Christmas Trees by Lynn Long, OSU Extension Horticulturist

One of my favorite activities during the Christmas season is our annual family outing in search of a Christmas tree. Over the years we've had many memorable experiences, some of them were fun, like the times we coupled our tree safari with a sledding outing on Mt. Hood. Other times were less fun, but no less memorable.

When Marlene and I were first married we lived in Eastern Washington, near the Idaho border. Friends of ours had a farm in Northern Idaho where we could cut a Christmas tree from the wild at no charge. Just think of the savings! It took me exactly two years to figure out that free was not always a bargain. Both years we ended up getting stuck. The first time in snow and the second time up to the axle in mud! It took a hard freeze and a D9 Cat to finally get us out of that little adventure.

Well, I finally got smart. Besides, I had another friend who had a Christmas tree plantation who was willing to let me cut any tree on the farm for only $6.00. Just think of the savings!

The only problem was that my friend knew absolutely nothing about growing Christmas trees. He had purchased some weak, spindly seedlings that immediately fell over after planting. They eventually grew upright but not before forming a crook in each and every trunk. By the time they were old enough to be harvested the trees looked good from a distance, but what looked great in the field was an impossibility once I got it home. There was no way to make the tree stand up straight short of wiring it to the wall or cutting the bottom completely out. A wired tree, therefore, became our Christmas tradition year after year until we moved to The Dalles. Was it worth it? Think of the savings!

Our kids are all grown and moved far from home but we still enjoy selecting and decorating our tree together when we have that opportunity. This year we are all meeting at Melissa and Dave’s apartment in Germany for a Long Family Christmas. Melinda and Dominic will be flying in from Washington DC, Ryan and Erin from Hungary and we will be there as well. In Germany, they don’t put up their tree until Christmas Eve so we really are considered crazy Americans when we put the tree up on December 20, a whole five days early!

Continued on pg. 3
President’s Corner: Barbara Bailey

Greetings Fellow Master Gardeners,

Recently, I had my first OMGA experience. This state organization is amazing. Lana, our representative, gave a brief report about Wasco County MG activities in 2009 as did all other county representatives. What a valuable pool of ideas and inspirations. Thank you Lana for your dedication and time. Wasco County will be hosting the OMGA officers in June, here in The Dalles.

Good News, on filling committee assignments. So far we are happy to welcome, Plant Clinic, Cheri Austin; Seeds & Soils, Pam Manning; Spring Fair, Sheri Esquivias; Newsletter, Carolyn Wright; Soil Testing, Cheri Austin; Imagination Garden, Charlotte Link; Garden Tour, Anna Nolen & Tammy Tripp; Bulb Sale, Cheri Austin & Lana Tepfer; Mentor Program, Therese Leon; Graduation, Candy Armstrong; and Refreshments, Ronnie Smith. If you have not been contacted, I will soon be calling you for your "yes."

Lynn Long told me recently that 2010 class speakers are responding positively.

Boring but necessary, Candy Armstrong, Etta Myers, Cheri Austin and myself recently met to review our bylaws. The Executive Committee will vote on the revisions at our November meeting.

Thanks all, for your time and green energy, Barbara Bailey

Happy Holidays to All!

Candy Armstrong’s writeup for last month’s newsletter didn’t reach me in time to be included then, so here it is:

Name: Candy Armstrong
Birthday: September 21
How long in Mid-Columbia: Most of my life. I was born and raised on Mill Creek. I attended District 12 schools (Colonel Wright, Dry Hollow, The Dalles Junior High and graduated from The Dalles High School in 1969). I have lived away from The Dalles at various times, 2 years in the Philippines, 9 years in Hood River and 3 years in Tillamook, but I always find my way home.
Family: I have been married to George Armstrong for forty years. We had two sons, our oldest son was killed in an auto accident in 1991, but left behind a son (Blake) who is now in his senior year at The Dalles Wahtonka High School. Blake has a younger brother, Jacen who I also consider a grandson. Jacen is in the 7th grade at The Dalles Middle School. Our son Mike and his wife Carrie live here in The Dalles. They have two children. Kendyl is a 5th grader and Michael is a 2nd grader at Chenowith Elementary School. My brother, Mike Fowler and his wife Pat also live here in The Dalles.
My favorite plant is a rose, but the older I get the less I like getting snagged by the thorns, so I have started limiting the number I have in my garden.
Garden Tip: Dream big, start small. Always consider your lifestyle and time commitments before taking on too much in the garden. If you have a busy schedule a small garden is best. That way you can keep your fingers in the soil without becoming overwhelmed.
I love Master Gardeners because of the people. I find them to be hard working, willing to share and with an attitude of service to others.
Christmas trees, continued from page 1
No matter how or when you get your tree this year there are a few things that you should know that will help you make a good choice. There is a wide selection of trees available, both commercially and from the wild. The following descriptions will help you choose one that is right for you.

