Forcing Winter Blooms – Lynn Long

When it comes to winter weather by the time February rolls around I’m always ready for something different. Unfortunately, we still have February to struggle through before our garden begins to wake up and bring color back to our landscape. However, no matter the weather outside, it is possible to brighten the inside of your home by forcing spring flowering shrubs into early bloom indoors.

Forsythia, spirea and flowering plum are good varieties for forcing. Others are witch hazel, flowering crab apple and flowering quince. First, select branches from shrubs in the yard. Look for those with fat flower buds. Cut a two- to three-foot length of branch and take it indoors.

Make a one or two inch slit in the base of the branch to allow for easier water intake. Place it in a deep pail of water and leave it in a room with moderate temperatures until the buds swell and begin to show color. Light is not important. In fact, the process could be done in the dark.

Branches with fat buds will show a little color in four or five days. Branches with tiny buds may take up to 10 days before blooming. Keep the branch in water and make fresh cuts to allow for additional water intake.

Once the buds show some color, move the branches to the normally heated part of the house. The flowers should be in full bloom in a day or two and will last about a week. It is possible to keep them longer by placing them in a cool spot away from drafts caused by heating vents.

While you are outside collecting cuttings for winter color take a look at your plants, especially those in protected areas under eaves and trees. In a dry area such as The Dalles winter rains will not provide adequate moisture to keep these protected plants stress free.

Even though it is extra work it is worth the effort to hook up the garden hose and water these plants at least once during the winter season. Although plants are dormant during the winter they still use some water. In addition, moist soil will offer greater protection from the cold.
President’s Corner: Barbara Bailey

Dear Friends and Gardeners,

This month I want to write about the extended "Culture of Gardening." This culture I speak of is celebrated in a variety of artistic forms. For example, poet Emily Dickinson wrote in the late 1800's, "I was always attached to mud." Of the pussy willow she stated, "This spring softness is nature's buff message."

More recently, a Sunday Oregonian in the Arts and Entertainment section was written in 'gardenese', "A Bumper Crop of Creativity, Theater Grows in Fertile Ground." The Dalles Art Center is exhibiting "Gardens and Garden Art" in March. Marion McNew of Mount Hood Gardens expressed, "I believe to be successful in garden design, one has to start with a certain amount of artistic as well as practical sense."

In conclusion, poets, theater, painters, sculpturists and landscape design are part of an all-embracing "Culture of Gardening."

See you in class,

Barbara Bailey

Spring Fair Planting at NORCOR

We are meeting every Monday morning at NORCOR at 8a.m. On that day we work with kids planting their annual seeds. As I write this we have a good inventory of petunias.

Then on Thursdays we are back working for the Master Gardeners. So far we have several varieties of tomatoes, peppers, lavender, and cone flowers. We are striving for bigger plants this year and I think we are on the right track. We started off with four Master Gardeners helping then dropped off to just three of us so be ready to help if we call on you. Be sure to get your background check in (it is painless).

Please look for old vinyl blinds as we use these to mark all the little pots in the greenhouse. Speaking of the greenhouse, we were working a little at a time cleaning as we go, so to speak, until our new president Barbara Bailey came to help. She had us sweeping and throwing out this and that - I’m telling you we all worked up a sweat that day! But I’ve got to tell you, it sure looked good. Thank you Barbara, you are a trooper!!

Cheri Austin is the one to call about those background checks and also, if you can make it one morning or two please call her and let her know as it helps with the day’s activities. Oh ya, did I tell you? For all of you who need to get the chill out of your bones, the greenhouse is running about 80 or more degrees. I hope to see a lot of different volunteers as the time goes by. It’s fun getting to know everyone outside of the classroom.

We have decided that regular meetings will benefit our project at NORCOR. So every 1st and 3rd Monday after working with kids we will meet at 10:30 a.m. We will need this time to gather thoughts and regulate little things in and around the greenhouse, etc. Anyone on the committee or who is interested to lend a hand and ideas is encouraged to attend.

Sheri Esquivias, Spring Fair Chair
Update on The Dalles Imagination Garden – Charlotte Link

It’s almost Spring! Go away dark days of winter and let the sun shine in! February brings a new month and lots of planning for the garden.

The American Center for Sustainability 2010 Plant Project is available online at www.sustainablesift.org. The deadline for requesting garden plant starts is February 15th. Since 2007, ACS has distributed over 115,000 garden plant starts for free to nonprofit projects and organizations across Oregon, including schools and churches, in an effort to support ongoing educational garden projects and develop a more sustainable local food web. Last year, ACS provided over 400 garden plant starts to The DIG project.

