

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

March Topic:

Bats in the Garden

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its March 2020 meeting on Wednesday, March 4 at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Our speaker for the evening will be Kathleen Bander, founder of Bats NW.

Bats add a fantastic nocturnal air show to our garden experience. The bats' aerial antics rid our gardens of flying pestilence and provide endless entertainment. Before you know it, you will be settling into a comfy chair at dusk with a nice nocturnal beverage and a culinary treat to maximize the viewing pleasure.

As our resident bat guide, Kathleen Bander will identify the local resident bat species and their lifestyle status. To increase our nocturnal visitations, she will provide information on how to attract and nurture the resident populations. For those who wish to establish their own bat squadron, there will be effective logistical support (housing, care, feeding, rules and advice).

Come celebrate those creatures that are not only interesting to watch but make important contributions to our gardens!

Time to Divide Perennials

Every gardener has perennial flowers and we all know how, if they are in the right spot, they will live and multiple supposedly forever. And, we all know the common sense tips for growing perennials – location that suits the plant, healthy soil, correct moisture – but one problem that plagues enthusiastic gardeners is overcrowding.



Overcrowding can lead to several problems—weak plants, less flowers, disease and insect problems, and overall an unattractive and unproductive plant. Now is the time to assess your perennial plantings and take action.

To avoid interrupting flowering, dig up summer and fall-blooming perennials when the new growth is a few inches high—that is in the early spring. Now is not the best

time to dig up and divide the spring flowering plants such as peony and iris. Some fast-growing perennials need to be divided between one and three years after planting.

Dig up the parent plant using a sharp spade. Gently lift the plant out of the ground and remove any loose dirt around the roots. Separate the plant into smaller divisions by gently pulling the roots apart or cut them with a sharp knife. Each division should have 3-5 vigorous shoots and a healthy supply of roots. Keep the divisions shaded and moist until they are replanted.

Divide ornamental perennial grasses before new growth emerges. Cut back the old culms to within 4 to 6 inches of the ground and use a sharp shovel to slice or hack one or more wedges out of the crown. Immediately plant them elsewhere or pot them for the BGC Plant Sale!



Oh Those Beautiful Hellebores!

Here in the Pacific Northwest the blooming of hellebores is a favorite late winter reminder that spring is right around the corner. Single and double flowers in shades of red, pink, white, green, purple, and yellow are blooming now. And the showy flowers stick around for two months or more.



Hellebores require only a shady site, well-drained soil, and an occasional watering in dry times. They bloom best in fertile soil; top-dress with compost or, when you see new growth in late winter, apply an organic fertilizer.

And, this little gem is deer-resistant! But the compounds that make hellebores unpalatable to deer can also cause mild skin irritation, so wear gloves when handling.

Hellebores are perennial and largely evergreen. Their flowers provide color and interest in the shade garden. Their leaf structure is interesting enough to make your shade garden pop all year.

Get Ready for the Plant Sale

The Birchwood Garden Club's 26th annual plant sale will be on Saturday, May 2, starting at 9:00 a.m. (sale volunteers arrive at 8:00 a.m.) in the lower level conference room of the Bellingham Public Library at 210 Central Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225. Please mark your calendars for this fun event.

As in the past, we will be setting up for the sale on Friday, May 1, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Please help by donating plants or related gardening items to this BGC major fund-raising event. Annuals, perennials, indoor plants and veggie starts, along with pots, books and other garden items are much appreciated and make our sale a huge success. On set up day volunteers will be unloading vehicles of plants at the library (we will have a designated drop off area for the sale items on Lottie Street which borders the north side of the library), setting up and lining the tables, posting price signage, pricing the plants and organizing them on the appropriate tables.

On the day of the sale we need help for customers with their plant choices, cashiers, people to help the customers take their purchases to their vehicles, greeters at the door, someone to check receipts and cleanup after the sale.

The plant sale is the one major fundraiser for the Birchwood Garden Club. Please consider volunteering your time for either or both days. Anything you can do to help out would be much appreciated. In the meantime, look around your yards to see if anything needs division!

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
Lora Finnigan and Jan Rector

Snacks

This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Donna Halwe and Sheri Lambert.

