

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

January Topic: Invasive Noxious Plants

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its January 2019 meeting on Wednesday, January 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Our speaker for the evening will be Laura Baldwin, Whatcom County Weed Control Coordinator, who will provide an overview of invasive noxious plants in our area.

Invasive noxious plants are plants that are able to establish on many sites, grow quickly, and spread to the point of disrupting plant ecosystems. These plants quickly take over our gardens and destroy the ecosystem for native plants.

It is a good New Year's Resolution to "do no harm" and acquaint ourselves with these "bad" actors of the plant world. We need a battle plan to address the spread of these "nasties."

Bonus

Sheri Gerhard from Master Gardeners of Whidbey Island will be providing an overview of the 2019 Whidbey Gardening Works conference. Key components of the conference include a keynote speaker and over 45 classes on all-things gardening, and opportunities to purchase plants and garden art.

Nasty Name for a Beautiful Plant

While some gardeners think the crushed leaves of *Helleborus foetidus* have a curious scent (hence its common name "stinking hellebore"), this plant is a beautiful winter garden attraction. Although the flowers are somewhat similar to other hellebores, *Helleborus foetidus* is very individual, from its filigree leaves to its green blooms.



This architectural, easygoing evergreen has dramatic deeply-cut dark green foliage. The pale clusters of nodding, bell-shaped, lime-green flowers rimmed with purple bloom in January and persist into May. The flowers contain numerous stamens as well as up to ten nectaries which make them attractive to bees and other insects.

Helleborus foetidus grows slowly in a clump to 1-2 feet tall and wide. It is extremely hardy and adaptable, stays evergreen throughout the year and blooms earlier than just about any other perennial flower. It performs best in part shade in rich well-drained soils, and is drought-tolerant once established.

While this plant needs little care, it is best to allow the flowers to go to seed and cut back the faded flowering stems in late May to early June being careful not to damage the new growth.

Helleborus foetidus is a dramatic addition to shady borders, containers, under trees or shrubs, and in woodland gardens. Its deeply-pronged leaves are beautiful when planted with hosta and rhododendron. It is deer resistant.

But beware, all parts of the plant are toxic, so avoid if you have dogs, or children who indiscriminately grab and eat plants.

Winter Growing Herbs

Just because it's colder, doesn't mean you have to give up on your herb garden. Growing fresh food should be a thing you can do 365 days a year. So, here are some herbs that do a little better in chilly weather—the perfect winter herbs to grow and eat.

Rosemary

Rosemary is a perennial herb, which means that it can be grown year-round, and sturdy enough to defend itself against icy temperatures. This herb will bloom throughout the year, and is one of the more affordable ones to grow and replace in the event that your plant kicks the bucket.



Parsley

Don't underestimate the ubiquitous parsley plant; it's more resilient than you might think. In harsher (cold) climates, parsley will hide underground to keep itself safe, but don't worry—it's still growing, however slowly. In milder winters, it will continue to bloom.



A good tip is to grow lots and lots of parsley to counteract its slow growth over the winter. Because parsley self-seeds, it means that more plants will grow even if you stop planting new ones.



Thyme

These sturdy little plants will survive over the winter with little to no up-keep, though there will be very little growth as well. Having said that, you should be careful not to cut all old growth, as that will prevent it from growing new leaves, taking away all of the plant's reserves.



Mint

If you've ever grown mint, then you know that it's imperative for it to be grown in a separate pot as it will take over the entire planter. Those who plant their own herbs are never short of mint! Think of mint like a weed. Needless to say, this tough, resilient herb will continue to grow throughout the winter.



Basil

While these herbs will grow throughout the winter, the growth will be minimal and it's important to bear that in mind so that you don't harvest too much, otherwise there will be absolutely no new growth.

Snacks

This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Zapote Gregory and Cheryl Haak.

Welcome New Member
Kari Nason

Plant of the Month: *Stewartia pseudocamellia*

One of the most beautiful small trees for the landscape, Japanese stewartia provides a show for every season. Serrated foliage emerges bronzy purple in spring, develops into a dark green by summer, and turns red or orange in the fall. In midsummer, white camellia-like flowers open in random succession and are followed by pointed brown seed pods.

A multi-stemmed, deciduous tree with a rounded columnar form, the Japanese stewartia features stunning bark that exfoliates in strips of gray, orange, and reddish brown once the trunk attains a diameter of 2 to 3 inches.

The Latin species name, *pseudocamellia*, refers to the tree's resemblance to a camellia (a nod to the look of its lovely and plentiful white June-into-July flowers).



This tree grows somewhat slowly until established, eventually reaching up to 40 feet tall and 20 feet wide. It is best when grown

in moist, acidic, well-drained soil in full morning or partial shade; avoid a site with hot afternoon sun. The Japanese stewartia is not particularly susceptible to pests or disease, making it a fairly low-maintenance choice for the landscape.

The Japanese stewartia makes a lovely patio tree where its beautiful flowers and bark can be viewed up close. It also serves as a beautiful focal point in borders planted with an understory of ground cover. Planted 15' apart, on either side of a walkway, the Japanese stewartia creates a full-season covered walkway. This tree also works well in large container plantings.

Spend More Time in the Garden for Your Health

Still working on your New Year's resolutions list? Don't forget to include one of the most important resolutions—spend more time in the garden! The health benefits really go without saying.

Garden activities like pruning, digging, raking, hoeing will all help you stay fit. To make the activity easier and less tiresome, make sure you have all the right tools to best fit the job and your needs.

Spending time in the garden will raise your spirits as well. Physical activity is good, but do take time to relax and sit on that garden bench, preferably with a loved one, and enjoy the view. We all seem to live faster these days and quiet time becomes even more important to recharge our batteries and clear our minds. There is no better space to spend quality relaxation time than sitting in the garden.

A fun way to start out the New Year is to keep a garden journal of daily or weekly activities and observations. Besides being fun for you, it will provide a valuable reference for planning next year's garden. Use your journal to keep track of when plants bloom, when seeds need to be sowed, when pruning needs to be done, and when vegetables and fruits are ripe. Include an inventory of the plants in your garden and what works and doesn't work!

**Almost any garden, if you see it at just the right moment, can be confused with paradise.
Henry Mitchell**

Meeting Minutes

December 5, 2018

Submitted by Cheryl Haak



President Ann Holland welcomed 29 members to the December 5th meeting.

Minutes of the November meeting were approved.

Old Business: We are still in need of someone to be the club Secretary. If you are interested in filling this volunteer position, please contact Ann.

New Business: We have welcomed 6 new members to the Club: Loraine Ferguson, Irma Gutknecht, Sunny Johnson, Kelcie Sheriff, Marissa Townsend and Kari Nason. Thank you for joining. We now have 95 club members.

Jerry McLean gave us the Treasurer's report.

Tamara Hall has offered members to come by her home and pick persimmons. She indicated they are ripe, but small this year.

Thank you to Judy Boxx, Mary Etta Foster and Carol McLean 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 Rebecca Morse from Osborne Seeds in Mt. Vernon.

There can be no other occupation like gardening in which, if you were to creep up behind someone at their work, you would find them smiling.

Mirabel Osle

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
Sunshine – Cheryl Haak
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