

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

January Topic: Pruning and Care in the Landscape

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its January 2020 meeting on Wednesday, **January 8** at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Our speaker for the evening will be Debra Olberg, owner of Secret Garden Designs, who will provide an overview of seasonal tasks for maintaining beautiful and productive gardens.

Even though we are beginning the winter months, this time of year is the optimum time for completing tasks that will start our gardens onto the right path for health, vigor, and beauty. And each garden season brings a list of tasks to be completed at optimum periods across the seasons.

Debra Olberg has spent 23 years in the retail nursery/landscaping industry as a certified technician. Her company specializes in one-on-one consultations with homeowners to solve their garden problems. She also teaches classes at Whatcom Community College on cultivating vegetables, fruit trees, and berries and general care and landscape design.

Come and start organizing your year-round gardening tasks!

Fragrant Winter Flowers

Few shrubs reach their peak in the middle of winter, but that is precisely when *Sarcococca ruscifolia* begins to shine. Tiny white flowers hidden amongst its glossy, dark-green foliage, open to release a delightful perfume of sweet vanilla. The perfume wafts in the winter air from January through February. Following flowering, small scarlet berries appear.



Sarcococca is deer resistant, evergreen, gets about 3-4' tall in time (a lot of time, it's a slow grower!), and is one of the few plants that will tolerate deep, dark shade. The plant is easy to prune to keep to size and naturally forms a nice compact mound with arching branches.

A possible negative aspect of the plant is spreading through underground runners. This usually is not a problem as the runners are easy to snip away and

spreading does not occur until the plant is fully mature (after 10 years of slow growth).

Sarcococca is easy to grow, not susceptible to disease or pests. The plant prefers well-drained soil and is drought tolerant in the Pacific Northwest. *Sarcococca* thrives in USDA Zones 7-9.

Because of its fragrant flowers, *Sarcococca* is a good choice to plant near a walkway or porch. The sweet scent is a wonderful way to welcome visitors! Because there are few choices of flowering evergreen shrubs for shade, *Sarcococca* is especially useful for woodland gardens and as a structural plant for the shady border. Its evergreen foliage and



fragrant flowers make *Sarcococca* a beautiful plant for the winter garden.

2020 Perennial Plant of the Year — *Aralia* “Sun King”

The Perennial Plant of the Year program began in 1990 by the Perennial Plant Association to showcase a perennial that is a standout among its competitors. Perennials chosen are suitable for a wide range of growing climates, require low maintenance, have multi-season interest, and are relatively pest/disease-free.

The Perennial Plant Association named *Aralia* ‘Sun King’ as its 2020 Perennial Plant of the Year. Also called Golden Japanese Spikenard, this aralia is hardy, fast growing, and attractive to wildlife.

‘Sun King’ has a tropical look, but it is hardy to USDA Zone 3 and grows to about 3 feet high and wide or larger in some cases. The large compound leaves measure up to 3 feet long, as well.

‘Sun King’ emerges mid-spring with bright gold leaves on contrasting reddish brown stems.

If given at least a few hours of sun a day, the foliage will remain yellow all summer. In heavier shade, the foliage ranges from chartreuse to lime green.

In mid to late summer, interesting racemes of tiny white flowers are produced followed by deep purplish black, inedible berries



loved by birds. Like most Aralias, the flowers attract honeybees.

An excellent complement to hostas, heuchera, and woodland perennials, ‘Sun King’ quickly forms a large clump of foliage

which amazingly resists deer browsing. It is a beautiful plant for the woodland garden or as a focal point in the perennial border.

Aralias prefer moist, fertile, humusy, well-drained soils. They need shelter from strong winds to protect the large compound foliage. No pruning is needed, but in colder climates plant may die back to the ground and start again. Dead stems can be removed once it buds out in spring.

The Perennial Plant Association’s list of perennial plants of the year is an excellent resource for exploring standout perennials. So, if you are looking for an excellent perennial for your next landscape project or something reliable for your gardens, make sure to check out the Perennial Plant of the Year archive list at perennialplant.org

The Birchwood Garden Club Provides Financial Support and/or Gardening Expertise to the following Community Organizations

Bellingham Public Library *Whatcom Museum of History and Art*
Growing Veterans *Cornwall Rose Garden* *Bellingham Food Bank*

Welcome New Members

Lisa Anderson and Sharon Pelfrey

Snacks

This month’s meeting snacks will be provided by Elvira and Jim Butler, and Cheryl Haak.

Thank You

Plant of the Month: *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica'

Noted for its stunning bright coral red stems in winter, *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica' (Tatarian Dogwood) is a medium-sized ornamental shrub with great year-round appeal. It has stunning fall color, attractive berries, and specular red stems that create wow in the winter garden.

