This Month's Master Gardener™ Calendar

Monday, February 6, Library Committee meeting, 10:00am. This is the group that makes the decisions concerning what new books are needed for the MG Library for reference in assisting the Master Gardeners in answering the questions coming from the public. The meetings will be held each month and anyone may attend and is encouraged to attend. MG office at the Extension Service building.

Tuesday, February 14, YCMGA Board Meeting, 3:00-5:00pm, PWA, All YCMGA members welcome! Please note the meeting time/date has changed.

Thursday, Feb. 16, 9:00am, All volunteers welcome. Come out for a fun time tagging trees for the Bare Root Tree Sale. Yamhill Co. Fairgrounds

Friday, February 17, Deadline for the March Tiller. Please note the deadline for the Tiller will be the Friday following the board meeting.

Saturday, February 18 & 25 10:00am - 3:00pm, YCMGA Bare Root Tree Sale, In addition to the sale of the trees, the association will also be providing free service to the public, with or without purchases:

- 100% of net proceeds to college scholarships.

- Written instructions for the planting and care of bare root trees. Rose pruning demonstrations at 1:00 and 3:00 each day. Free tree to each person under age 17. All tree care questions answered. All trees priced at $10, $15 and $20.

- Yamhill County Fairgrounds

Monday, February 20, 10:30am, McMinnville Garden Club meeting: Start Plants From Seeds by Gail Price owner of Nut Farm in McMinnville, 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm Gail will show us techniques on how to start garden plants early for a beautiful and bountiful garden this year. Covenant Church: 2155 W. 2nd Street

Tuesday, February 21, 9 am - 1pm, Winter Twig I.D. - Advanced training class, (with a probable field trip the last hour of class). Taught by Carolyn Devine. Recertification credit given for this class, textbook available: Winter Twigs. A wintertime key to deciduous trees and shrubs of NW Oregon and W Washington. Public Works Auditorium

Insect Committee Meeting Cancelled until March 2006
From the President by Pam Dowling

I don't know about you, but as I write this, I am very tired of all this rain. I know it will help us this summer with irrigation, but enough! However, it does give us more time inside to drool over the garden catalogs and select those new and interesting varieties we will put into our gardens this year.

February is the start of a busy spring for the YC-MGA. We will be holding our Bare Root Tree Sale. Greenhouse activities will begin in preparation for the April 29 plant sale. The greenhouse will be in full swing and we will be getting ready for our plant sale.

The Amity Daffodil Festival (held in March) has requested our assistance again this year. We need a coordinator to oversee the volunteers for the plant clinic at the Festival. We also need a presenters for a workshop. Please contact me for specifics.

As spring progresses, we will be busy with our annual Appreciation Luncheon and the Oregon Master Gardener Association quarterly meeting to be held in our county on March 4. We can always use help in any aspect of our organization's business. In most cases, the more help, the easier the project is completed.

I thought it would be nice for all the members to know who is governing our association and the committee chairs. The 2006 Board of Directors is made up of 8 members who have voting rights on Board business and are: President – Pam Dowling, Vice President – Tom Jellison, Secretary – Ruth Rogers, Treasurer – Anna Ashby, OMGA Rep – Al Hanks, Alternate OMGA Rep – Karen Payne, Member at Large #1 – Joyce Hammerschmith, Member at Large #2 – Kathleen O’Brien-Blair.

I'm very pleased that the top four officers who served last year agreed to serve again this year. We also welcome our 2 new members at large from the class of 2005. The remainder of the Board positions are non-voting and as follows – Class member(s) from current class – Open (will be filled as class progresses).

