2010 GARDEN TOUR - HIGH DESERT TREASURE
Tammy Tripp & Anna Nolen

Anna Nolen, Tammy Tripp, Lauretta Platt, and Ronnie Smith are the Leaders for the 2010 garden tour. It is exciting to be hosting this year’s garden tour in south county. We’ve all seen how people garden in the relatively high rainfall environs of Hood River and the hot and windblown basalt hills of The Dalles. Now we get to show how the hardy souls of south county eke out masterpieces in the rock and sagebrush on the edge of the high desert.

This year’s title is High Desert Treasure. The theme is owner inspired and created. The emphasis is on education. We have confirmation from vendors who will be selling lavender products, native plants, and garden art. There will be educational booths on household hazardous waste, pond construction, beneficial insects, and wildlife. The Maupin Garden Club (who will be generously donating their time to help out as well) will be holding the plant sale at Seed to Table Organic Nursery and Greenhouse just off Hwy 197. Other interesting features will be included in the tour and will be described in future newsletters.

At different gardens throughout the day we will offer mini-presentations on topics such as Xeriscaping, Irrigation, Living with Deer, Container Gardening, and Noxious Weeds, all of which play major roles in gardening in the gorge, too. There are many opportunities for you to help staff and produce these educational features.

We are also working out the logistics of having a bus which will do a pickup in Tygh Valley and take people around to the gardens. Cost will be $5.00 a rider. We originally would have liked to do a pickup in The Dalles, but the cost was prohibitive. We also have plenty of rest stops available so no worries there!

The gardens, centerpieces of the tour, are exceptional. We’ll see some pretty innovative techniques homeowners have used to realize their garden dreams, particularly in the use of rock and terracing. As a bonus, each of the gardens will feature before and after photos in order to show how the gardens evolved from their humble beginnings. It’s hard to describe the excitement that our homeowners have at being part of the Master Gardener tour and being able to share their labors of love.

With your help we can make this tour a resounding success.
President’s Corner: Barbara Bailey

At Graduation, Barbara read the following piece which she wrote in February, 1998 for her grandson, Gus. People asked that it be in the newsletter for all to enjoy, so here it is.

My Dear Gus –

My soul started this dedication a year ago – but today I put pen to paper and share my thoughts with you and any future dear ones that may be a part of your life.

I have just lit a pine-wood fire, there is rain mixed with snow gently tapping sleepy roofs, your grandfather is in China, and I feel my blood racing at the realization of another spring and the song of excited robins. I cherish the resurgence of life as a promise this time of year. I know that as my heart pounds, the plant world corresponds with the new flow of sap and the reaching for sunlight.

You are destined to be a GARDENER – your great-grandfather (my Carolina daddy) and then through me and my genes – you will know the glory of planting and picking.

Don’t ever hold back an intense desire to place a tiny seed in loamy ground, to nurture all nature, and to give thanks to some pagan god for the beauty you experience. Your SPIRIT will be enriched as you care for the world around you.

Your Grandmother, Becz... (Barbara Bailey)

Mentors Needed!

Dear Veteran Master Gardeners,

The time is drawing near when you may be asked to 'mentor' a new applicant for the year. Please give this serious thought. Many responses are 'I don't know enough to mentor someone'. This will always be the case...when will we ever be totally knowledgeable?

Please give it some consideration; it may just help your year be more enjoyable!

Thank you, Janet Probstfield

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

A great big thank you to Garry Peterson for weedeating around all the beds at the DIG with his new weedeater. Thanks, Santa, for getting him that! Lana Tepfer
Garden Questions and Answers

There was a wonderful response this month to the garden questions. The questions are:
1) What plants never fail you?
2) What's your favorite bird?
3) What bird is most entertaining in your garden?

The answers are:

1) Never-Fail Favorites: violets, lilies-of-the-valley (both notorious "spreaders"), narcissi/daffodils (as opposed to those fickle tulips which sometimes do, and then sometimes disappear completely), Lilacs of course!!! As I make my list it seems these are all spring beauties with fabulous fragrance -- do we have a trend going here . . . Summertime brings almost non-stop blooming from blue catmint (nepetia?) and "meet-me-by-the-gardengate" (red jupiter beard?) Both of these are old-fashioned favorites with nostalgic nicknames, and the mint is strangely well-behaved (no aggressive runner growth) while the jupiter beard pops up all thruout the garden. Daylilies and lavender are another no-fail combo favorite, edged with a petticoat of volunteer alyssum, of course. Autumn brings no-fail asters and chrysanthemums which continue the jewel colors theme until frost. Never-fail winter favorites include red-twig dogwood sentinels and mixed evergreen borders, which give life and serenity to the slumbering gardenscape, plus it's a safe place for wild bird feeders, as well. Peek out your winter window to enjoy this vista while staying cozy inside with garden catalogs and a hearty beverage: Joyeaux Noel!