Sibirica dogwood is a multi-stemmed suckering deciduous shrub that grows at a fast rate up to 4-7 feet high and 3-5 feet across. This beautiful shrub performs best in full sun or part-shade in organically rich, medium moisture, well-drained soil. It is easy to grow, easy to care for, and deer and rabbit resistant.

The dark-green foliage of Sibirica dogwood turn a beautiful purple red in fall. Flat-topped clusters of



tiny yellow-white flowers, 1 to 2 inches in diameter, appear in May and June. While not showy, they attract butterflies and pollinators. Flowers give way in midsummer

to clusters of bluish-white berries that are loved by birds.

Sibirica dogwood looks spectacular during the winter when the bright coral red stems become prominent. While pruning is not required, the best winter stem color appears on new growth. For the best display, while at the same time encouraging the flowers and berries that only form on second-year growth, prune about one-third of the oldest stems in early spring.

This beautiful shrub serves as a dramatic focal point and brings interest to the garden throughout the year.

Make Composting a New Year's Resolution

What better New Year's resolution than to start recycling and doing your part to preserve our natural resources? By composting yard and kitchen waste, you can also get a jump start on your spring gardening by creating your own mulch and fertilizer. Done properly, raw compost material can transform into nutrient-rich soil in just six weeks!

Composting is an excellent way to avoid wasting useful natural resources and creating environmental problems, while at

the same time producing a high quality and inexpensive soil amendment. Composting is a natural form of recycling which continually occurs in nature.

What is compost? Essentially, it is what's left of organic matter after microbes have thoroughly decomposed it. Among the compostable organic materials close to home are leaves, grass clippings, twigs, and vegetable/fruit peelings and coffee grounds. Table scraps containing meat, eggs, or oils are not recommended

because they can draw rodents and cause an odor.

Composting is easy! You don't need a fancy bin or container; just a pile in an out-of-the-way place in the garden will do. Alternate layers of brown (leaves, twigs) and green materials (grass clippings, vegetable peelings). Rainfall will provide most of the needed moisture. Move oxygen through the pile to increase decomposition by turning the pile on a regular basis with a pitchfork or rake.

My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece

Claude Monet

Meeting Minutes

December 4, 2019

Submitted by Ann Holland



Our President Patti Salotti welcomed all and two guests to our December meeting. There were forty-two members present. Our speaker tonight is Karen Chapman CPH (Certified Professional Horticulturist) from Le Jardin. Karen spoke tonight on Deer Resistant Gardens.

The last meetings minutes (November 2019) published in the Gazette were approved.

The **Silent Auction** table has several interesting items for our bidding pleasure.

Old Business: Zapote Gregory thanked all those who helped with the Rose Garden work party in November. Ann Holland thanked the six members who renovated the Museum garden. Old plants were removed and six new drought tolerant plants were installed. The ivy was trimmed back. The museum staff is delighted to see something new.

Treasurers Report: Nancy McMaster gave us the current bank balance and membership income to date.

New Business: Judy Boxx announced that the Masters Gardeners Club has arranged for bus transportation to the NW Garden Show again this year. If there are empty seats, non Master Gardeners may go along for \$50.00. The bus transportation will be for the first day of the show, Wednesday, February 26th.

Announcement: Remember that the January Birchwood Garden Club meeting will be on the second Wednesday of the month; January 8, 2020.

Thank you to Judy Boxx, Mary Foster and Carol McLean for our snacks this evening. As always, thank you to Sheri and Russ Lambert for our coffee (always decaf).

The Birchwood Garden Club (BGC) is open to everyone in Whatcom and Skagit Counties who supports the objectives of the organization. BGC meets the first Wednesday of each month from September thru May. Annual membership is \$10 for an individual, \$15 for a family, due in September. Membership applications are available from the website: www.birchwoodgardenclub.org.

The Birchwood Garden Club Gazette is published monthly, September thru May, by the BGC. Articles, inquiries, letters to the editor, or other comments should be directed to the Editors, Ken and Stephanie Salzman, at the above address or via e-mail to: sasalzman@comcast.net

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CURRENT OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

President - Patti Salotti

President Elect - Sheri Lambert

Treasurer - Nancy McMaster

Secretary - Ann Holland

Garden Tours – Sheri Lambert & Carol McBride

Historian – Violet Hayes

Hospitality – Carol McBride

Library Garden – Donna Halwe

Museum Garden – Ann Holland

Membership – Judy Lewis

Newsletter – Ken & Stephanie Salzman

Plant Sale – Cheryl Haak

Programs – Tamara Hall

Publicity – Susan Metcalfe

Silent Auction – Sandy Gurosko

Sunshine – Cheryl Haak

Webmaster – Tom Sparks