Douglas-fir: one of the most popular Christmas trees grown in Oregon. It is a native species so is readily found growing in the national forests in the region. Needles are ¾ to 1½ inch long and are yellow-green to blue-green. Needle retention is good and most trees have good form, color, and density. Once harvested, the average life of a Douglas-fir Christmas tree is 3-4 weeks.

Grand fir: another native tree found both in the wild and on the lot. Needles radiate from the twigs in a single plane giving the branches a flattened look. A whitish cast on the underside of the needles provides this tree with its other name of white fir. The tree is often chosen for its unique beauty and appealing scent. Grand fir will last 3-4 weeks after harvest with proper care.

Concolor fir: in my mind this is one of the most beautiful Christmas trees available due to the blue-green nature of the needles. Needles are soft, long and flat giving the tree a distinct look. The form is nice, although dense branches often make it difficult to find good hanging branches for ornaments. Needles tend to drop indoors. Concolor fir is becoming very expensive due to its popularity as a landscape tree.

Noble fir: another native species that makes a highly sought after Christmas tree. Needles are gray-green and often appear silvery. Needles are turned upward and are tightly massed along the twig. Noble fir is desirable for the spacing between branches that allows for easy hanging of ornaments. With proper care, the tree will last up to 6 weeks after harvest.

Scotch pine: Probably the most popular of the pine species for Christmas tree use. Needles are grouped in clusters of two and are 1½ to 2½ inches long. Needles typically range in color from yellow-green to blue-green and retention is good. Most pines are relatively open, providing optimum space for ornaments. The fragrance is good.

Happy hunting!

Half Price Bulb Sale – Cheri Austin

The remaining spring flowering bulbs are now half price. Yolanda VanVeen, owner of VanVeen Bulbs states you can plant your spring bulbs as late as February. You might miss the blooming season, but the bulbs will be in the ground for next year. You can purchase your bulbs at The Strawberry Patch – contact Lana Tepfer.

Editor’s tip: If you are unsure where you might locate bulbs in your garden, you can plant them in containers and pots, and then in the spring place them in the garden where you think they will look best.
Spring Fair Update

We will start early planting for the Spring Fair on January 11 at 8 am. We are hoping for no blizzards at that time because we want a good turnout of volunteers. For all of those who volunteered at the Graduation party we need your background checks as soon as possible. Please call Cheri Austin with a request for a form. Those of you who volunteered last year - unless you robbed a bank your background checks are still good.

We also need old mini blinds for marking our pots. We need the plastic variety and lighter colors as we write on them.

We will be asking for volunteers along the way so please keep us in mind. The closer we get to the Spring Fair the more volunteers will be needed. It is time consuming, like all things, but it is soooo worth it.

Thank you,

Sheri Esquivias
Spring Fair Chairperson

Spring Fair Planting Begins

The planting of seeds in the NORCOR greenhouse for our Spring Fair will begin January 11 at 8:00 am. We are starting many of our seeds earlier so when sale time gets here they will be more advanced, and generate even more sales.

Background checks are required to work in the greenhouse. If you worked last year, you will not need another one. If you haven't worked at NORCOR and want to you will need one. This is a very simple process and there is no expense to you. I encourage everyone to help out. The kids really enjoy being in the greenhouse and they want to learn.

To sign up or to get your background check, give me a call. A signup sheet will be available after we start in January with definite dates. This is an excellent payback opportunity.

Cheri Austin
TriCounty Hazardous Waste & Recycling Program

Just wanted to let all the Master Gardeners know about the scheduled FREE collections of leftover chemicals (such as yard & garden stuff) coming up for 2010. Note, our program has expanded its offerings to 2 monthly collections (Hood River and The Dalles) in addition to rural events. So when you folks are “out and about” doing your good work, remind people they can properly dispose of unwanted chemicals at these events. They can “clean up with a conscience” when switching over to less-toxic and/or organic gardening!

