

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

December Topic: Growing Vegetables

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its December 2018 meeting on Wednesday, December 5 at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Our speaker for the evening will be Rebecca Morse from Osborne Seeds, who will provide an overview of growing vegetables.

In a few weeks, we will be starting our selection of vegetable seeds for next year and numerous catalogs are tempting us with seed treasures. It is not always easy to interpret the marketing statements to be sure we are making the best choices for plant performance in our area.

To help us make good choices, Rebecca Morse will cover vegetable growing fundamentals including seed catalog choices, effective vegetable choices, and good varieties. In addition, she will cover common issues that reduce yields/germination in our area and best practices for vegetable growing.

Osborne Seeds (since 1982) are specialists in determining the hardiest and most successful vegetables for our environment. So prior to making your choices for the next growing season, come and hear the wisdom of Rebecca Morse!

Winter Beauty Paperwhite Narcissus

If you want the sweet scent of spring to brighten up your home during the holiday season, now is the time to pot some paperwhite narcissus bulbs. These bulbs are readily available this time of year. For a full pot be sure to have at least 6-8 bulbs per 6" pot (depending on the size of the bulb). Since these bulbs are usually discarded after blooming, you can use a glass bowl filled with decorative pebbles to contain the bulbs, or you can grow them in a pot filled with a soil mix.



It will take from 4 to 6 weeks from potting until bloom, depending on the heat and light conditions of your home. Keep your pot moist, but not soaked. Initially, you should keep the pot in a warm, dimly lighted place. When the green leaves begin to emerge, move the pot to a high light, but cooler temperature if possible.

The foliage and blooms always tend to flop over which ruins the effect. So, stick a few gnarly, bare branches in the pot. As the foliage emerges it grows among and between the branches, which adds just the right amount of support for the blooms and foliage. The blooms are quite fragrant.

Poinsettia Facts

The poinsettia's main attraction is not its flowers, but its leaves. The flowers of the plant are the yellow clustered buds in the center. The colored leafy parts are actually bracts or modified leaves, that turn color in response to the plant forming flowers. When buying a poinsettia, make sure it has the buds, preferably not yet open.



Red is the most popular color, accounting for roughly three-quarters of all sales nationwide, followed by white and pink. The more than 100 varieties of poinsettias come in a range of colors from red, salmon, and apricot to yellow, cream, and white. There are also unusual speckled or marbled varieties with several colors blended together.

A native of Mexico, in tropical climates the Poinsettia can reach heights of 12 feet with leaves measuring six to eight inches across. It is actually a small tropical tree (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) belonging to the Euphorbia plant family.

Although every state in the United States grows poinsettias commercially, California is the top producer with almost 7 million pots grown, followed by North Carolina with 4.3 million pots sold, Texas with 3.3 million, Florida with 3.2 million, and Ohio with 2.9 million poinsettias sold.

December 12 is National Poinsettia Day (www.poinsettaday.com/). The United States has observed this official day since the mid-1800s. It honors the man, Joel Roberts Poinsett, an amateur botanist and first United States ambassador to Mexico, and the plant he introduced

The best way to prolong the life of this holiday plant is to avoid

hot or cold drafts, keep the soil moist not soggy, and place in a room with sufficient natural light and temperatures of around 60 to 70 degrees F. Water when the soil begins to dry.



Above all, protect it from exposure to wind or cold on the way home from the store. Poinsettias are highly sensitive to cold temperatures and even a few minutes of exposure to 50-degrees F or lower temperatures will cause them to wilt. But when cared for properly, poinsettias usually will outlast the holiday season!

Snacks

This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Judy Boxx, Maryette Foster and Carol McLean.

Thank You

Welcome New Members

Loraine Ferguson, Irma Gutknecht,
Sunny Johnson, Kelcie Sheriff, Marisa Townsend

Plant of the Month: *Pinus mugo* 'Slowmound'

With dense and thick growth throughout its lifetime, Slowmound Mugo Pine is a rugged, compact, and slow-growing bush that adds an amazing dose of greenery. It is an instant attraction to your garden, in the landscape or pot.