Desk Captain – Karen Payne, Historian – Joyce Hammerschmith, Library – Polly Blum

The Committee chairs and members are listed as follows: Appreciation Luncheon Chair– Glenda Keck, Bare Root Tree Sale Chair– Alan Wenner, Demo Garden– Sylvia Connor, Doris Crimmins, Gail Price, Polly Blum, Susan Reynolds, George Migaki, Alan Wenner, Gail Bennet Education Seniors– Doris Crimmins Education Schoolage children– Pam Dowling and Anna Ashby, Greenhouse– Gail Price, Doris Crimmins, Polly Blum, Sylvia Connor, Gail Bennett, Susan Reynolds, Hospitality for General Meetings– OPEN

Linda's Corner by Linda McMahan, Community Horticulture Faculty, OSU Extension Yamhill County

Welcome to the Class of 2006. Please join me in welcoming a new Class of 2006 people who are training to become our newest OSU Master GardenersTM. They are Daryll Alt, Julie Balwit, Michelle Borroso, Mark Bourassa, Jennifer Browne, Cathy Burdett, Kate Cushman, Suluwo Eide, Jennifer and Fernando Gallardo, Marcia Garrick, Debra Hakala, Peggy Jacobson, Stana McKittrick, and Robert Moncy. This is a small but energetic and interactive group; I believe we will all enjoy getting to know and work with them in the coming year and beyond.

Thank you for the work of this year’s mentors as well. Judy Anderson and Gloria Lutz have again agreed to Chair the Mentor Committee. Other mentors include Jake Hurlbert, Sharon Gunter, Doris Cruickshank, and Kate Parker. George Migaki is continuing to serve as Class Host, and Karen Payne as Class Assistant.

Desk Sign-Up Reminder. Every time the rain stops for while, we get clients bringing in samples or questions for Master Gardeners. Please remember to sign up for desk hours to keep up with this demand. Winter is a great time to sign up for the desk because we get limited samples but lots of time to find the answers. Also, please consider signing up for some summer hours now since we always have trouble filling our “desk” needs during the summer. Even a commitment for one afternoon or morning a month will help tremendously during the summer months.

Desk Hours Changes. In
To Bee or Not to Bee!
As spring approaches, it is time to think about planting seeds, pruning bushes and getting fruit trees ready for the spring bloom. A decision now is to decide whether to attract orchard mason bees to your property or not. These little black bees begin to emerge in March, when the first bushes and native trees begin to bloom, and continue into late spring and early summer. They are indispensable for pollination of fruit trees, since our “wild” and domesticated honey bees have become decimated by disease and parasites. Mason bees are very easy to attract to the garden and to get them to propagate there. All that you need to do is supply them with the proper breeding containers. “Build them, and they will come!”

The adult mason bees lay their eggs in holes that they find in wood, often holes that were left by boring beetles. The size of these holes must accommodate the body of the bee, because they crawl deep inside to make multiple chambers in the hole for the larvae to feed and grow. After laying an egg in the chamber, the mason bees gather pollen and pack the chamber with it to provide food for the immature bee. When a sufficient amount of pollen has been deposited, the chamber is sealed with mud, and a new chamber is formed. If the hole is deep enough, many chambers will be formed in each, one in front of the other. The larvae feed on the pollen, pupate and then remain in this stage throughout the rest of the summer and winter. In spring, the pupa turn into adult bees, they cut their way out of the chamber to emerge in March-April, and the life cycle begins anew.

Needless to say, all that gathering of pollen for the bee offspring spreads around a great deal of excess pollen, and flowers (especially of fruit trees) are readily fertilized. Mason bee activity is especially important if we have an early spring, before other bees become very active.

To attract mason bees to your property, you need only to build some nesting boxes for the bees. I have found that wood 4x4 about 16 inches long works great for this purpose. Do not, however, use treated wood, as the chemicals used in the processing are lethal to the larvae. I drill 5/16th inch holes in one side about 1/2 inch apart, almost through to the other side of the wood. A drill press makes this job easy, as you can control the depth very precisely. One block of wood can contain as many as 50 to 70 holes. Be sure to clean the entrance to the holes so that there are no obstructions to the bees. I put a hanger on the back of the block and attach the box to a fence post or out building facing east near my fruit trees. Bees may not use it if it is facing south, so avoid that direction. Bees should be seen around and on the block in March.

