



Master Gardeners receive classroom as well as hands-on instruction

Photo: E. Anderson

master gardener program

The WSU King County Extension Master Gardener Program is dedicated to promoting environmental stewardship. Master Gardeners accomplish this mission by educating the public on environmentally safe gardening practices. Gardening is the most popular hobby in the United States, and its impact on the environment is great. By using correct practices, gardeners ensure that this impact is a positive one.

The Master Gardener program continues to grow:

- There are now 760 Master Gardeners in the King County program. Of this number, 730 are actively participating as volunteers. The remainder are Master Gardener alumnae/i who remain on the mailing list but no longer volunteer.
 - Four additional Plant Clinics have been added this year, making a total of 38 clinics. There are now Plant Clinics located at the Auburn, Mercer Island, and Vashon Farmers Markets. There is also a new clinic located at the Woodinville Water District Waterwise Garden.
 - A new Teaching Kit was created. This new kit focuses on nutrition and brings the total number of Teaching Kits to 12. Other Teaching Kits are built around the following themes: Roots and Shoots, Seeds and Flowers, Native Plant Wildlife Habitat, Trees, Insects, Pollinators, Mason Bee Habitat, Soil and Compost, Worms, Water, and Recycling. Each Teaching Kit is a “classroom in a box” and contains a curriculum, videos, hand lenses, posters, story books, and puppets. Each kit also contains a detailed handbook with background information, diagrams, worksheets, teaching tips, and dozens of lesson plans for educating young people of all ages. The kits are popular with groups of adults as well.
- Teachers and leaders of adult groups may contact Elaine Anderson at 206-205-3122 or elaine.anderson@kingcounty.gov for information on borrowing a Teaching Kit.
- Two new school gardens have been added to the program. One is located at Shorewood High School and is part of the Culinary Arts curriculum. Master Gardeners are working with the culinary arts teacher and students to make their garden more organic and sustainable. The other new school garden is at Vashon High School. There Master Gardeners are supporting the school’s horticulture program by developing projects that complement the curriculum and provide practical gardening opportunities for students.

Interested in becoming a Master Gardener?

Applications for the 2010 training will be available on August 1st, 2009, and the deadline for submission is October 2nd.

Applications will be posted at king.wsu.edu/gardening/becomeamg. Applications may also be requested by calling the Master Gardener office – 206-205-3122.

The 2010 training will be held on 12 consecutive Saturdays beginning on January 9. For the first time, classroom instruction will be enhanced by the addition of online training. This training will take place at home between classroom sessions, allowing for the inclusion of a greater number of topics than in past trainings.



Sign welcoming neighborhood residents to the Cesar Chavez Demonstration Garden

Photo: Mick Duggan

- The program has begun the process of translating its Fact Sheets into Spanish. The translation is being done by staff members at El Centro de la Raza, the community center where the Master Gardener Cesar Chavez Demonstration Garden is located. Eight Fact Sheets have been translated to date. The demonstration garden is primarily a vegetable garden, and emphasis is being placed on translating the Fact Sheets focusing on related topics. They will be added to the list of Fact Sheets available at king.wsu.edu/gardening/gardenfacts.

Looking Ahead

- Two topics have been judged to be of the highest priority when developing educational outreach programs: Rain Gardens and other issues concerning Surface Water Retention, and urban food gardening. Consequently, the King County Master Gardener program is part of a collaborative effort within Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties to develop these programs; planning will begin in September for programs to begin in the spring of 2010. The counties will develop classes and workshops, sets of informational material, and tools for evaluation that will allow them to present the same training and utilize the same materials. Master Gardeners will receive training and will serve as presenters.
- King County Master Gardeners have volunteered to clean up and maintain a neglected garden area between the Renton Library and the Extension office. The area was once a small demonstration garden, and Master Gardeners will be developing a plan with the City of Renton to restore the space by removing weeds, removing and replacing dying plants, and replacing plant labels that are damaged or missing.

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A Fond, but Sad, Farewell

Todd Murray has left WSU King County Extension and is now the new Director of Extension in Skamania County. He is truly missed by his fellow staff members and by Master Gardeners as well. Todd was a kind, supportive, and helpful office mate. In addition to that, he was a walking encyclopedia. There were few, if any, questions he either didn't have the answer to or didn't know where to find it (in the true spirit of Master Gardeners). He gave so much to the Master Gardener program away from the office, too. Speaking at meetings and at demo gardens, assisting the diagnosticians, providing tech support when we had new equipment for use at training. He did all this and more, always with a smile and true graciousness.