Cindy Brown, Coordinator
TriCounty Hazardous Waste & Recycling Program
419 E Seventh St
The Dalles OR 97058
541-506-2636 office
541-993-1552 cell

2010 Proposed schedule for hazardous waste collections

Business (CEG) and household (3rd Fri-Sat of each month) - 24 events

January 15, 9am-2pm Hood R. Garbage Ser.
January 16, 9am-2pm The Dalles Disposal Service

February 19, 9am-2pm Hood R. Garbage Ser.
February 20, 9am-2pm The Dalles Disposal Service

March 19, 9am-2pm Hood R. Garbage Ser.
March 20, 9am-2pm The Dalles Disposal Ser.

April 16, 9am-2pm Hood R. Garbage Service
April 17, 9am-2pm The Dalles Disposal Ser.

May 14, 9am-2pm Hood R. Garbage Service
May 15, 9am-2pm The Dalles Disposal Ser.

June 18, 9am-2pm Hood R. Garbage Service
June 19, 9am-2pm The Dalles Disposal Service

July 16, 9am-2pm Hood River Garbage Service
July 17, 9am-2pm The Dalles Disposal Service

August 20, 9am-2pm Hood R. Garbage Service
August 21, 9am-2pm The Dalles Disposal Service

September 17, Hood River
September 18, The Dalles

October 15, Hood River
October 16, The Dalles

November 19, Hood River
November 20, The Dalles

December 17, Hood River
December 18, The Dalles

Rural household collection events

Parkdale, April 3, Saturday, 10am-2pm Fire District, 4895 Baseline Dr

Maupin, April 24, Saturday, 10am-2pm, Public Works, 390 3rd St

Dufur, May 22, Saturday, 10am-2pm City Park (Comm. Cleanup)

Moro, May 8, Saturday 1pm-3pm Road Dept, 4th & Hood St

Tygh Valley, June 26, Saturday 10am-2pm Mel’s Sanitary Service Inc

Odell, September 11, Saturday 10am-2pm Mid-Valley Mkt, 3380 Odell Hwy

Cascade Locks, September 25, Saturday 10am-2pm WW Plant, 105 Herman Cr Ln

Tygh Valley, October 9, Saturday 10am-2pm Mel’s Sanitary Service Inc

Mosier, October 23, Saturday 10am-2pm Mosier Community School
The Dirt Sheet
Newsletter of the Wasco County Master Gardener™ Association
Carolyn Wright, editor
carolyneewright@gmail.com
541-506-5001

Officers
President – Barbara Bailey
President Elect – Candy Armstrong
Secretary – Therese Leon
Treasurer – Catherine Whalen
Historian – Candy Barnard-Davidson
OMGA Rep – Lana Tepfer
Alternate OMGA Rep – Cheri Austin
OSU Extension Staff
Lynn Long

Find Us Online
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/wasco/

GARDEN QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

There wasn’t a very big response to the questions, but here are the answers submitted:
1) If you could have only one flower in your garden, what would it be?  (a) Lavender; (b) Gaillardia, also known as blanket flowers; (c) One?  One of each!

2) What’s your idea of a dream garden?  (a) A place where weeds are afraid to grow; (b) no lawn! (c) a place of healthy plants (no powdery mildew!) with something blooming every month.

3) If there were no weeding or chores to do, how would you spend a day in the garden?  (a) Having a glass of wine while reading a book and listening to the garden grow; (b) I would spend the day relaxing in an Adirondack chair with a cup of my favorite coffee to sip, the latest issue of the "Fine Gardening" magazine to read and my favorite kitty softly purring in my lap. (c) Watching birds, reading, enjoying the flowers, colors, & textures, and daydreaming.

Thank you to (a) Cheri Austin, (b) Charlotte Link, and (c) Carolyn Wright for responding. Next month’s questions are: 1) What plants never fail you? 2) What’s your favorite bird? and 3) What bird is most entertaining in your garden? These are the final three questions, so don’t procrastinate and think you’ll participate with answers in February! It would be nice to have more responses.