

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

May Topic: Peonies

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its May 2019 meeting on Wednesday, May 1 at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Our speaker for the evening will be Renel Anderson, specialist on cultivating beautiful peonies.



May and June are announced by the dazzling flowers of peonies. Both tree and herbaceous peonies bring armfuls of spectacular flowers to our gardens. No garden is complete without a few of these sumptuous bloomers. Tree peonies are inspiring specimen or accent plants. The herbaceous peonies play nicely in perennial borders or mixed beds and provide a color blast to spring.

Renel Andersen will provide an overview of the varieties and care requirements of peonies. Her nursery, Pure Peonies in Everson, features over 175 peonies and is a must see during this time period to enjoy the color potential.

You can view pictures of some of her favorite varieties of peonies as well as tips for growing these beauties at her website <https://purepeonies.com>

Annual Plant Sale

Saturday, May 4, 2019
9 a.m. - noon

**Bellingham Library
Meeting Room**



*The Annual Plant Sale
is a fundraiser for the
Birchwood Garden Club*

Vibrant Spring Color

Moss phlox (*Phlox subulata*) blooms reliably every spring with brightly colored flowers in a showy ground-hugging mass for three to four weeks. For the rest of the year it takes a backseat, but the evergreen, needlelike foliage makes a solid bright green ground cover that is a perfect background for summer bloomers.

Moss phlox is an evergreen, mat-forming, perennial that grows three to six inches tall. Clusters of five-petaled flowers literally cover the entire plant in spring. Clumps gradually spread as stolons creep over the ground and eventually cover an area approximately 18 to 24 inches in diameter.

Given a modicum of care, moss phlox will grow well if thought is given to its placement and preferences at planting time. Choose a place in sun to partial shade.



While preference is for moist, well-drained soil with a neutral to slightly alkaline pH, it is very tolerant and adapts well to dry, sandy, and acidic soil.

Once established very little care is needed. Plants can be invigorated and lush new growth encouraged by cutting back by about one-third to halfway immediately after flowering. Dividing the clumps every three or four years will help to keep them vigorous.

Use moss phlox at the edge of a border. Its small stature and spreading and draping habit make it a great selection for the top of a wall or in a container where it can cascade down the sides. In rock gardens, these same qualities make it an effective choice since it creeps over rocks and weaves its way among them quite easily.

Are Dyed Mulches Safe?

Some colored mulches are dyed with harmless dyes, like iron oxide-based dyes for red or carbon-based dyes for black and dark brown. But, cheap mulches, typically on sale in the spring, can be dyed with harmful or toxic chemicals.

Many colored mulches are made from recycled wood – like old pallets, decks, crates, etc. These recycled bits of treated wood can contain chromates copper arsenate (CCA). Using CCA to treat wood was banned in 2003, but many times this wood is still taken from demolitions or other sources and recycled into dyed mulches.

CCA treated wood can kill beneficial soil bacteria, beneficial insects, earthworms and young plants. It can also be harmful to people spreading this mulch and animals who dig in it.

Besides the potential dangers of colored mulch, dyed mulches are not beneficial for the soil because they do not enrich the soil or add beneficial bacteria and nitrogen, like natural mulches do.

Generally, if the price of dyed mulch seems too good to be true, it probably is not good at all and you should spend the extra money for better quality and safer mulch.

Welcome New Members

Laurel Peterson and Gwen Scott

Snacks

This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Dianne Gerhard and Lillian Nelson.

Thank You

Plant of the Month: *Physocarpus opulifolius*

Diablo Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Monlo') features eye-catching flowers, deep reddish purple leaves, and wonderfully textured bark. It's a real knockout plant that's also easy to grow.

The common name of "Ninebark" comes from the textured stems of the plant. They have a unique way of "exfoliating" or peeling back to expose a variety of reddish-brown layers underneath. The look is quite ornamental, and the red leaf of this particular variety is stunning.

In spring, white, button-like blooms appear in clusters that form an amazing contrast to the deep red leaves. The flowers present a showy display that are sure to draw the attention

of butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees.

At the end of the growing season in fall, ornamental red capsules sparkle on the tips of the branches. They'll add a ton of



charm to the late season landscape and birds love the seeds.

