

NOVEMBER 2021

# the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

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

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## November Topic: Noxious and Invasive Weeds

*Submitted by Tamara Hall*

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its third meeting of the 2021-2022 season on Wednesday, November 3, at 7:00 PM via Zoom. The speaker will be Laurel Baldwin, Whatcom County's Weed Control Coordinator. Zoom link information will be forthcoming.

Are you troubled by fighting a losing battle with destructive, unmanageable, and persistent weeds? Does it seem like all your weeding efforts are only a holding action and not a final victory that you can celebrate.

What's worse, some of these invaders you might have innocently "invited" into your yard.

My two villains are morning glory and blackberry. I need a new script for addressing them since my present methods are only marginally effective.

Laurel Baldwin will update us on the list of noxious and invasive plants. This list expands each year but those needing special attention change over time.

Laurel will provide the status on the war effort with respect to the "baddies," and offer guidance on more effective elimination strategies.

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## Memories of Veggies Past

*By Cheryl Haak*

I grew up on a farm in Wisconsin in the '50s and '60s. The first five years of my life my parents operated a dairy and later grew soybeans, wheat, and corn on the 136 acres they owned.

They also had hogs, chickens, and grew a very large garden adjacent to a small apple orchard with about six trees.

We grew rhubarb, tomatoes, sweet corn, green beans, cucumbers, watermelon, you name it. My mother was busy all summer preserving the extra produce that we couldn't consume as fresh. I have vivid memories of her on hot, humid days working at the stove with the pressure cooker valve going around on top and her cautioning me to stay far away. I was always concerned it was going to blow, but it never did. She'd put up many jars of food for the winter to store down in our cellar. My parents, and most of our rural neighbors lived fairly self-sufficiently and, although they didn't use the term back then, sustainably.

Fast forward to the 1980's and I'm living in an apartment in Seattle, itchy to plant something. Luckily I have a very generous home-owning friend who also is wanting to grow something. So we decide to plant seeds of sweet corn, sweet peas, tomatoes, and

green beans. How fun it was to prepare the beds and carefully plant the seeds! We dreamed of nonstop produce all summer long.

So we weed-watered-weed-watered and by late July we could see the fruits of our labor. We were suddenly inundated with more than we could eat! It all happened so fast that we ended up taking some to other friends and coworkers. It was then that it dawned on me that my parents knew to stagger planting the seeds so the vegetables wouldn't all happen at the same time. Why didn't I remember that? Obviously, there's a lot to learn about being self-sufficient and sustainable.

These days I see people putting in raised bed "vegetable boxes" between the streets and sidewalks. It's a great idea to use what is typically a very sunny spot. And although I'm much better at growing ornamentals, I have been contemplating the idea of growing certain veggies. Maybe next year.

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GETTING OLDER IS  
JUST ONE BODY PART  
AFTER ANOTHER  
SAYING, 'HA HA, YOU  
THINK THAT'S BAD?  
WATCH THIS.'



I was surfing (on-line, not in the water) the other day and I came across a nursery ad that read, “Red Daylily Bulbs For Sale!” I thought, *Gee, that’s unusual.* Not because red Daylilies are rare, but because Daylilies don’t grow from bulbs.

If I were working at a BGC Plant Sale and a customer asked me about the Daylily bulbs, I’d understand the error. After all, Easter lilies are bulbs, Calla lilies are bulbs, Tiger lilies are bulbs, and several other types of lilies are bulbs. So the novice gardener could easily assume that Daylilies were bulbs as well. In that situation I’d patiently explain that Daylilies are not bulbs, but rather herbaceous perennials; they have fleshy roots.

But when an on-line nursery advertises Daylily “bulbs,” I have no such patience. In fact, such a vivid display of ignorance evokes a visceral response in me because there is simply NO excuse. The person putting the ad copy together didn’t accidentally misspell herbaceous perennial as bulb. Heck, even “autocorrect” wouldn’t do that!