2) Favorite bird is the Quail. Love its warning alarm "call-the-cops-call-the-cops" and the sound of their wings when the band takes flight. Momma Quail ushering her brood across the road is precious, cautiously glancing both ways and finally diving into the blackberry jungle on the other side of the lane. And in the orchard or by the creek she leads her family in a haphazard trail -- how she keeps inventory straight is a mystery! A flock of geese overhead is another favorite sight.

3) Most entertaining bird in my garden is the wren - such bold melodies from such a small creature! Husband and Wife Wren have returned to their same birdhouse nest for several years -- and he even helps clean and prepare for this year's new batch(es) of chicks all the time "whistling" while he works! Jamie Crouse

1) While I feel most perennials never fail I guess the most dependable flower is the rose. As long as you are on their schedule, you can pretty much depend on having at least a few any day of the growing season.

2) My favorite bird is the goldfinch. I first saw them in my yard in winter on the head of an echinacea. I was absolutely amazed how bright they are.

3) The most amusing bird in my yard is a daddy crow in the spring nesting time. I have a daisy shaped birdbath which is pretty tall. I was finding horrible things in it and one night there was a McDonald's cheeseburger patty complete with cheese, missing one bite. I didn't want to touch it and the following morning there was the daddy crow carrying it off to his young one block north in a tall tree. He was using my birdbath to soften foods overnight and feeding them to his babies in the morning! It is also amazing to watch crows towards evening. They all gather (hundreds) in nearby trees for about an hour before sunset and chatter. Then right as sunset is occurring, they all take flight and find resting places for the night in different trees. There is definitely a pecking order with the largest males getting the pinnacles of the trees. The next morning at sunrise, a sentry flies over and squawks for everybody to get up for the day. The best I can tell, they are pretty much on their own during the day. Most people hate crows because they are so loud but they are sure interesting to watch. They are one smart bird, too. Lana Tepfer

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Garden responses, cont.

1) What Plants Never Fail you
First Lady Marigolds, Early Jersey Wakefield Cabbages, Waltham Butternut Squash, Oregon Sugar Pod II Peas, Blue Lake Beans, Pole & Bush Tomatoes - Early Girl, Champion & Celebrity, Early Wonder Beets, Giant Kohlrabi Garden bones -- Various junipers, Laurel, Otto Luyken lilacs, shrub roses & ground cover roses. Iris -- drought tolerant and great for those hard to water locations
2) Quail in the winter, Hummingbirds in summer
3) Hummingbirds -- love their antics at the feeders. Peggy Peterson

2) I love the white-breasted nuthatch. They live all year in my yard. In the summer I see families. Adults make their burring "Here I am calls" as they teach the youngsters how to forage for insects. In the winter they travel with flocks of chickadees and sometimes their cousins the red-breasted nuthatch. The white-breasted nuthatches are shy and don't come to my feeder for sunflower seeds nearly as often as the other birds. Nuthatches are one of the few birds that can walk headfirst down trees. Woodpeckers and most other birds can only go up because they need to use their tail for support. But the nuthatches fearlessly go straight down. How can you not like them? Judy Davis

1) daffodils, bearded iris, shasta daisies, lavender, oregano, thyme, marjoram, sage, parsley, dill, savory, rhubarb, Swiss chard
2) pileated woodpecker
3) tie between orioles finding nesting material in the late spring, and Stellar's jays all year. I also like nuthatches and towhees. Marcia Strader

1) snowdrops (already coming up!), Scilla siberica, hellebores, Chionodoxa, rock iris, peony, Coreopsis, Oriental poppies, Salvia, hardy geraniums, Allium, rose campion, Phlox 'davidii', columbine, Sedum, Caryopteris, goldenrod, Campanula, sweet woodruff, and many others already mentioned.
2) I have many favorites, kingfishers being one.
3) Scrub jays probably top the list for year-round entertainment value in my yard, with juncos a close second. Carolyn Wright
One of Katherine Loeck’s projects while an AmeriCorps/VISTA volunteer was working on food assessments for the area. The “Highlights from the 2009 Wasco County Community Food Assessment” report is in three parts; below is the first part and the following two will be covered in subsequent issues of the newsletter. There were 678 people who responded to the survey.

