

the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

www.birchwoodgardenclub.org

CHARTERED 1931

November Topic: Mason and Leaf Cutter Bees

Submitted by Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will hold its November 2018 meeting on Wednesday, November 7 at 7:00 p.m. in the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Our speaker for the evening will be Dave Hunter, owner of Crown Bees, who will provide an overview of the advantages and requirements of successful mason and leaf cutter bee keeping.

Mason bees and leaf cutter bees are native species in the Pacific Northwest. Their advantages over the European Honey Bees are considerable. They are solitary non-hive forming bees, are gentle and non-aggressive, and pollinate up to 100 times more effectively than honey bees. Moreover, keeping these gentle creatures involves little cost or maintenance.

Mr. Hunter is looking for some new bee keepers in our area. Crown Bees would provide housing supplies and bees in exchange for collecting all the bees at the end of the year. This eliminates the need for overwintering your bees and provides bee stock (via Crown bees) to new people.

Come to the meeting and experience a wide ranging bee event!

Asters for Beautiful Fall Color

Asters are hardy perennials that bloom through late fall in various colors and heights. They provide color in the garden and provide a late-season source of pollen for bees and other pollinators.

The main types of asters are the New York (*Aster novi-belgii*) and the New England (*Aster novae-angliae*). The New York ones generally tend to be shorter (a foot or so) than the New England ones (three feet or more). Both come in a range of colors from red to purple, bluish to white and provide a nice complement to the colors of fall mums.



Purple Dome is one of the most commonly seen asters in our area. A New England variety, it is covered with purple flowers through a long period in the fall and grows only two feet tall or less.

Asters should be planted in good loamy soil as most don't like wet feet. Most asters perform best in full sun—though some tolerate partial shade, only with fewer blooms and less vigor.

Asters are beautiful, provide a symphony of color, and bloom though late fall. If you're looking for an easy way to jazz up your fall garden, asters are a good place to start.

Growing Japanese Maples from Seed

Japanese maples have a well-deserved place in the hearts of many gardeners. With beautiful summer and fall foliage, cold hardy roots, and often a compact, manageable shape, they are the ideal specimen tree. They are often bought as saplings, but it's also possible to grow them yourself from seed.



Japanese maple seeds are ripe in the fall. This is the time to collect them – when they're brown and

dry and falling from the trees. You can plant both seeds that have fallen to the ground and seeds you've picked from the tree.

When planting Japanese maple seeds, it's important to pretreat them before sowing them in the ground. If you plan on planting your seeds outdoors in the spring, place them in a paper bag and store them in a cool, dark place through the winter.

If you plan on starting them indoors in a pot, you can skip the winter storage and begin treating the seeds right away.

First, break off the wings of the seeds. Next, fill a container with water that's very warm but not too hot to put your hand in it, and soak your seeds for 24 hours. Then mix the seeds in a small

amount of potting soil and put it all in a sealable plastic bag. Poke



a couple holes in the bag for ventilation, and put it in your refrigerator for 90 days to stratify.

Once the 90 days are up, you can plant the seeds in a container or directly in the ground.

Read more at *How to Grow Japanese Maples from Seed* by Michael J. McGroarty at <http://www.japanesemaplelovers.com/growing-japanese-maples-from-seed>

A Washington Treasure

There are few better ways to enjoy a beautiful Pacific Northwest autumn day than with an afternoon at a public garden. Perhaps the most unique public garden in our area is the Chihuly Garden and Glass.

Dale Chihuly is one of the most famous glass artists ever, and the Tacoma native drew from his childhood in the Pacific Northwest for a lot of inspiration. It's fitting the Chihuly Garden and Glass is in Seattle, and it's one of the most incredible experiences in the city.

The glasshouse, which houses many of Chihuly's works, is inspired by his love for greenhouses and conservatories. Eight galleries (complete with drawing walls, which display light paintings made by the glass sculptures) offer some views of the breathtaking glasswork.

