

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

April Topic: Ferns for the Temperate World

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its April 2017 meeting on Wednesday, April 5, at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Our speaker will be Judith Jones from Fancy Fronds Nursery <http://www.fancyfronds nursery.com/ferns/>

It is time to celebrate the plethora of wonderful ferns which thrive in our area. They bring delicate shadows and forms to our gardens in a rugged and dependable plant.

The fronds range from smooth and straight forward to curled or intricately patterned. Among this wide ranging family, there is a fern to match your sun, shade, size, or frond requirements.

No landscape will realize its full potential without the inclusion of a handful of fern accents. Judith Jones will take us on a tour of the fern genre and its many choices for the garden. She is a well-known expert in this field and has the spores, plants, and experience to guarantee an impressive talk.

She will be bringing some ferns for sale, so bring your wallet. This is a talk and demonstration to relish!

Preparing for the Plant Sale

Submitted by Dianne Gerhard

The Birchwood Garden Club Annual Plant Sale is coming very soon Saturday, April 29th, 9:00 a.m. - noon, at the Bellingham Library Lower Conference Room. The community counts on our sale as a source of great plants that grow well in our area. So now is the time to start preparing your plants!

Start dividing and potting your plants. The more time plants have to acclimate, the better they are going to look for the sale. Place the pots in the best areas to insure they thrive. Try placing the newly transplanted plants in places where they are sure to get light and sun to give them a jump start.

We have found that medium size plants (1 - 2 gallon) and ground cover in 6 inch pots tend to sell best, probably because they are easier for customers to carry away and place in their own gardens.

Prepare labels. Your labels should include the name of the plant, sun or shade, wet or dry, size and color of flowers and/or fruit. Photos of the plant are

always very helpful. Blank white labels will be available at the April meeting.

Keep your plants well-watered, but stop watering (and put in a dry place) two days before the sale. Before you take the plants in, trim off any bad leaves and spent flowers.

Bring your plants to the Bellingham Library lower conference room on Friday, April 28th between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. for set up for the sale. If you are unable to deliver your plants on Friday, but would still like to donate a few for our sale, please call Dianne Gerhard, 360-734-1270 and we will pick them up for you!

Help with the sale. We count on our members to help with the sale -- setting up, helping customers choose their plants, processing sales, and serving as greeters at the door. Sign up at the April meeting or call Dianne Gerhard to volunteer to help. Remember that the plant sale is our major annual fund raising event and helps us support our service to the community!

Gardening with Moss

The first land plant was probably moss. It is an ancient throw-back to the days of the dinosaurs. There are over 12,000 species of moss and it grows on all seven continents.

Moss is a plant, not a fungus as some people believe. However, there are some interesting differences that separate mosses from other plants. Unlike vascular plants, the root system of moss is not responsible for the absorption of water and nutrients. Moss is non-vascular, so the roots only serve as anchors to hold it in place. Moisture and nutrients are absorbed through the leaves.

Unlike the majority of the plant world, mosses produce spores, much like their equally ancient neighbors, the ferns. Water is needed for moss to bloom and produce spores, that's why you often see the little threads of blooms right after a rain.

Generally, mosses prefer shade or filtered light, but do need enough sunlight to photosynthesize. They require constant moisture to be healthy and happy, however, they are quite tough and can go into a dormant stage where they appear dead, only to revive when conditions are right.

Many gardeners with shady, woodland gardens try to encourage mosses because they offer a texture and appearance that traditional plants can't mimic. Mosses even make excellent container plants

Mosses provide an interesting texture to the garden and a living mulch. If the conditions are right, try some in your garden this season!

Container Lettuce

With warm weather just around the corner, but temperatures still in the cool range, it's a great time to start some lettuce seeds in your garden. Lettuce is easy to grow, matures quickly, does well in containers, and offers a "cut-and-come-again" growth habit that can give you several salads from the same plant.

Because it is fairly shallow-rooted veggie, lettuce grows well in containers (1 gallon or larger). Container growing also carries the advantage of mobility; you can move the containers to a better spot if the weather gets too cold or excessively warm, thus sustaining your homegrown salad even longer. And the plants will be out of reach for those pesky bunnies!

Germination of lettuce seed requires two elements: lots of moisture and light. Do not bury lettuce seeds, but rather scatter them over some fertile, fluffy, moist soil, then sift a small amount of compost on top of the seed and press down gently. You will probably see germination in about a week if soil temperatures are around 50 degrees.

Leaf lettuces are particularly fast-growing; they reach maturity in 45-60 days, while romaine and butterhead/bibb types can take up to 70 days. You can harvest individual leaves to eat, or give each plant a crew cut about 2" above the soil line and let it re-grow.

Welcome New Members

We are pleased to introduce two new members who joined Birchwood Garden Club this month.

**Nancy McMaster and
Mary and Richard Nichols**

Snacks

This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Linda Cline and Sherry Cline.

Thank You

Plant of the Month: *Magnolia stellata* 'Royal Star'

The elegance and beauty of the star magnolia are a welcome sign of spring. The intricate and colorful star magnolia flowers appear weeks ahead of other spring flowering shrubs and plants, making this tree a wonderful choice for early spring color.