Vigorous, this deciduous shrub typically grows upright with a spreading habit, up to 4 to 8 feet

tall and wide. If you need a smaller specimen, cutting Diablo to the ground will result in even more dark foliage and a more compact plant.

Diablo Ninebark has an excellent resistance to insects and disease. A full-sun to part-shade lover, it is easily grown in average to slightly acidic, dry to medium moisture, well-drained soil. It blooms best in full sun, but does not like hot climates.

These large shrubs make a colorful addition to any landscape. Diablo Ninebark works well in a mass planting as a screen or hedge and looks terrific at the back of a perennial bed. A single specimen makes a beautiful container plant.

What to Divide in Spring?

One of the most rewarding aspects of perennial gardening is the fact that most plants actually increase in size over the years. After a time, some perennials are going to benefit from being divided, and in most cases spring is a terrific time to go about this task.

Perennials need to be divided if clumps have started to die out in the middle or if flowering performance has declined. Stunted growth or yellowish leaves are signs that soil nutrients around the clump have been exhausted and the plant needs to be divided.

So which perennials are best divided in spring? One rule of thumb for division is perennials that flower between early spring and mid June are best divided in early fall. Perennials that flower after mid June are best divided in the spring. Spring is also the best time for dividing most ornamental grasses.

However, as creative gardeners, we know that rules can be judiciously broken. For example, primroses can be divided in late spring. Same thing with spring flowering creepers like Basket-of-Gold (*Aurinia*) and Moss Phlox (*Phlox subulata*).

Three plants that should definitely be divided at other times are Peonies (fall only), Oriental Poppies (in July or August) and true Lilies (mid to late fall). Daylilies (*Hemerocallis*), on the other hand, can be divided at nearly any time, but spring seems to suit them perfectly.

Meeting Minutes

April 3, 2019

Submitted by Cheryl Haak



Fifty-Five people attended the meeting on April 3rd presided over by President Ann Holland.

Old Business: Minutes of the March meeting were approved.

Nancy McMaster, our Library and Museum Gardens Chairperson, announced the library cleanup day will be Saturday, April 27th from 9:00 a.m. till noon.

Cheryl Haak announced the plant sale is May 4th at the Bellingham Public Library, downtown branch with setup for the sale on the 3rd of May from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. Cheryl passed around signup sheets.

Susan Metcalf, one of our members, is handling publicity for our sale with broadcast and print media and graciously donated the cost of our ad in the Bellingham Herald. Cheryl will be posting our poster advertising the sale in prominent places in Bellingham's groceries stores, libraries, and many businesses. She gave posters to volunteers to post at business in the Fairhaven area and also the north end of the Bellingham and Ferndale area.

Potting soil and pots were brought to the meeting as well as white labels for plant identification. Please have your plants labeled before you drop them off at the two parking spaces we will have reserved on the north side of the library. On the label, you'll need to note the name of the plant, whether it needs sun or shade and any other distinguishing characteristic you like.

Please water plants two days before but not right before so that they aren't dripping on the tables. Aprons will be supplied for most volunteers and please wear your name tags. People who volunteer are entitled to purchase one plant before the sale per day of volunteer work. Please bring, in addition to your plants, box bottoms, and garden carts if you have one, garden books marked NFS and have your name written in them.

As a reminder, after you've dropped off your potted labeled plants, please move your vehicle out of the 2 spaces we're reserved for that purpose. If you aren't able to drop the plants off the day before the sale, you are welcome to drop them off at my home beforehand at 2733 Grant Street, Bellingham and I'll get them to the sale for you.

Cheryl brought in the yard signs and members took many home. They may be returned to Cheryl for storage after the sale at 2733 Grant Street, 7 blocks NW of Trader Joes. If you aren't able to drop them off, she'd be happy to come and get the sign from you.

Jerry McLean gave us the Treasurer's report.

Sandy Gurosko announced there were many items for the silent auction table.

Thank you to Judy Lewis and Marissa Townsend for tonight's snacks. Thank you to Sheri and Russ Lambert for our great coffee.

Our speaker tonight was Robin Haglund, founder of Garden Mentors. Her presentation was "Retire into your Garden with Ease."

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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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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