Thank You
Thank you to Ronnie Smith for the huge box of seed packets and to Territorial Seed Company for the unexpected box of seeds.

The Tri-County Hazardous Waste and Recycling Program will partner with us to obtain a chipper/shredder from the Central Gorge MGA. The chipper/shredder was MG Minor Brady’s and was purchased after his death, used at the Rorick House, then went to the Learning Garden. Also, thank you to Tip Top Tree Care, L. Cruz Tree Service and The City of The Dalles for the piles of leaves and wood chips at The DIG.

Thank you to the Association for approving our budget for 2010. The additional $500.00 will cover the costs of the port-a-potty for the season.

The DIG Day Camp
This year, the popular DIG Day Camp will expand to two weeks in June. June 14-18, June 21-25 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. WCMGA will partner with Northern Wasco County Parks and Recreation to provide the DIG Day Camp. A training day before the Day Camp will be scheduled for all volunteers. Let’s make the DIG Day Camp as much fun as possible (including the water fights!).

is a terrific opportunity for payback hours. Please contact Lolly Tweed and Brad Mulvihill for more information.

Construction Update
Paul and Lynette Black have been very busy this winter. Paul has designed a spectacular series of clear cedar garden arches to be placed on the street side of the DIG. The arches will welcome visitors in to the garden as well as provide a vertical and architectural element to the garden. A sign will also be incorporated with the arches. Yes, we have approval from the Building Codes Department and the City for the arches, no permits necessary. Also, the classroom circle cover will be a similar design for continuity with the arches. (Also approved by the Building Codes and City).

The last four mosaic tile panels for the interlocking block wall are finished as well as the shed doors. They are stored in the shed with plans for installation when the weather is a little warmer. Funny how the weather plays such a strategic role in our lives!

In the Something to Think About category, as the DIG project continues to expand, an opportunity for payback hours at The DIG is available.

A suggestion is to offer each MG an opportunity to be part of the DIG by volunteering to be in charge of the garden for a week from April to October. Duties would include watering, weeding, monitoring the garden, co-coordinating the garden projects for that particular week. I know this sounds like a lot of work, but you would set your own schedule. For example: Monday, check on the watering. Thursday, check on the watering and walk around the garden. Talk to the visitors on the Riverfront Trail. With more eyes and ears at the garden, our community will grow as well as the garden.

The DIG committee meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month in the Extension Service conference room at 1:00 pm. Everyone is invited to attend.

Think Spring!
MASTER RECYCLER PROGRAM Cindy Brown

Do you want to: Learn how to reduce waste? Conserve natural resources? Motivate others to change their habits? Make a difference in your community? You can get the formal training you need to do all this and more by becoming a Master Recycler, a new offering by the TriCounty Hazardous Waste & Recycling Program. Similar to the OSU Extension Service’s popular Master Gardener program, participants will attend a series of mandatory classes and field trips, and be required to volunteer at least 30 “payback” hours in their communities. The mission of the Master Recycler program is to “bridge the gap between awareness and action by motivating people to reduce solid waste in homes and workplaces.”

The classes are offered free of charge to residents of Wasco, Sherman and Hood River counties. The Master Recycler class is limited to 30 applicants. Acceptance is made on a “first come, first serve” basis as completed applications are received. However, in order to encourage region-wide participation, five spots are initially reserved for residents of communities other than Hood River and The Dalles.

The next Master Recycler course will be held Tuesday evenings during March and April at the Mosier Creek Terrace in Mosier. For more information, call Cindy Brown at 541-506-2636 or visit www.tricountyrecycle.com and click “Master Recycler”. Applications are taken on-line.

Highlights of January Executive Board Meeting

The meeting was held January 7, 2010 at 1pm, President Barbara Bailey presided. Also attending were C. Austin, C. Whalen, T. Leon, L. Long, L. Bryant, J. Probstfield, C. Wright, and C. Link. Catherine Whalen, Treasurer, reported bank balances total $9,382.88.

February Executive Board Meeting set for Tuesday, Feb 16.

Cheri Austin reported on proposed By-Law changes.

Charlotte Link reported for the DIG. She presented the drawings and materials to be used to build a 4 way Arch at the garden entry, to be made out of clear cedar.

Janet Probstfield will again be heading up the Mentor Program this year. The Social/Presentation will be February 15th at 6pm.

Therese Leon, Secretary

Recap of January Quarterly Meeting

The Quarterly meeting was held Monday, January 18th in the meeting room at the PUD. The meeting was opened by President Barbara Bailey who asked all present, including prospective new members for 2010, to introduce themselves.

Lee Bryant, Program Chairman, asked each Committee Chair to give a brief description of their focus.

Catherine Whalen, Treasurer, gave a report on the Budget Committee meeting and the proposed 2010 budget.