The cultivar 'Royal Star' with its spectacular flowers and compact growing habit is an especially striking addition to the landscape that will be treasured for years to come! The Royal Star boasts large, 3 to 4 inch, double blossoms that bloom before the leaves open. The flowers last throughout the spring and into the summer.

Native to Japan, this dwarf tree is multi-trunk and can even look like a large shrub. Deep green, lush foliage and smooth, silvery gray bark add to the interest of this petite tree. Green to pink fruit pods form and ultimately reveal orange-red berries in fall,

attracting songbirds and other wildlife. In winter, buds form that are visually similar to pussy willows catkins.

The Royal Star Magnolia is only 10 to 15 feet tall and wide at maturity making it a super



versatile landscape option. It has an appealing, rounded shape that makes it look lovely in your yard year-round. An added bonus of the Royal Star Magnolia is that it attracts butterflies!

Star magnolia trees thrive in the USDA planting zones 5 through 8. They do best in slightly acidic soil, along with rhododendron and azaleas. Choose a sunny or partly shady location with soil that drains well for best results.

The Royal Star requires little maintenance. It is insect and disease resistant and thrives in moist, well drained soils. Remember to mulch around your new tree to keep out weeds and provide moisture. For ideal growth and the most prolific blooms fertilize in spring with a high quality, slow release fertilizer. This is the hardiest Magnolia out there and thrives in our area.

The Royal Star Magnolia is prized by gardeners for not only its lovely shape and alluring flowers but also its fragrance. What a wonderful early spring performer!

Watch Out for Wet

With our early spring showers, there is usually a lot of soggy ground around in April. When doing your pre-season weeding in the perennial or vegetable garden, try hard not to step into the soft garden soil until it dries out somewhat. If you need to reach into the garden, lay a board down first and keep your feet on that. The board distributes your weight over a larger area quite effectively.

And be careful to not dig up or work in wet soil. That undoes years of soil building on your part by compacting the soil. Ideal garden soil should look like chocolate cake, with large, moist crumbs. Working soil while it's wet destroys those crumbs, either packing them into hard clods if clayey, or pulverizing them into grains if sandy.

Organic matter (compost, manure, natural mulches) helps tie soil particles together into those nice, cake-like crumbs. Do all you can to maintain those 'crumbs' and your plants' roots will thrive.

Meeting Minutes

March 1, 2017
Submitted by Cheryl Haak



President Judy Boxx welcomed forty members. In addition, two guests attended the meeting. Minutes of the February meeting were approved.

Kathy Sparks gave the Treasurer's report and also announced that her job as Treasurer will be open beginning in September. In addition, Judy indicated we'll also need a new Secretary. Both positions are for a two year term.

Ann Holland, Library/Museum Gardens Chairperson, passed around a signup sheet for working on the Library and Museum Gardens on March 25th beginning at 9:00 a.m. Please bring your own tools and gloves. The Parks Department will supply garbage bags and compost. Judy indicated that our Club does this as payment for use of the room we use every spring for our plant sale.

Dianne Gerhard, Plant Sale Chairperson, passed around signup sheets for both the day of setup for the sale (April 28 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) and the sale date (April 29 from 9:00 a.m. until noon). Dianne brought in plant tags and some pots. She asked us to bring cardboard trays (the bottoms of boxes) for people to carry their purchases out.

Carol McBride, Hospitality Chairperson, reported that she was asked by the management of the Museum if we could please not put our garbage into the kitchen adjacent to the Rotunda Room where we meet. Please pick up your trash after the meeting and put it into the garbage can at the back of the main room.

In addition Carol said our garden tours this year will be in June and July. If you or anyone you know would like to be on tour this year, please let herself or Sheri Lambert know. We will have our annual potluck in August and please let Carol know if you are able to and interested in hosting.

New Business: We need housing for one night's stay for next month's speaker. If you have room in your home please let Judy Boxx know.

Please let Judy know if you are willing to work on a nominating committee for the new officers which will begin in September.

We have a couple of members who, especially during the winter months, need assistance getting to meetings. Currently, one person in need is on South Hill and the other in the York neighborhood. If you have ideas about how to organize this, or if you are able to help people in your neighborhoods with a carpool, please let Judy know.

Our speaker tonight was Susan Schwiesow of Schwiesow and Drillas Landscapes who spoke about Japanese garden design principles.

Thank you to Judy Lewis and Kathy Piscitello for our snacks tonight and to Sheri and Russ Lambert for supplying us once again with great coffee.

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 - Judy Boxx
President Elect - Ann Holland
Treasurer - Kathy Sparks
Secretary - Cheryl Haak
Garden Tours – Sheri Lambert & Carol McBride
Historian – Kay Reddell
Hospitality – Carol McBride
Library/Museum Gardens – Ann Holland
Membership – Judy Lewis
Newsletter – Ken & Stephanie Salzman
Plant Sale – Dianne Gerhard
Programs – Tamara Hall
Publicity – Susan Metcalfe
Silent Auction – Sandy Gurosko
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