Thank You

Plant of the Month: *Vaccinium crassifolium* 'WellsDelight'

For the gardener looking for a lovely groundcover that also bears fruit, Wells Delight Creeping Blueberry fits the bill. Also known as Thick-leaved Whortlberry, this evergreen groundcover was developed at North Carolina State University from a creeping blueberry native to the coastal Carolinas.

Wells Delight is an evergreen groundcover that grows 5-8 inches tall and 24 inches wide. The new growth starts out bronze and turns to dark green as summer progresses. The beautiful shiny leaves have an

oval-elliptic shape, are thick and leathery, and grow on horizontal branches. The trailing stems form runners that root in and form a thick ground cover that is attractive all year round.



Small white urn-shape flowers appear in mid to late springtime. Later they morph to dark blue

berries which are highly attractive to birds.

Wells Delight grows beautifully in sun to light shade. It does best in acidic organically rich soil with good drainage. New plants need moisture when young but are fairly drought tolerant afterward. This type of creeping blueberry has no pests and deer do not find it attractive.

Any of the blueberries would be excellent companions for Wells Delight. Other plants that would look great with creeping blueberry are dwarf blazing stars, dwarf iris, and Sedum.

I Can Almost See Spring

This is a good time for all of us to check our trees and shrubs, before they leaf out (which always seems to occur overnight, much sooner than we think it's going to). It's easier to see winter injury, or branches crossed or rubbing, or if some shaping is in order, while the branches are bare. Make note of the current size of your trees and shrubs and whether there are wires, lights, or roofs that may necessitate pruning before the end of this growing season.

To Prune or Not To Prune. That is the question! Some of reasons you may want or need to do some pruning this spring include winter injury, aesthetics (to maintain natural shape), size reduction, and growth stimulation. Pruning will also remove crossing or rubbing branches that could create entrance for insects or diseases. Rejuvenation of an overgrown plant can be achieved by pruning just before new growth begins.

Tree Pruning Sequence. When pruning trees, diseased or dead wood should be removed first and then branches that are rubbing other branches. Then remove branches growing inward toward the center and weak V-joints that could later cause splitting of limbs or the trunk. Next prune watersprouts (small branches growing vertically from a larger branch) and branches that are distorting the natural shape. Finally, cut off suckers (small branches growing from roots or from around the base of the tree).

Pruning Flowering Shrubs. Generally, if a shrub flowers in the spring, the buds form on old wood (last year's growth), so prune after flowering. If it flowers in the summer or fall, the buds form on new wood, and you may want to prune to control size or encourage growth. Frequently with flowering shrubs careful deadheading may be all that is required.

Meeting Minutes

February 5, 2020

Submitted by Ann Holland



Our President Patti Salotti welcomed all and introduced new member; Sue Fisher.

There are thirty-two members present. Our speaker tonight is Stephanie Harvey from Green Earth Technology. Stephanie provided us with an overview of her company's process of obtaining our local community waste and turning it into high quality compost, which is for sale to the public. They are located on the Hannagan Road seven miles north of Sunset Drive.

The last meetings minutes (January 2020) published in the Gazette were approved.

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

Old Business: The clubs involvement in the Cornwall Rose Garden was discussed and several members voiced their opinion that financial support for fertilizer and new plants was a good fit for our club goal of community gardening support.. Anyone wishing to volunteer their time to help with the upkeep should contact Zapote Gregory.

We received more information regarding the Whidbey Gardening Workshop, which takes place on March 14th.

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

New Business: Please think about new program subjects that you would like presented during the 2020/2021 season and voice your opinions at the next meeting.

Cheryl Haak announced the dates for our plant sale in May. The **set up day** will be Friday May 1st starting at 3:00 p.m. The **sale day** will be Saturday May 2nd from 9:00 until noon. Start thinking about plants that you can divide so they can live on in a new home. Many members would be glad to display our plant sale information on their car windows.

Announcement: The Mount Baker Orchid Society has extended an invitation to our club member to come and hear the well-known Thomas Mirenda speak on the Orchids of Southwestern Australia. The event will take place on Friday, February 14th at 7:00 p.m. at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10441 Bayview Edison Road, Mount Vernon, WA.

Thank you to Tamara Hall and Kathy Reed 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

Author's statements, either of fact or opinion, are their own and do not necessarily express the official policy of the BGC. While the advice and information in this newsletter is believed to be true and accurate at the time of publication, neither the authors nor the editor can accept any legal responsibility for errors or omissions. The BGC makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein.

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