira Penn, at the above address or via e-mail to: rmqeditor@yahoo.com.

Author's statements, either of fact or opinion, are their own and do not necessarily express the official policy of the BGC. While the advice and information in this newsletter is believed to be true and accurate at the time of publication, neither the authors nor the editor can accept any legal responsibility for errors or omissions. The BGC makes no warranty expressed or implied with respect to the material contained herein.

Please Complete The Survey Form

Included as an insert with this issue is a Member Satisfaction Survey. It is very important that you complete the survey and mail it in.

We all want the BGC to be the best club that it can be. To achieve that goal, however, we need to have member input regarding our current status.

The reason for a written survey is so we can get responses from as many members as possible. Asking the questions at a meeting would not serve that purpose.

The survey is completely anonymous. Tell us what's on your mind. Are you excited about the BGC as an organization? Are the BGC programs helping you to be a

better gardener or are the meetings just a nice place to get some delicious snacks once a month? Are the business meetings worthwhile and informative or do you avoid them?

The survey results will be published in a future issue. And if changes need to be made we can make them! Please take a few minutes of your time and share your thoughts.



Snacks 

This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Kaye Dykas and Gail Haines.

Thank you!

Flower Show Bus Trip

Continued from page 2, column 3

It is suggested that you bring a backpack and a bottle of water plus any snacks you might wish. There are many restaurants in the area (just remember to get your hand stamped when exiting the show) and lunch can also be purchased at the show. Tables will be available where you can sit to eat your home-packed lunch as well.

There will be plenty of room on the bus for your purchases. Some people have been known to bring carts or bags to the show, but there is a place where you can accumulate your purchases until you're ready to depart for home.

The bus will leave Seattle at 4:30 PM, hopefully to be back in Bellingham by 6:30 PM.



Birchwood Garden Club Member Satisfaction Survey

Please answer the following questions and return the form to the address on the opposite side by January 15. Candor will be appreciated! This survey is completely anonymous unless you want to include your name as part of an answer to a question on the opposite page! If you wish to make comments or suggestions that require more room than we have allowed, please use an extra sheet of paper and just fold it into the form. It will not require any additional postage. Fold, tape, stamp, and mail!

Thank you!

What is your reason for belonging to a garden club?

Do you belong to more than one garden club? Yes No

If Yes, how would you rate BGC compared to the other(s)? Better Worse About the same

If Worse, please say what's wrong at BGC.

How long have you been a member of BGC?

What do you like best about the BGC?

What do you like least about the BGC?

Do you consider yourself an: Experienced gardener Somewhat knowledgeable Novice Gardener

How many meetings (we have 9 each year) have you attended in the past year?

Do you think the general level of the programs is: Too high Too low Just right

Do you usually stay for the "business" part of the meeting? Yes No

If No, why not?

If Yes, do you find it worthwhile and informative? Yes No Sometimes

Do you want the business meetings to continue as they are? Yes No

Would you favor a change to the rules and procedures so that the business part of meetings was conducted before the program? Yes No

Would you favor a change to the rules and procedures so that the business part of meetings was eliminated and almost all business matters would be handled by the Board? Yes No

Have you participated in any of the Club events other than meetings? Yes No

If Yes, Plant Sale Garden Tours Library Garden maintenance

If No, what prevented you from participating?

Would you prefer to receive the Gazette by: Regular mail E-mail

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BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB
PO BOX 362
BELLINGHAM, WA 98227

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Have you ever:

- Brought snacks to the meetings? Yes No
Written an article for the Gazette? Yes No
Held a BGC office or chaired a committee? Yes No
Served on a BGC committee? Yes No

Would you be interested in doing any of the above? Yes No

Would you like to be personally contacted to participate? Yes No

If Yes, please include your name and phone number.

Would you be interested having speakers address the following topics: *(Check all that apply.)*

- Garden irrigation methods—reducing water use
- Companion plant combinations
- Specialty plants, i.e., Rhododendrons, Heathers, Roses, Hostas, Sedums, etc.
- Seasonal garden treatments
- Shade gardening
- Restoring the ecology of our yards—low impact methods & techniques
- Shrub and tree pruning in winter
- Heirloom and native plants
- Hybridizing
- Tissue culture
- Latin for gardeners