

# the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

[www.birchwoodgardenclub.org](http://www.birchwoodgardenclub.org)

CHARTERED 1931

## March Topic: Japanese Touch for Your Garden

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its March 2017 meeting on Wednesday, March 1, at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Susann Schwiesow, partner in Schwiesow and Drillas Landscapes and owner of The Garden Room in Fairhaven, will present on Japanese garden principles.

Most of us have experienced the distinctive beauty and peace of a traditional Japanese garden. Japanese gardens utilize elements such as ponds, streams, islands and hills to create miniature reproductions of natural scenery.

While creating the traditional Japanese garden is certainly a complicated and time-consuming endeavor, we can easily enhance our gardens by incorporating Japanese garden principles.

Susann Schwiesow will provide an overview of Japanese design principles and present examples of local gardens where Japanese touches are incorporated. She will show us how to use the elements of the Japanese garden to enhance our own landscape.

Susann's garden has been featured in Better Homes & Gardens, the Seattle Pacific Magazine, and Sunset Magazine.

## 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.



The genus *Helleborus* is comprised of 15 different species which belong to the buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*). There are literally hundreds of varieties with more new ones developed each year. Lenten rose (*H. orientalis*), Christmas rose (*H. niger*), and bearsfoot hellebore (*H. foetidus*) are three you're likely to find at garden centers and in catalogs. Lenten rose can be grown in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 4 to 9.

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 when other plants are dormant. Their leaf structure is interesting enough to make them a foundation of the shade garden year-round, even when their flowers are spent.



It's a short jump from buying your first plant to becoming a lifetime member of *Helleborus* Anonymous.

# Get Ready for the Plant Sale

from Dianne Gerhard

The Birchwood Garden Club 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Plant Sale will be Saturday, April 29th, 2017 in the lower conference room of the Bellingham Public Library, 210 Central Avenue.

As in the past, we will be setting up for the sale on Friday, April 28th from 3 p.m. to 6 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.

We will have a designated drop off area for items in the back parking area of the library, Lottie Street, on Friday, April 28th beginning at 3 p.m.



## Triage for Trees

Our recent snow storms, ice, and winds have left behind trees and shrubs that are broken or bent over. What are some reliable actions for taking care of storm-damaged plants?

The first order of business is of course safety. Broken, hanging limbs, and split trunks can pose a risk to you or others. Avoid trying to shake or break ice from branches, because there's a good chance of causing further damage.

Right now there's no good way to tell if a bent tree will right itself. Many of them will, though a bit of judicious pruning in early spring can go a long way to assist them. It doesn't hurt to prop up a bent-over trunk or low-hanging branch with a two-by-four or similar support, which can help prevent further damage should we get more snow and ice.

Where breakage has left a jagged stub, you can assist the tree by making a clean cut. These cuts will keep the limb from tearing away and damaging the trunk. Cuts should be close to, but not flush with, the parent stem. Those tar-like wound coatings may help us feel better, but it turns out they work against the tree, and are no longer recommended.

In cases where a tree has lost 30% or more of its crown, it's a good idea to get a professional's opinion. Hiring a Certified Arborist is the best way to be sure the person doling out advice has demonstrated basic competence in all aspects of tree care.

Here's hoping for an early spring!

## Is It Too Soon to Plant?

In most parts of Whatcom County, you can plant dormant container-grown, ball and burlap, and bare-root shrubs and trees this month. Stick to the container-grown selections if the plant has already leafed out or begun new growth. Avoid planting deciduous bare-root stock that has begun to leaf out, as chances of survival are diminished.

Hardy vines like clematis, five-leaf akebia, Carolina jessamine, and gold flame honeysuckle can be planted this month. Hardy ground covers like bigleaf periwinkle, lirioppe, mondo grass, Asiatic jasmine, and spreading junipers can be planted anytime this month as well.

# Plant of the Month: *Chaenomele*

A beautiful harbinger of spring, flowering quince blooms around the same time as forsythia. In contrast to forsythia's bright yellow, flowering quince blooms in pink, red and white.



The two best known flowering quince are *Chaenomeles speciosa* (common flowering quince) and *Chaenomeles japonica* (Japanese flowering quince). Both grow well in USDA zones 4-8.

The traditional quince flowers arrive by March in scarlet, red, pink, peach, and white. In late

January or February, budding branches can be brought inside and placed in warm water to bloom. The seed pome that forms after the flowers fade resembles an apple and is about 2-inches long and wide.

Relatively easy to grow, flowering quince is a woody shrub with a naturally rounded outline that can grow to 8 feet at maturity. However, plants can be hard pruned to restrict their size, grown against a wall or kept trimmed as a hedge. Older plants can become unattractive if they are not pruned from time to time. Spring flowering shrubs are pruned right after the spring flowers fade.

Unless pruned some varieties will stop flowering. A flowering quince that has lost its form or stopped blooming can be cut to 6-inches above the ground to be rejuvenated. In general, remove the oldest and largest canes first

then stand back and look at the plant's natural shape before continuing to cut.

The adaptability of flowering quince makes it a good choice for difficult places in the garden



where the soil is poor or thin. They enjoy sun and will not flower if planted in shade. The common varieties have sharp thorns, although there are several thornless varieties that are easier to keep pruned.

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## 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 multiply 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.

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!

# Meeting Minutes

February 1, 2017  
Submitted by Cheryl Haak



President Judy Boxx welcomed forty-eight members including two new members, Jane Smith and Larry Guevara. In addition, two guests attended the meeting.

Minutes of the January meeting were approved.

Kathy Sparks gave the Treasurer's report and also reported that Tom Sparks, our Webmaster, has given a facelift to our website, [www.birchwoodgardenclub.org](http://www.birchwoodgardenclub.org).

**Old Business:** There was no old business.

**New Business:** It will soon be time to form a nominating committee for officers for the next term. If you are willing to serve on the committee, please let Judy Boxx know.

Judy reported that our upcoming plant sale is our main fundraiser and many volunteers will be needed for this fun event.

Judy asked the audience for a volunteer to take over the Historian Chairperson position. Violet Hayes volunteered and will take that position immediately. Thank you, Violet!

Dianne Gerhard passed around a signup sheet for the two days involving the plant sale. Delivery of the plants and setup is scheduled on April 28, 3:00 until 6:00 and the day of the sale is April 29 from 9:00 a.m. until noon. She also reported that she will bring posters to the next meeting as well as three types of plant tags for labeling. Pots can be found at the Restore as well as at Lowes and the Garden Spot.

Ann Holland, Vice President and Library/museum Gardens Chairperson, reported there will be a cleanup of the gardens in March. She will bring a signup sheet to the March 1st meeting. We expect to add compost to the gardens, so many volunteers will be needed.

Tamara Hall brought mason bees to the meeting for people to take home and eventually into their gardens.

Judy drew attention to our silent auction table where amaryllis bulbs had been shared for purchase as well as a gardening book.

Our speaker tonight was Tom Thornton of Cloud Mountain Farm. He spoke about growing and pruning apple, pear, cherry and plum trees for maximum fruit yields.

Thank you to Carol McBride and Zapote Gregory for our snacks tonight and to Sheri and Russ Lambert for attempting to get great coffee to us (the dispenser was dropped and spilled in route!).

## Welcome New Members

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

**Janice Schuch and Jennifer Wall**

## Snacks

This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Judy Lewis and Kathy Piscitello.

**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](http://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](mailto: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

Sunshine – Cheryl Haak

Webmaster – Tom Sparks