I have seen on-line nurseries that referred to Tall Bearded Iris Bulbs. (They’re not; they’re rhizomes.) On-line nurseries that referred to Gladiolus Bulbs (Nope, they’re corms.) And on-line nurseries that referred to Dahlia Bulbs. (Wrong again, they’re tubers.)

This is not to disparage all on-line nurseries. I’ve been buying plants on-line for decades now and there are many terrific vendors out there, some selling esoteric plant varieties that just aren’t available locally. If you are unsure about making a purchase, there are even on-line rating and review sites that can help you decide which merchants are better than others. One

that I like to use is [davesgarden.com](http://davesgarden.com). No punches are pulled there!

Or... you could ask a friend. While I am often reluctant to tell someone, “Buy your plant from ABC Nursery,” I am much less reticent to say, “Don’t buy your plant from XYZ Nursery.” Sometimes, telling a gardener where not to obtain a plant is even more useful than telling them where to get one.

I suppose that as long as I’m on a rant I should say a few words about brick and mortar nurseries. Okay, here’s what I have to say: There’s nothing to rant about! My experiences have been 99% positive and, in all honesty I can’t recall what the 1% negative was, I just know there had to be something. Whether I was gardening in Maryland, Tennessee, or here in Washington, I have mostly found local nursery folks to be knowledgeable and friendly.

Oh, I have heard people say that such-and-such a place has high prices or that so-and-so has an attitude, but that’s just not been my experience. I would much prefer to buy locally if possible. Obviously, the selection isn’t going to be the same as you’d have perusing the thousands of offerings on the Internet, but the local plants are usually much larger and the outrageous shipping costs are nonexistent!

As far as “big box” stores go, I’m not going to bad-mouth them either. They serve a purpose. Even grocery stores can yield a horticultural treasure now and then. About all I can suggest no matter where you shop is: Don’t ask the kid watering the plants for gardening advice.

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## the Gazette

The Birchwood Garden Club Gazette is published monthly, September thru May, by the Birchwood Garden Club, P.O. Box 362, Bellingham, WA 98227. Articles, inquiries, letters to the editor, or other comments should be directed to the Editor, Ira Penn, via e-mail at:

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The Birchwood Garden Club is open to everyone in Whatcom and Skagit Counties who supports the objectives of the organization. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month from September thru May. Annual membership dues are \$10 for an individual, \$15 for a family, due in September. Membership applications are available at:

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

### 2021-2022 Officers and Committee Chairpersons

President—Sheri Lambert  
Vice-President and President Elect—Vacant  
Treasurer—Dianne Gerhard  
Secretary—Lisa Friend

Garden Tours—Sheri Lambert & Carol McBride

Historian—Ed Gerhard  
Hospitality—Carol McBride  
Library/Museum Gardens—Ann Holland  
Membership—Judy Lewis  
Newsletter—Ira Penn  
Photographer—Kathy Sparks  
Plant Sale—Cheryl Haak  
Programs—Tamara Hall  
Publicity—Susan Metcalfe  
Silent Auction—Sandy Gurosko  
Social Media—Nancy McMaster  
Sunshine—Cheryl Haak  
Webmaster—Tom Sparks

# Meeting Minutes

Submitted by Lisa Friend



President Sheri Lambert called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and thanked Tamara Hall for the speaker selection. Twenty-six members attended on Zoom.

## Minutes

The September meeting was cancelled due to COVID resurgence. Minutes of the August Board meeting were reviewed in September via email by Board members, and the membership approved the budget and slate of officers proposed therein.

**Treasurer's Report:** Pogozone was paid for web hosting, and the Club made a donation to the Bellingham Public Library, for which a "thank you" has been received. The Club received \$165 in dues. Sheri Lambert signed up for Zoom but hasn't yet billed the Club.

This year's budget was passed unanimously via email in September when the slate of officers was elected, as per Club Bylaws. Judy Boxx has reviewed the accounts, and all look good.

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collect seeds. Soon after, seeds were distributed to various universities and arboreta worldwide for growth trials. Some of the seeds were given to Carl English, horticulturist at the gardens at the Chittenden Locks in Seattle. He shared his seeds with his Bellingham friend, Mary Jane Moser, who planted some of the seeds. She then shared some of the seedlings with Birchwood Garden Club "Lifetime Member" LeVern Freimann.