The joy of watching these industrious little black bees is worth the effort of making the houses. You also may get a better fruit crop! By the way, commercially sold bee boxes are also available!

Book Look

Poinsettias: To Be or Not To Be!
by Barbara Grossmann

Barbara’s note: Master Gardener way or, the hard way: To care for that holiday Poinsettia gift, keep the plant in a sunny window. Avoid any sudden temperature changes. Keep the soil moist; don’t let water stand in the pot saucer. When leaves fall from the plant in late winter or early spring, cut stems back to two buds and reduce watering to a minimum. Store in a cool place until late spring. When frosts are past, set the pots in the sun outdoors. They will probably grow too tall for indoor use next winter, but may survive winter if well sheltered; (not where I live). Start new plants by making late-summer cuttings of stems with four or five eyes (joints).
**Superb Herbs - Thyme ...** by Beth Durr

*Thymus vulgaris*, thyme as we know it, gives us all kinds of ways to “make pun” of ‘thyme on our hands,’ ‘thyme to kill,’ ‘thyme will tell,’ etc.

Thyme’s generic name *Thymus* has a divided explanation of its origin by word smiths. The Greek derivative *Thymus* means “courage.” However, there is another ancient Greek expression that refers to “to fumigate.” Its strong antiseptic properties and use as incense to purify the air and chase away insects were ancient practices.

More confusion concerning thyme lies in the botanical classification, as there is a disagreement among experts. Linnaeus described 8 species in 1753. Others think there are three basic types. European researchers have identified 7 distinct chemical forms and there are over 400 specimens being studied world-wide at Cornell University. *Thymus vulgaris* is the most common and is known as English thyme.

From earlier times (thymes) to now, thyme has been associated with bees and honey. Because it attracts swarms of bees, it is a common Mediterranean practice for orchard growers to plant thyme as a ground cover to attract pollinating insects to fruit trees. The thyme-based honey is sold in many import stores. The bee–honey–thyme theme flourished during the Age of Chivalry and has since become a symbol of strength, activity and bravery.

One extreme medieval application as an herbal remedy included a soup of beer and thyme as an antidote to shyness. (It was probably the beer!) More modern day applications claim that it improves digestion, soothes coughs, eases asthmatic breathing, helps headaches, encourages sleep and relieves flatulence. And don’t forget, the previously mentioned antiseptic qualities. Again I also must caution in the use of the essential oil of thyme, as it is potentially toxic. Just look at the labels of Listerine, Vick’s Vapor Rub and various cough drops, ear drops and ointments to see this herb in action.

To grow this versatile plant in your garden, it needs full sun, but can take some shade. It is hardy in zones 5–9 and prefers a soil pH of 6.3–6.5. As with most plants, it also prefers well-drained soil. It can be a little finicky to start by seed, so it is recommended to start indoors. They grow to about 8” the first year. Thyme requires little care once it is established. It can become woody and straggly after a couple of years, but this can be kept in check with hard pruning twice a season, and diligent pinching off regularly. Mid-summer is the first harvest. Cut back to 2” and dry by hanging or laying on a screen. You may also freeze it. If you harvest again in late fall, cut back to just 4” to help its hardiness through the winter. Prune again lightly in February to stimulate new growth.

Thyme has a delicate green–with–faint–clove aftertaste. It ranks as one of the ‘fines herbes’ of French cuisine. This is another herb that goes with all meats, soups, stews, vegetables and egg and rice dishes. It is an ingredient in poultry seasoning, Italian blends, Jamaican jerk sauce and Cajun blackening spices. One note here, is that although creeping thyme is edible, it is seldom used as a flavoring.

For those who are into companion planting, it is said that thyme repels cabbage worms and whiteflies, therefore it is good to plant with eggplant, potatoes, and tomatoes.