Slowmound Mugo Pine, when maintained under ideal conditions, can live up to fifty years. A completely grown bush can reach a height of 3 feet and spread up to 4 feet.

This shrub should only be grown in full sunlight. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very

well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is disease and insect resistant and is not attractive to deer or rabbits.



One advantage of planting this shrub is that the dense bush

spreads right down to the ground so you will not need facer plants out in the front. It's a slow growing shrub too, so you don't have to worry about it outgrowing its space.

What sets it apart from most landscape plants is its fine texture with foliage that is slightly less refined.. With its evergreen color and slow growth rate, the bush remains attractive throughout the year and also brings out pretty buds while remaining in a compact, thick and dense state. The flowers and fruit are not significantly ornamental, but are attractive to birds.

Year-round Wildlife Habitat

Attracting bees, birds, butterflies, and other wildlife to your garden is one of the best ways to have a healthy, vibrant, sustainable landscape. And attracting wildlife to the garden creates year-round interest in the garden.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (US Department of Agriculture) offers five key elements the gardener will need to provide for a year-round wildlife habitat. None are complicated and all enhance the beauty of the landscape!

Plant evergreens and conifers that will feed and shelter wildlife, especially birds, year round.

Include something blooming for as many months as you can manage. Many pollinators, especially bees, forage during the entire growing season.

Provide shelter for nesting or from bad weather. (Leave a hedge untrimmed and a section of lawn unmowed; pile grass cuttings in a sunny spot; provide some bare soil for ground nesting bees.)

Limit your use of chemicals (both synthetic and organic) and use plenty of compost and mulch to build healthy soil. Healthy soils create healthy plants.

Provide a consistent source of clean water for drinking, bathing and breeding. And, speaking of water, butterflies love wet soil for sipping water and for the salts and mineral nutrients—a little dirty puddle is appreciated.

Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2018

Submitted by Cheryl Haak



President Ann Holland welcomed 45 members to the November 7th meeting.

Minutes of the October meeting were approved with one amendment. An apology was made to Kathy Piscitello for misspelling her name.

Old Business: Nancy McMaster, Library Gardens Chairperson, gave an update on library cleanups this fall. The first one in September was productive but cut short by heavy rainfall. The second cleanup in October resulted in removal of shrubs that were blocking the glass block windows. The library had asked that we remove the shrubs to allow light to enter the building. The library also asked that we remove plants from the west side employee entrance/exit area due to increased problems with people sleeping in that area. The police encourage library staff to ask to have any plants taller than 1.5' removed. Next spring we will be planting this area with appropriate plants.

New Business: More work needs to be done on the California wax myrtles to shorten them for the cameras to view the librarian entrance and exit. Also, the west end on the library still needs to be cleaned up.

Rhonda Rinn, our Secretary, has become a snowbird and we have need for a new Secretary. Please let Ann know if you'd be interested in helping to fill this position which involves taking the monthly meeting Minutes and sending them to the Editors of the Gazette, Stephanie and Ken Salzman.

Checks for the Food Bank and the Library donations have been made.

Thank you to Kathy Sparks and Kathy Piscitello for our snacks this evening. Thank you to Sheri and Russ Lambert for our great coffee, which is always freshly roasted and decaffeinated.

Our speaker tonight was Dave Hunter from Crown Bees.

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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President Elect - Patti Salotti
Treasurer - Jerry McLean
Secretary - VACANT
Garden Tours – Sheri Lambert & Carol McBride
Historian – Violet Hayes
Hospitality – Carol McBride
Library/Museum Gardens – Nancy McMasters
Membership – Judy Lewis
Newsletter – Ken & Stephanie Salzman
Plant Sale – Cheryl Haak
Programs – Tamara Hall
Publicity – Susan Metcalfe
Silent Auction – Sandy Gurosko
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