In 1953 LeVern planted seedlings on the Southeast corner of the Whatcom County Courthouse grounds and in the front of the Birchwood Elementary school. Both trees are still thriving today. In 1990 the County planned a major renovation of the courthouse which called for the tree to be cut down. But because of its historical value the plans were reconfigured to preserve the tree for generations to come. This is one of the largest living specimens of this tree in the United States.



*Dawn Redwood at Courthouse*

Today the Dawn Redwood thrives in China, the United Kingdom and the United States. One of the more significant examples is in Strawberry Fields, a landscaped section of New York's Central Park dedicated to the memory of John Lennon. At the northern end of the lawn are three dawn redwoods dropping needles in the fall and re-growing in the spring as a symbol of eternal renewal.

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## BGC Member Brought a "Living Fossil" to Bellingham

By Ed Gerhard

In 1944 a Chinese forester found an enormous unidentified tree in the remote Sichuan Province of central China. Further research and fossil comparisons concluded the tree was a *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, or Dawn Redwood, a deciduous conifer, thought to have been extinct for millions of years. Finding this "living fossil" is widely regarded as the greatest botany discovery of the 20th Century. Commonly known in China as a "water-fir" or "water pine" because of its tendency to grow in low-lying areas near rivers and streams, it is a great source of national pride and it is illegal to cut the trees and branches.

Sixty-million years ago the Dawn Redwood was one of the most widespread tree species in the Northern Hemisphere. Significant fossils have been discovered in the badlands of western North Dakota and as far north as Ellesmere Island off the northern coast of Greenland. The Dawn Redwood is a deciduous tree with colorful leaves. It is also the smallest of the three redwoods, typically between 50 and 60 feet tall, although specimens have been recorded at over 160 feet with a trunk about 7 feet in diameter.

In 1947 the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University funded an expedition to China to

# Mystery Solved

By Ira Penn

In last month's newsletter, I had a short article about seed viability. I started off by referencing watermelon. No sooner did *the Gazette* hit the computer screens than I got an email asking: How do you grow a seedless watermelon if there are no seeds to plant? A very interesting question, right?

In answer to the questioner (and to all the rest of you who didn't ask, but who were laying awake nights wondering the same thing) I will now tell you more than you ever wanted to know about growing seedless watermelons.

First let's dispense with the mysterious part: Seedless watermelons are not completely seed-free. There are many small, white seeds in the flesh and you've undoubtedly seen and eaten lots of them. But once in a while you will find a brown seed in a seedless variety. Jackpot!

All seedless varieties of plants are hybrids. Hybrids do not breed true from seed. In the case of seedless watermelons, the white seeds are actually sterile. They're like mules. Mules are a cross between a horse and a donkey, but mules are sterile, so you can't breed mules together to get more mules. It is possible to breed a female mule with a male horse or donkey, but the chances of success are extremely slim. There have only been 60 recorded cases of offspring resulting from such pairings since 1527. And it is completely impossible to breed a male mule to a female horse or donkey and have any success at all.

At this point you're saying to yourself, *#\$\*%& Ira, I didn't ask about mules; tell me about watermelons.* Patience! I'm getting there.

You have a much better chance trying to produce a seedless watermelon, but it's far from being a slam dunk.

Ordinary seeded watermelons have 22 chromosomes (called a diploid). To produce a seedless watermelon, a chemical process is used to double the number of chromosomes to 44 (called a tetraploid). Then, the pollen from a diploid is placed on the female flower of the tetraploid. The resulting seed has 33 chromosomes, a triploid or seedless watermelon.



Ideally, seedless watermelon seeds should be planted in a greenhouse with temperatures between 75-80 degrees F. Direct to ground seeding is very difficult and costly. Seeds run from 20-30 cents each!

Additionally, a pollinizer (a diploid) must be planted along with the seedless or triploid melons. In commercial fields, a row of pollinizers is alternated with every two rows of the seedless variety. Between 66-75 percent of the plants are triploid; the rest are the pollinating (diploid) plants.

