

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

January Topic: Noxious and Invasive Weeds

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its January 2017 meeting on Wednesday, January 4 at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Laurel Baldwin, Whatcom County Weed Control Coordinator, will be presenting an update on the noxious and invasive weeds and plants in our area.

It's is easy to forget our role in the propagation and disbursal of bad garden characters. And, it is natural to try and justify keeping these plants with such excuses as "it has not spread" or "we cut off the seed heads." The list of noxious and invasive plants expands every year and more of our garden treasures risk being reclassified as garden thugs.

Laurel Baldwin will provide an overview of noxious and invasive weeds and plants currently listed and those under consideration. She will tell us the justifications for a noxious classification and provide containment techniques.

So come and learn how to be a good gardening citizen by eradicating noxious and invasive plants!

Beautiful Winter Flowers

If your garden needs some winter cheer, consider *Camellia x vernalis* 'Yuletide.' Yuletide camellia has an upright growth habit with lots of single red medium-size flowers that have attractive bright yellow stamens. It reaches its peak of beauty during the winter months.



Yuletide camellia will tolerate more sun exposure than the spring-flowering types of camellias and has a rather bushy low-growing form. Its small leaves and upright form make it a fine choice for formal and informal hedges. It is also excellent when used as an espalier and makes a lush screen for the back of the border.

Like all camellias, Yuletide needs to be planted in a spot where there is good drainage. If

the plant is set too deeply into the soil it will grow, but will not flower properly, if at all. It grows slowly and pruning is seldom required because it has a naturally uniform growth habit.

Camellias in general are not very heavy feeders. However, if yellow leaves develop, the plants will benefit from feeding in the late winter or early spring, with a rhododendron type fertilizer. Established plants are best transplanted during the fall and winter months.

When used in foundation plantings, this beauty's smaller leaves help it to both blend and contrast with other plants. The fine-textured leaves and red berries of nandina complement the foliage and flowers of Yuletide. Evergreens such as Little Gem magnolias, boxwoods, and autumn fern also make good companions.

Attractive winter flowers and bright glossy evergreen leaves make this camellia a must for the Northwest garden.



Winter Frost Facts

Frost is water vapor, or water in gas form, that becomes solid. Frost usually forms on objects like cars, windows, and plants that are outside in air that is saturated, or filled, with moisture. Areas that have a lot of fog often have heavy frosts.

Frost forms when an outside surface cools past the dew point. The dew point is the point where the air gets so cold, the water vapor in the atmosphere turns into liquid. This liquid freezes. If it gets cold enough, little bits of ice, or frost, form. The ice is arranged in the form of ice crystals.

Frost is most common in low-lying areas. Warm air rises, and cool air sinks—cool air is denser than warm air. That means there are usually more water molecules in cool air than in warm air. As cool air collects in valleys, frost forms.

You know frost when you see it but you may be surprised to know how many kinds of frost there are.

Early in the morning as winter approaches you've probably had to scrape frost off your windshield or your lawn, trees, and bushes may be covered. This frost appears white but is actually clear or translucent and scatters light in all directions, making it appear white. This is ground frost, a type of Radiation or hoar frost. Hoar, meaning "showing signs of old age," is the frost that makes our lawns, trees, and bushes look white.



Hoar Frost

Another type of frost that we see a lot of is Advection, or wind frost, and presents itself as minute ice spikes formed when very cold wind blows over surfaces.

Advection frost is a collection of small ice spikes.

Rime is frost that forms quickly, usually in very cold, wet climates. Rime also forms in windy weather. Rime sometimes looks like solid ice. Ships traveling through cold places often end up with rime covering at least part of the exposed part of the ship. Remember Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*?

Frost can severely damage crops and destroy plants or fruits. Plants with thin skins, such as tomatoes, soy, or zucchini, can be ruined. If frost is bad enough, potatoes will freeze in the ground.

