

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

March Topic: The Education of a Garden Traveler

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its March 2019 meeting on Wednesday, March 6, at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Our speaker for the evening will be Marty Wingate, renowned author and speaker on gardens and travel.

Sit back and enjoy a fabulous travelogue through the gardens of England, Ireland, and Scotland, virtually visiting gardens both public and private and grand and intimate. There you will find plant and design inspiration for your own garden as well as stories of people and places.

Marty Wingate's garden books include *Perennials for the Pacific Northwest* and *Landscaping for Privacy*. She is also the author of three mystery series, the Potting Shed mysteries, the Birds of a Feather mysteries, and the First Edition Library mysteries, and articles in *American Gardener* and *Country Gardens*.

Come and learn about unfamiliar plants as well as new ways to use old favorites in your own landscape.

The Perennial Situation with 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, or in some cases an axe, to slice or hack one or more wedges out of the crown. Immediately plant them elsewhere or pot them for the BGC Plant Sale!



Get Ready for the Plant Sale

Submitted by Cheryl Haak

The Birchwood Garden Club 26th Annual Plant Sale will be Saturday, May 4, 2019 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, May 3 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, May 3 beginning at 3 p.m.



Hydrangea Color

If you want to maintain a “blue” hydrangea or change your hydrangea’s color, you need to start now; once they start developing buds it’s too late. But remember, white varieties always stay white.

Hydrangeas change color based on the pH level of their soil. The more alkaline the soil, the pinker the flowers. To maintain a pink color, add aluminum sulfate to the soil to lower the pH level.

To make pink hydrangeas turn blue (or to keep your blue ones from turning pink), increase the acidity of soil by adding organic materials. Coffee grounds or ground-up citrus peel are good. Work the mixture into the soil around the base of the plant, and then water it in.

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 ajuga, liriop, mondo grass, Asiatic jasmine, bearberry, and spreading junipers can be planted anytime this month as well.

Snacks

This month’s meeting snacks will be provided by Ann Holland and Patti Salotti.

Thank You

Welcome New Member
Anna Theobald

Plant of the Month: *Akebia quinata*

The five-leaf akebia vine, or chocolate vine, is a semi-evergreen perennial that is sometimes vigorous to a fault. However, we tend to forgive the faults of things with “chocolate” in their names! The chocolate vine gets its name from the rich purplish-brown blooms that smother the vine and from the delicate chocolate scent of the flowers.

Glossy dark green leaves are oval-shaped, and grow in clusters of five (hence the plant’s other common name of five-leaf akebia). Vines produce many dangling purple flowers with three petals in the spring (ranging from March to May) that have a delightful vanilla scent. The vines sometimes produce fruits that resemble eggplants late in the summer. Fruits are edible, but not very palatable.

Flowers and fruits are best in full sun, but the vine is very shade tolerant and will grow in woodland settings. The vine grows well in USDA zones 4 to 8, and it remains evergreen in zones 6 and warmer.

Plant the chocolate vine in the spring or fall, in average well-drained soil. If you wish to grow the fruits, plant at least two vines to increase the chances of pollination and fruiting. You can propagate the vine through softwood cuttings if you only have one plant. Provide weekly watering until vines are established, then water during periods of drought so that plants get at least one inch of water per week.



The chocolate vine will climb on supports or scramble up to 40 feet. Because of its vigorous growth habit, many gardeners prune the chocolate vine back to ground level in late winter to keep it in check. You can also

lightly prune the vine to help it look tidy after flowering.

Practice good stewardship by not allowing *akebia quinata* to escape your landscape into neighboring woodland areas. In some areas the chocolate vine has displaced native plants with its dense vegetation. The vines have the potential to choke out small trees when left untended.

Consider the mature size of the vine when incorporating this plant into your landscape design. This isn’t a specimen that will daintily clamber up your mailbox. Although the vine doesn’t cling, you can train it up a drain spout or across a privacy fence with the help of some heavy-duty twine or netting. This vine would also be an attractive drape to hide a chain link fence. Browsing deer avoid the plant.

Some gardeners appreciate the rampant growth of this vine when used as a groundcover to disguise eyesores like rock piles, or manhole covers. However, the delicate flowers tend to get lost in the mass of foliage on the ground.

Master Gardener Plant Sale

The 2019 Master Gardener Plant Sale will be Saturday, May 11th, 9 am – 2 pm at Hovander Homestead Park (5299 Nielsen Avenue Ferndale, WA).

A fundraising event for Master Gardener programs, the sale offers unique varieties of tomato plants, vegetable starts and herbs, perennials and shade plants, native trees and shrubs, dahlia tubers, and potted succulents for Mother’s Day.

Want Some Bees?

Tamara Hall is working with Crown Bees of Woodinville as the local contact for helping residents of our area keep bees. If you’d like to help out the cause, the cost is \$20.00 for the bee house, trays, and Mason bees. Tamara will take care of getting the bees from (and back to) Crown Bees for the seasonal changes in Spring and Fall. If interested, contact Tamara very soon at 360-752-9923 because she’ll be making the trip to get the bees around the end of February.

Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2019

Submitted by Cheryl Haak



Thirty-Two people attended the meeting on February 6 presided over by President Ann Holland. Amongst them, Ann also welcomed 3 guests. In addition, we have a new member, Anna Theobald.

Old Business: Minutes of the January meeting were approved.

We are still hoping to fill the position of Secretary. If you are interested, it requires about 1 hour of volunteer work a month.

Nancy McMaster is soliciting suggestions of plants for the library gardens. Please let her know if you have ideas.

Cheryl Haak reported that the plant sale will be held on Saturday, May 4 from 9:00 till noon at the downtown Bellingham Public Library. Setup for the sale will be on the day before, Friday, May 3 from 3:00 p.m. till roughly 6:00 p.m.

Signup sheets were passed around for volunteers for both days. Volunteers will be entitled to purchase one plant per day before the sale begins. This year we are going to be assigning jobs at the setup and sale to help make things go as smoothly as possible. If you have a preference for a certain job, please let Cheryl know.

Cheryl showed the Club's new yard signs that we are going to advertise with this year in addition to our posters that artist Kathleen Whitlock prepares for us each year. Please consider putting one of these signs in your yard. Let Cheryl know at clhaak@comcast.net if you'd be amenable to having a yard sign to borrow at the April meeting and then return after the sale. She'd be glad to bring one to you if need be.

Cheryl brought in plant labels. Pots were available in her car for after the meeting and she will provide potting soil at the March and April meetings so please remember to bring a bucket if you need some.

Jerry McLean gave us the Treasurer's report.

New Business: Tamara Hall is working with Crown Bees of Woodinville to be the local contact for helping residents of our area keep bees. If you'd like to help out the cause, contact Tamara very soon at 360-752-9923. .

There will be an Orchid Show in Mt. Vernon on Saturday, March 9th opening at 9:00 a.m. and Sunday, March 10th at 9:00 a.m. The address is Skagit Valley Gardens, 18923 Peter Johnson Road, Mt. Vernon, 98273.

Thank you to Donna Halwe and Rita Saling for our snacks this evening. Thank you to Sheri and Russ Lambert for our great coffee. Another big thank you to Carol McBride who is in charge of hospitality, who without exception, brings our snack supplies every month and sets up an inviting area.

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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