In order to grow your own seedless watermelons, either begin with purchased transplants or start the seeds in a warm (75-80

degrees F.) environment in a sterile soil mix. When the runners are 6-8 inches long, the plant can be transferred to the garden if soil temps are at least 70 degrees F. Remember, you need to grow both seedless and seeded watermelons. Dig holes in the ground for the transplants. Place one seeded watermelon in the first hole and transplant seedless watermelons into the next two holes. Continue to stagger your plantings, with one-seeded variety to every two seedless. Water well and wait 85-100 days, for the fruit to mature.

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A garden is a place where you can find yourself when you need to lose yourself.



Continued from page 3, column 2

## Committee Reports

**Plant Sale:** Plans are progressing for the Plant Sale, April 30, 2022, at Bellingham Public Library. The Library is still uncertain whether the room will be available, due to ongoing COVID concerns. Plant Sale Chair Cheryl Haak hopes to know by late November. Meanwhile, she and the Board have discussed a “Plan B,” which might see the plants arranged on the North lawn of the Library or in a nearby parking lot, depending on city decisions. At minimum, the Club hopes to be able to price plants the night before and set them out on the day of the sale.

The question was raised as to whether small firs and cedars would be useful at the Plant Sale. The consensus was that we should try. If the trees do not sell, the Club can donate to them to the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association for use in restoration plantings.

**Garden Maintenance:** Garden and lawn soil/compost mix has been spread at the Museum and the Library. Ann Holland and Cheryl Haak did lots of weeding and spread the mix. They also planted Red Dragon and Chartreuse Angelina sedums, which look nice.

Ann suggested the stone pathway at the Museum could be dug out, lined with fabric and refilled with sand and rock, which might be easier to weed. Attendees agreed with the suggestion. If the weather holds, she will try to set

something up and will notify interested members.

**Membership:** The Club will wait until next year before implementing the dues increase that was discussed at the August Board meeting. Currently, dues are \$10 per individual and \$15 per family. We have 85 members and we will send a reminder to pay dues by mail.

**Programs:** The December speaker will talk about Hostas. The proposed speaker about garden restoration is asking a higher fee than usual. Perhaps she will speak in the spring, when more members might attend.

## New Business

How can we attract younger members? Attendees discussed supporting school gardens, and Jenna Deane offered to act as a liaison. The Club has done a lot in the community in the past. Attendees discussed possible gardening at the new tiny house village and greater visibility for the Club via social media.

The sign at the Bellingham Public Library has disappeared (the sign used to announce that the Library gardens are maintained by the Birchwood Garden Club). The pole had been rotting. We might get a new metal sign. Sheri Lambert will call the Bellingham Parks Department, to see if they have the missing sign. Dianne Gerhard reminded folks to mark, code, and sign any receipts. Sheri Lambert thanked Ed Gerhard for the history article in the Gazette.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

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## Don't Do a Fall Cleanup

By Ira Penn

Although you might want to clean up your yard before the winter months, here are a few reasons why it's good to hold off.

Letting plants go to seed provides a food source for wintering birds. The old plant stems can also provide shelter to a variety of wintering insects including bees. In the early spring the dead stalks can be used as building materials for birds building their nests.

Leaving your grass long provides shelter for wintering insects and they'll become food for newly hatched birds in the spring.

Leaf piles provide a safe place for animals like frogs to hibernate. Rock piles can provide this as well, especially near water.

Brush piles provide protection for small mammals such as marmots, chipmunks and hares.

A pond that ices over in the winter can provide water for critters if you make hole in it. To make a hole without cracking the ice, place a container of hot water on the ice to melt it. This method ensures that the animals can access the water without the danger of them falling through.

NO I CAN'T DO SNAPCHAT  
OR TIKTOK BUT I CAN WRITE  
IN CURSIVE, DO MATH  
WITHOUT A CALCULATOR  
AND TELL TIME ON A  
CLOCK WITH HANDS.