President-Elect Candy Armstrong presented proposed By-Law revisions.

The Treasurer’s Report & Budget, and the By-Law revisions were all unanimously accepted by those present.

Everyone enjoyed the refreshments provided by the Master Gardeners.

Therese Leon, Secretary
In January the first part of the “Highlights from the 2009 Wasco County Community Food Assessment” report was given covering Growing Food: Farms, Ranches and Local Markets for Local Produce. Following is part two of the assessment.

**Accessing Food: Food Security, Emergency Food and Shopping**

As of 2007, 14.6 percent of Wasco County lived below the poverty line. These individuals struggle to balance housing, transportation, child care and health care costs, in addition to food for their families.

The majority of residents report shopping primarily at full service grocery stores in The Dalles for most or all of their food needs — 14.1 percent travel at least 26 miles to shop. Small markets in the rural communities of Wasco County are not affordable for low-income households and often do not source a variety of fresh produce. In addition, residents access a range of secondary food sources, including: farmers’ markets, home gardens, farm stands, food pantries, senior centers, hunting and fishing, and small or specialty stores.

While Wasco County residents choose local foods when they can, (93.7 percent of respondents sometimes or always choose food grown locally when it is available) cost is a barrier for many. 37.8 percent of respondents say cost makes it hard to get the food they need.

In Oregon, 13.1 percent of the population is considered food insecure. 28.4 percent of Wasco County residents report worrying at least once a month that food will run out before there is money to buy more. 10.1 percent report skipping a meal at least once a month because food is scarce. This figure is higher among children, which is not surprising: households with children are the largest group served by Oregon Food Bank.

In 2009, the three food pantries affiliated with the Oregon Food Bank served an average of 1,392 individuals each month. Demand for food pantry services increased 12.7 percent from 2007. Because the only organized emergency food efforts in the county operate in The Dalles, rural communities struggle to address food insecurity with a patchwork of faith-based and all-volunteer efforts that need increased resources.

Food pantries and community meal programs (including potlatch sites and Meals on Wheels) benefit from fresh produce donated from local farmers and gardeners. The Windy River Gleaners collects larger quantities of excess produce to share with hundreds of households in need each month.

Nearly half of respondents have accessed government assistance programs, such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or food stamps), WIC (Women, Infants, Children), Head Start, free and reduced-price school lunch programs, etc. This group demonstrates significantly higher rates of food insecurity and is less likely to purchase locally grown food.

In June 2009, approximately 18.6 percent of residents accessed SNAP — a 14.7 percent increase from 2008. SNAP participants purchase more than $5 million worth of food each year in Wasco County. Local farmers’ markets and farm stands accept SNAP benefits and Farm Direct Nutrition Program vouchers (for WIC clients and low-income seniors). However, there is a demonstrated need to increase outreach efforts to low-income and Latino families, and individuals receiving government assistance who struggle to access and afford fresh produce and local food.

**Recommendations:**

- Increase amount of fresh, local produce available in school meal programs, food pantries and community meal sites
- Expand and coordinate emergency food infrastructure in South Wasco County
- Increase sustainability of community meal programs
- Improve the affordability and selection of food available in food stores and direct markets, especially in outlying rural communities
- Improve farmers’ market outreach and marketing to underrepresented populations

Next month the third and final part of the assessment will be covered, dealing with **Food Skills: Cooking, Nutrition and Gardening.**
Feature of the Month – Carolyn Wright

This is a new idea I have and others are welcome to submit their choices for a monthly feature. This first month will be a weed, but garden plants, insects, birds or anything else that is prominent in a given month would be appropriate.

Bitter or winter cress – *Cardamine oligosperma* – is a fine example of a native plant out-of-place when it shows up in abundance in gardens at this time of year. A small, tap-rooted annual, it blooms early and then shoots off an abundance of seeds when the capsules (siliques) dry and are disturbed. It is easy to control now by pulling while the ground is moist and the plants are still in rosettes. An edible plant, it is a member of the mustard family and has a peppery flavor which can be a welcome addition to a salad.

Remembering Tony Carothers – Charlotte Link

Here is a photo of Tony Carothers, Sr., Tony Jr., Kyle Weston and Charlotte Link at the end of the first phase of construction at The DIG in 2008. Tony provided the site preparation and the installation of the interlocking barrier blocks. Tony of Tony Carothers Excavating died on January 13, 2010 in his sleep of an apparent heart attack. Not only will I miss him so much but our community will miss his smile and his willingness to help without reservation. His excavating work can be seen in countless projects throughout The Dalles. He willingly donated his time and resources for other projects when the need arose. Tony was 49 years old.