Growing Food: Farms, Ranches and Local Markets for Local Produce

Wasco County has a sizable agricultural sector and is one of the top state producers of sweet cherries (first in Oregon) and wheat (fifth in Oregon). County farmers and ranchers also report producing wine grapes, vegetables, berries, other tree fruit crops such as pears, poultry/eggs, beef, pork, cut flowers, live plants and bulbs, and seed stock (beans, grains). Approximately 40 percent of the county’s farms are less than 50 acres in size, and 24 percent are more than 500 acres.

Most of the food grown in the county is destined for national and international markets. County farms were responsible for just less than $90 million in sales in 2007 – with 66 percent, or $59 million, in fruit. Livestock sales accounted for $10.5 million and grain sales for $15.8 million. Vegetable sales represented only $252,000 of farm sales in the county.

Wasco County producers report energy and input costs, water issues, and challenges getting their crops to market (distribution and marketing) as their biggest local concerns. Most farmers selling locally or regionally use at least two different means to sell their products, including farmers’ markets, farm stands, CSAs, and local restaurants and caterers. Larger operations move far greater volumes of product mainly intended for the commodity market through co-ops and packing houses. Many farmers work additional jobs to achieve a livable income, or have a spouse who works off the farm. 75 percent of farms sold less than $50,000 worth of products in 2007.

Producers reported approximately $74 million in expenses in 2007 — a profit of $16 million. However, profits like this are not guaranteed every year. In 2002, farmers sold $43 million in farm products and reported more than $44 million in expenses (a loss of $1 million). In the Gorge region, farmers and ranchers sell an average of $67 million each year in farm products and spend $77 million each year in expenses (fuel, fertilizers, equipment, seeds, etc.), which is an average loss of $10 million each year.

Meanwhile, county residents spend $66 million each year buying food — $39 million spent for home use — that is mostly sourced from outside the region. That $66 million is potential wealth that leaves our community.

Only 13 percent of Wasco County farms sell directly to consumers, bringing in $432,000 in sales in 2007. That $432,000 represents slightly less than 0.5 percent of total agricultural sales in the county. This seemingly small number is slightly more than the national average for direct sales (0.4 percent). If county residents opted to purchase just 20 percent of their fruit, vegetables and meat directly from local farmers, they could have an economic impact:

Potential Value of 20% Local Purchases, Gorge and Wasco County (in millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Gorge</th>
<th>Wasco</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meats, poultry, fish and eggs</td>
<td>$5.2</td>
<td>$1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>$4.4</td>
<td>$1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3.0</strong></td>
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Recommendations:

- Encourage the development of more locally focused farm and food businesses, and the success of existing operations
- Develop stronger food distribution infrastructure for products destined for local markets
- Develop and improve local markets for local products

The remaining two sections of the report are: 
**Accessing Food: Food Security, Emergency Food and Shopping** and **Food Skills: Cooking, Nutrition and Gardening**. The third section, which includes gardening, is probably the most pertinent to us as Master Gardeners, but I feel that it is important for everyone to read the other sections of the report as well. Gorge Grown Food Network will be following up with the reports.
Calendar

January 5  1pm  The DIG meeting, rm. 1.162
January 7  1-3pm  Executive Board Meeting, 2.273
January 11  8am  Spring Fair planting at NORCOR
January 18  6pm  Quarterly Association Meeting, PUD
January 29  5pm  Deadline for MG Applications
January 30    Deadline for February Newsletter
February 2  1pm  The DIG meeting

WANTED….. ALL MASTER GARDENERS  Lee Bryant

On Monday, Jan. 18, 2010 at the PUD meeting room we will be holding our Quarterly Association meeting. We are inviting the public to come and learn more about The Master Gardener program. Please come and share your love of gardening and of the Master Gardener program. Bring someone you think might be interested in the program.

Bring finger foods to share at 6:00 PM and there will be a short association meeting to approve the budget for the coming year.

A Few Things to Think About, sent in by Charlotte Link

"If it weren't for the last minute, a lot of things wouldn't get done" Michael S. Traylor

"Remember, today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday." Dale Carnegie

"An optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old one leaves." Bill Vaughan

"I mail, I text, I tweet, I blog, I build a Facebook for my dog, I speak no words, I shake no hands, I am at last a modern man." Allan Fallow from the AARP magazine

The Northwest Flower and Garden show  February 3 through 7, 2010, Wednesday - Sat: 9 am - 8 pm; Sunday: 9 am - 6 pm at the Washington State Convention Center, Seattle, Washington

www.gardenshow.com

The DIG Committee meeting will be Tuesday, January 5, 2010 at 1 pm in the large Boardroom (1.162) in Building 1.

Happy New Year, Everyone!