The garden surrounds the glasshouse, and features glass pieces like Reeds on Logs, the Crystal and Icicle Towers and four massive sculptures in the corners to anchor it all. And, of course, there are scores of vines, flowers, trees, and shrubs tying it all together.

Plant of the Month: *Skimmia japonica*

This evergreen shrub constantly manifests itself in new ways throughout the year. In November the plant displays the reddish buds of its sturdy, attractive flower spikes. The color of the buds continues to look beautiful all winter long. In April/May the buds open and *Skimmia* flowers with white/pink flowers with a strong scent loved by bees. The first new buds appear at the end of August.

If a male plant is nearby for pollination, female plants light up the landscape with bright red berries in fall and winter. Green-tinted bark and leathery green leaves provide a backdrop for the colorful blooms and berries.

Skimmia is at its best in semi-shady, woodland gardens. It is relatively deer-resistant and the berries are highly attractive to hungry songbirds.



This compact, slow-growing plant reaches a mature height of 4 feet and a spread of about 4 feet. With all its beauty, however, you should bear in mind that all parts

of the plant are poisonous if ingested.

Skimmia is fairly indestructible, tolerating drought. The plant is not fussy about soil but is most happy in acid conditions, making them good companions for azaleas, rhododendrons, and camellias. *Skimmia* tolerate life in a pot, although yellowing leaves are a sign of iron deficiency (in which case add sequestered iron).

Skimmia is a steadfast evergreen shrub, undemanding and dependable while offering lovely foliage and seasonal interest with blooms, colorful buds and stems, and bright berries.

Autumn Tasks for Maintaining Healthy Trees

Trees are the backbone of the landscape and represent quite an investment in time and money. To protect your trees and keep them growing and long lived, there are maintenance chores you can do now to prevent winter damage and ensure a healthy tree for years to come. According to arborists, November is the optimum time to complete tree maintenance chores.

Remove or correct structural faults and deadwood that are clearly visible. Try to make small pruning cuts that minimize the exposure of the central heartwood core on branches.

Properly prune branches that will touch the ground when loaded with rain and snow. Foliage and branches that are in contact with soil can invite undesirable pests and problems.

Remove damaged and declining twigs, branches, and bark. Do not leave pests food and shelter for the winter.

Remove any new sprouts that have grown at the tree base, or along stems and branches.

Pruning should conserve as many living branches as possible with only a few selective cuts.

Spread a thin layer of composted organic mulch to blanket the soil. If possible, cover an area at least as large as the branch spread.

Properly wrap new trees that have not developed a corky bark and could be easily damaged. Mechanical injury from the environment, including chewing and rubbing by animals, must be prevented.

Meeting Minutes

October 3, 2018

Submitted by Rhonda Rinn



President Ann Holland welcomed 38 members to the **October 3rd, 2018** meeting of the Birchwood Garden Club.

Our speaker tonight is Steve Lorton, "My life in other peoples' Gardens". Steve was the NW Bureau Chief for Sunset Magazine for many years. He is now an Ambassador for the magazine.

Old Business:

Reminder that annual dues are still begin collected by Jerry. Also, a reminder that the Whatcom Museum policy does not allow us to bring any live or cut flowers to our meetings. If you want to share a plant with a member, please leave them in your car and distribute after the meeting.

The library garden clean-up was rained out after 1 ½ hr. This will be rescheduled at a later date.

New Business:

The budget was provided by Jerry and passed by members present.

Thank you to Sandy Gurosko and Ira Penn for our snacks this evening. As always, thank you to Sheri and Russ Lambert for their generous donation of coffee for our enjoyment.

Snacks

**This month's meeting snacks will be provided by Kathy Piscefellow and Kathy Sparks.
Thank You**

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
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Secretary - Rhonda Rinn
Garden Tours – Sheri Lambert & Carol McBride
Historian – Violet Hayes
Hospitality – Carol McBride
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Membership – Judy Lewis
Newsletter – Ken & Stephanie Salzman
Plant Sale – Cheryl Haak
Programs – Tamara Hall
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