In the garden, as a landscape plant, thyme offers many colors and textures. This tiny-leaved perennial offers a multitude of possibilities. The leaves and flowers shades vary from grays to greens and gold, pure white through pink and lavender to vibrant purples. Its fragrance is an added bonus. The culinary species can become an upright, bushy shrub to add as a backbone to landscaping. Woolly thyme can create a blanket of fuzzy foliage as it crawls through your garden. Lemon thyme has bright golden leaves and a sharp citrus smell. There are many variegated varieties with multi-colored leaves and flowers with spice-like scents such as caraway and nutmeg. A lot of the creeping varieties are sold as “step pables,” meaning you use them as ground covers that give off a fragrance when crushed beneath your feet, yet they continue to grow.

This aromatic function extends to craft and home uses. Thyme is great as a sachet to repel insects, and can be used in the bath, in lotions, and of course, potpourri. Its scent blends well with lavender and lemon. There are also wreaths and dried arrangements that thyme winds its way through.

For us gardeners who rarely have “thyme on our hands,” we can start a nice collection of the different kinds of thyme. Who would ever think that hungry slugs could be such gourmands? Slugs and poor air circulation are the only problems with growing thyme. Otherwise, this herb is a great addition to any garden.

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Poinsettias continued from page 3

Plants bloom only when they experience long nights. Starting in October, move them into a closet each night for 14 hours, then move them into light in the morning for a maximum of 10 hours. Continue this procedure for 10 weeks; you can have poinsettia blossoms by Christmas.

Barbara’s note: The easy way. Buy them at the store.  
Source: Sunset Western Garden Book on Poinsettias.
Hey! It's still raining! At least as I write this column it is raining and it seems like it has rained continuously --- FOREVER!

Everything is just one big puddle. As I look out the window I see things that need doing in the flowerbeds. Even though it is wet and cold the weeds manage to continue growing. I would love to get out and stay on top of things at least by keeping those weeds pulled.

I also see old foliage that didn't get cleaned up in the fall. It really didn't look bad until we had the cold spell that froze everything back. Then the rain came and I didn't get out to finish cleaning up the beds. Now I have to look at the mushy foliage of calla lilies, cannas, and hostas. I bet the slugs are having a ball under all that stuff. I am just itching to get out there and clean it all up.

As I look out at this wet mess, I am trying to think of a plant that is not letting this nasty weather bother it. Lo and behold I see the hellebores are coming into their own. Their flower stems are elongating and it won't be long before they are in bloom. Except for the weeds, the hellebores are the only plants showing any active life.

There are a number of varieties of hellebores and I think mine are Hellebores orientalis, common name lenten rose. (I'd go out and check their tags to be sure but it is raining too hard.) Anyway, I have sort of a rose colored one, a cream colored one, and a maroon colored one. They have deep green palmate leaves which I like.

Some people cut the leaves off at this time of year and just let the flowers show. I like the leaves as long as they look healthy. As the leaves get ratty looking I cut them off and by spring I have cut them all off as new ones will grow and look nice throughout the summer. The flowers are long-lasting and make nice cut flowers. The plants are long-lived and prefer not being disturbed once established. I think they are a great plant for the winter garden.

Summer is sort of their dormant time but the leaves can look nice behind some annuals or other perennials. Hellebores like some shade in the heat of summer. They will tolerate some dry conditions. I usually squirt a little water their way when I hand water other plants near them.

Hellebores can reseed heavily depending on the conditions. I let mine reseed on purpose two years ago because I wanted some seedlings to raise. Last year I cut the seed heads off before they dropped their seeds to avoid another crop.

From the Greenhouse.... by Gail Price

Speaking of seedlings, it won't be long before we have seedlings going in the MG greenhouse. The plant sale plant committee met just after the first of the year to go over plant lists and catalogues. Orders are off to our favorite seed companies. The seeds will be sent to us in time for our first day of seeding on February 21st.

We will again be meeting every Tuesday at 9:00am at the MG greenhouse at the fairgrounds. Over the next two and a half months, we will be seeding, transplanting and tending the plants that we will sell at the plant sale on April 29th. We welcome any of you who want to help out with this major project. We hope there will be members of the new class who want to learn how to work in a greenhouse, and we hope some of you veterans will come and mentor the new people. We really have a great time working on this project.