Sturdier plants are not destroyed by frost, but frost will stop them from growing. Leaves on deciduous shrubs and trees may freeze and drop rapidly. Evergreen shrubs, such as rhododendrons, and conifer trees, including fir and cedar, will stop growing during a frost, but they won't die.

Great Winter Read

January is a tough month for gardeners! We have less time in the garden because of the weather, especially this year with our historically cold temperatures! So why not curl up in the comfort of a cozy chair and read a great gardening book?

Anyone interested in growing any kind of plant will enjoy "How Plants Work, The Science Behind the Amazing Things Plants Do" by Linda Chalker-Scott, a professor of horticulture at Washington State University. This is not a how to garden book but instead a book to help you understand and appreciate how plants grow.

The author has a very readable writing style and explains the why's of many gardening practices and plant functions. She also debunks several garden myths about nutrient supplements and management practices. Every serious gardener should read this book this winter!

Plant of the Month: *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire'

Few plants can have such a dramatic effect in winter than *Cornus* Midwinter Fire, a shrub that without pruning would grow to 3-4 feet. Given a sunny situation where not too dry, and pruned annually in early spring, Midwinter Fire will make a striking show from November until the end of March.

The slender stems are orange at the base, suffusing to deep crimson at the tips creating from a distance a blazing fire, equally as showy on dull winter days as in sun.

Color in your garden during the winter months is a must - it cheers the soul and lifts the spirits even on the darkest day! Amongst the group of shrubs that do this job *Cornus* species (Dogwoods) are near the top of the list.

Fast growing, virtually bullet proof and very low maintenance,

Dogwoods offer so much, excellent screening during the summer months fabulous autumn tones and vibrant colored stems all winter long. They thrive on most soils in sun and partial shade.



Midwinter Fire is a British native and one of the very best Dogwoods. An excellent variety that adds a bold splash of color to your garden from October to the following May. The vivid green foliage turns a gorgeous range of oranges yellows and reds in the autumn before dropping to reveal to reveal spectacular bright red-

tipped, orange-yellow stems, the colors of which intensify as winter proceeds.

Maintain the best stem color by cutting down your Dogwood to within a foot of the ground level in late winter every one to two years. Kick start the new growth with a top dressing around the shrub of rich organic compost.

Use the dazzlingly colored cut stems for flower arrangements. They hold their color for many months and will often take root in the vase

If you have the space, the best effect for planting Midwinter Fire is in groups of three shrubs in a location that catches the winter sun. The flowers of low growing hellebores make for a stunning combination against the vivid stems.

Ornamental Kale and Cabbage

Ornamental kale and cabbage are favorite plants for the winter landscape. They are easy to grow, and show great color when the weather turns frosty. Ornamental cabbage refers to selections that have smooth and more or less unruffled leaves. Kale, on the other hand, has ruffled, textured leaves and many have feathered leaf edges.

Mix and match types for increased visual interest. The foliage of Peacock Red kale is displayed in beautiful sprays of rose-red centers with green outer leaves. Pigeon Purple cabbage forms round semi- solid heads, and the outer leaves maintain a darker green with purplish veins. The Pigeon series also has white and pink selections.

Kale and cabbage like consistent moisture, so apply a layer of the mulch to help conserve soil moisture. Don't forget that cabbage and kale don't like "wet feet," so a good bed drainage is essential.



President Judy Boxx welcomed 30 members and three new members to the meeting last night. Minutes of the November meeting were approved.

Kathy Sparks gave the Treasurer's report.

Old Business:

We received thank you letters from both the Bellingham Public Library and the Bellingham Food Bank for our donations.

Judy Boxx hosted a workshop at her home for making concrete mushrooms last month and 16 people were in attendance. She will host another workshop early next year to make cement leaves, mushrooms and hyper-tufa pots if there is enough interest.

There was no new business.

Thank you to Tina Swanson and Lillian Nelson for our snacks tonight and to Sheri and Russ Lambert for our great coffee.

Welcome New Members

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

Patti and Christopher Paul

WELCOME

Snacks

This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Bonnie Levan and Chris Mohnkern.

Thank You

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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