Before we can seed the plants we will need to get potting soil. “Dirt Day” has been set for Friday, February 10th. We will go to Pro Gro that morning. We have people with pickup trucks lined up but we might be able to use one or two more. Give me a call at 503-472-1417 if you have a truck and can go with us.

What we definitely will need is some help at the greenhouse around 10:30 that day to unload the potting soil. You might also give me a call if you can help unload the soil.

Even though it doesn't look like spring will be coming anytime soon, we are making plans for it anyway. Please join us at the greenhouse.

President continued from page 2


As you can see from the above long list, it takes a lot of members to make our organization run smoothly and achieve our goals. A B I G T H A N K S to all committee chairs and members agreeing to serve this year. In many cases, members have served on these committees for several years. We also have some open slots which need to be filled this month. Please contact me at dowling1290@msn.com to volunteer.
Bareroot Planting and Care Instructions

In the Willamette Valley, bareroot trees may be planted in very early spring as soon as they become available. Bareroot trees are a quality product that are in a dormant stage, have no soil on the roots and are not potted or balled in burlap. They are removed from the ground in fall and winter when dormant, stored in climate controlled environments, and with minimal care when planting, bloom into beautiful trees.

Traditionally, trees have been sold bareroot for many years with many advantages to consumers. The most important consumer benefit is increased cost savings over potted plants. Lighter weight bareroot requires less freight and shipping expense - the savings being passed on to the consumer through lower prices. Buying bareroot trees helps the environment with no plastic pots and less pollution and fuel consumption. Also, consumers can make their early spring purchases in larger quantities with space-saving bareroot plants.

The greatest advantage is to the tree itself. Potted trees frequently need severe root pruning so the plant may fit into the pot. The tops are also pruned to reduce the stress on these smaller root systems. All of this pruning plus being grown in a pot with artificial soil produce a tree of lower quality that will take much longer to become established in the landscape.

Other advantages to the consumer include: easier transportation, easier planting, ability to see the roots prior to purchase and less concern about soil compatibility.

Soaking the roots: Before planting bareroot, woody, dormant nursery stock, soak the roots in a pail or bucket of water for 18 to 24 hours (do not exceed 24 hours). This allows the roots to take up the maximum amount of water without doing any injury to the plant.

Soil Preparation: Do not replace the soil! Soil may be amended with organic matter (compost, manure, peat moss, etc.) to insure that the soil is fertile, loose, high in organic matter and well drained. Dig the hole large enough for the roots to fit in and fill the hole with water. If the hole does not empty in 24 hours, do not plant the tree in this spot. A small amount of general yard or garden fertilizer may be added to the soil but be careful not to have any fertilizer next to the roots.

Root Pruning: Cut off broken or badly damaged root, making a clean cut just in back of the ragged roots. Shorten any long roots that do not fit easily in the hole dug.

Top Pruning: Do not top prune trees except to remove any broken or misplaced branches.

Setting the Plant: Make sure the hole is large enough so the roots are not crowded and the soil in the bottom of the hole is loose. Make certain that the tree is planted straight up and down. The bud union must be above ground after planting and all of the roots should be covered with soil.

Watering: Newly planted trees need more water than established plants. Watering once every 7 to 10 days is recommended and water slowly so it soaks into the ground to the root depth or bottom of the original hole. Trees must be watered through the entire first growing season. In the Willamette Valley, this is until the beginning of the rainy season in November.

Mulching: Mulching helps maintain a uniform supply of moisture while keeping weed growth down. Organic material such as: hay, wood shavings, bark, sawdust, leaves and lawn clippings can be used as well as organic materials such as landscape fabric. When organic materials are applied a high nitrogen (lawn) fertilizer should be added to help the organic matter decompose.

Grass Barrier: Protect your newly planted tree from the lawn mower and string trimmer by placing a grass barrier about 12 inches from the trunk. Injuries from the lawn mower or string trimmer can cause problems that won't appear for years if the tree is injured when young.

Our Bare Root Tree Sale has become our greatest fund raiser ever. This success could not be accomplished without countless hours of dedication and hard work by us! Alan Wenner has been doing a great job at spearheading this endeavor. However, this year will end his leadership in this project. That is why it is crucial for all of us to get involved in this year’s sale so we can make sure it runs smoothly.

The Bareroot Tree Sale will be held from 10:00 AM to 3:00 pm on Saturday, February 18th and February 25th at the Yamhill County Fairgrounds. This tree sale is a fund raising effort for the Yamhill County Master Gardener Association. All net proceeds go to fund horticulture scholarships in Yamhill County. Shade, flowering and fruit trees will be offered at below wholesale prices. Alan Wenner can be contacted at alanwenner@verizon.net or phone (503)435-1131.
FEBRUARY

Garden hints from your OSU Extension Agent

- Have soil test performed on garden plot to determine nutrient needs. Contact your local Extension office for a list of testing laboratories.
- Tune up lawn mower and garden equipment before the busy season begins.
- Use delayed-dormant sprays of lime sulfur for fruit and deciduous trees and shrubs.
- Prune and train grapes; make cuttings.
- Monitor landscape plants for problems. Do not treat unless a problem is identified.
- Make a cold frame or hotbed to start early vegetables or flowers.
- Check junipers and cotoneaster for webworm activity. Treat if necessary.
- Plant windowsill container gardens of carrots, lettuce, or parsley.
- Plan to add herbaceous perennial flowers to your flowering landscape this spring: astilbe, candytuft, peony, anemone.
- Make plans for an herb bed, for cooking and for interest in the landscape: parsley, sage, chives, lavender; plant next month.
- If weather permits and the soil is dry enough, spade or till garden areas for planting later.
- Spade or plow down cover crops or other organic matter.
- Use a soil thermometer to help you know when to plant vegetable and flower seeds.
- Good time to plant fruit trees and deciduous shrubs.
- Prune deciduous summer-blooming shrubs and trees.
- Prune clematis, Virginia creeper, and other vining ornamentals.
- Pasteurize soil for starting seedlings in pots or flats.
- Fertilize rhubarb with manure or a complete fertilizer.
- Prune and trellis trailing berries and caneberries.
- Prune fruit trees and blueberries.
- Repair winter damage to trees and shrubs.
- Control moles and gophers with traps.

Oregon State University Extension Service encourages sustainable gardening practices. Always identify and monitor problems before acting. First consider cultural controls; then physical, biological, and chemical controls (which include insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, botanical insecticides, organic and synthetic pesticides). Always consider the least toxic approach first.

Linda continued from page 2

response to requests for more flexible desk hours, we are making all day Monday and Wednesdays available for desk duty. In exchange, we won’t have the desk open on Fridays. For the first few months of 2006, Monday and Wednesday will be the only days open. Starting in mid-March or April, we will add Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Also, remember if you can’t sign up for an entire 4-hour slot, then just do 2-3 hours. On Monday’s and Wednesdays, you can sign up for overlapping times during the day if this works better for you. Also, we have new “hours” forms, which are available on the web or in the front office. Tell us if you like them!

To sign up for times on the desk, please do one of the following: Call 503 434-8916, or the main extension number 503-434-7517, or email Deb Zaveson OSU Yamhill County Extension Administrative Support. @ Debra.Zaveson@oregonstate.edu

Just a reminder to pay your 2006 YCMGA membership dues.
We're on the Web!
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/pages/ycmga.html

The Tiller

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General meetings of the Yamhill County Master Gardener™ Association as announced in the Tiller, Open to the Public.

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Yamhill County OSU Master Gardener™ Newsletter

Organic Gardening Tip of the Month

As you are sitting by your warm fire perusing the garden catalogs and planning, consider an edible landscape. It’s easy to tuck in some colorful and productive vegetables amongst your established plantings.