



# Master Gardener Newsletter



WSU EXTENSION  
Cowlitz County

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE GARDEN

Gary Fredricks

OCTOBER 2023  
304 COWLITZ WAY,  
KELSO, WA 98626

### Stopping it before it gets started!

*“Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss other people.” ~ Socrates*

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**WSU Gardening Websites**  
[mastergardener.wsu.edu/](http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/)  
[gardening.wsu.edu](http://gardening.wsu.edu)  
[cowlitz.wsu.edu](http://cowlitz.wsu.edu)

**HortSense Fact Sheets**  
[hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/](http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/)

**PestSense Fact Sheets**  
[pestsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/](http://pestsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/)

**WSU Educational Pubs**  
<http://pubs.wsu.edu>

**WSU Cowlitz Co. MGs**  
[extension.wsu.edu/cowlitz/mg/](http://extension.wsu.edu/cowlitz/mg/)  
**Master Gardener Foundation**  
[www.cowlitzcomg.com/](http://www.cowlitzcomg.com/)

*Reasonable accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities and special needs who contact the office at least two weeks prior to the event. Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.*

It is wonderful when friends get together. It is a time to catch up on what has been happening, share stories about your adventures, voice opinions on wrongs in the world and maybe pass along some gossip you heard from someone else. Everyone learns a bit more about each other and it strengthens our friendship further. My concern is when people gossip. Hearing something from someone about somebody and passing it along second hand. Unfortunately, when that happens parts of the whole story get left out and the truth becomes distorted.

While talking about the problems of an event can be beneficial, please don't talk about a volunteer with others. We all have had days when we didn't shine so brightly and deserve the benefit of the doubt. **So, what do you if you witness inappropriate behavior by a volunteer and feel that such behavior should not continue.** Please contact me. I welcome the opportunity to have you share all concerns that you witnessed involving inappropriate behavior exhibited by another WSU volunteer. **As the WSU Master Gardener Coordinator, my goal is to eliminate any unsuitable behavior exhibited by WSU Master Gardener volunteers.** Know that:

1. The meeting will be private and can be held by phone, zoom or face to face.
2. Testimony can also be made by letter or E-mail.
3. All testimony will be kept confidential.
4. There will not be any retaliation tolerated by anyone towards you regarding your testimony.
5. All testimony reported should be only about incidents that you witnessed. Please do not include statements about what others have told you.
6. All action taken towards any volunteers will be kept confidential.

A strong organization is built on respect and trust of others. Gossip only serves to tear it down. **So how do I know what is considered inappropriate behavior.** The WSU Master Gardener Code of Conduct (found in the WSU MG Handbook) states as a WSU Extension Master Gardener, volunteers will:

- Represent WSU Extension with dignity and pride.
- Respect all persons with whom they interact as a WSU Extension Master Gardener (fellow volunteers, Extension and other county personnel, and the general public).
- Conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful manner and refrain from profanity, harassment, disruptive behavior, or abuse of any kind.
- Provide a positive role model when working with youth.
- Respect and follow WSU, county, and program policies and guidelines.
- Comply with equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination laws.
- Not consume alcohol, use marijuana, tobacco (including vapor products), or illegal substances while representing WSU Extension.

# Announcements

## Plant and Insect Clinic is open!

In-clinic visits, calls, and emails. In office April-Oct: MWF, Nov-March: Wed. only, 10-noon.  
360-577-3014 Ext. 1

All of our workshops-with slides, handouts, and videos:

[cowlitzcomg.com/workshops-videos](http://cowlitzcomg.com/workshops-videos)

### In this issue

If you enjoy the MG articles below,  
PLEASE LET THE AUTHOR KNOW!

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Log your Volunteer Hours



[wsu.givepulse.com/group/453100-WSU-Cowlitz-County-Master-Gardeners](http://wsu.givepulse.com/group/453100-WSU-Cowlitz-County-Master-Gardeners)

[wsu.givepulse.com/group/453100-WSU-Cowlitz-County-Master-Gardeners](http://wsu.givepulse.com/group/453100-WSU-Cowlitz-County-Master-Gardeners)

## - Article Opportunity -

If you specialize in a specific type of gardening, then why not share your knowledge by writing a short article for the newsletter? It's a great way to contribute, and help inspire fellow gardeners. Not to mention that the time spent writing can be turned in as volunteer hours!

If you have an article you'd like to share, please email them to: Alice Slusher: [alslush@gmail.com](mailto:alslush@gmail.com)

**Articles for November issue due November 20, 2023**

# Meetings & Event

## Foundation:

## ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING

Friday

NOVEMBER 17, 2023



**MASTER  
GARDENER  
CALENDAR**

### Upcoming Workshops

(Tues. 12 pm on Zoom unless otherwise noted)  
[cowlitzcomg.com/public-events](http://cowlitzcomg.com/public-events)

<b>ZOOM</b>	Sharpening Tools	Art Fuller
Nov. 7		
<b>IN-PERSON</b>		
Nov. 6, 6-8 pm	Floral Design--making large, fresh take-home arrangement	Kristen Buchanan
Nov 11, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm	Vermiculture: Make-and-take a worm bin!	Art Fuller

**Master Gardener  
Directory**

On members' page of website

# Foundation Announcements

## Art Fuller (Master Gardener Foundation of Cowlitz County, President)

October is just about over, and November is almost upon us. All the gardening has finally slowed down and hope to hear everyone is taking a well-deserved break. The Annual Planning Meeting will be here on 17 November at 10 A.M. on Zoom. This is our last meeting of the year, where all Officers, Directors, Chairpersons and Coordinator give a brief summary of what they have accomplished this year, what their goals are for next year and their budgets. The membership will also vote on the budgets and the 2024 Board election results will be announced. Hope everyone can join in.

On another note, the upcoming 2024 Northwest Flower and Garden Festival will be kicking off:



**FEBRUARY 14-18, 2024**

SEATTLE CONVENTION CENTER

705 PIKE STREET, SEATTLE, WA

I received an email request and letter from the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State, President. She is requesting financial support from us and other counties this year to fund the Northwest Flower and Garden Festival. The year 2023, they were requesting \$6000 support from all counties. This year the request has gone up to \$9000 financial support. Last year we donated \$400, and they are asking for us to support them for the same amount. If we vote to donate the money, we will once again get our volunteers to staff the booths in 2024.

I requested the following information: If we donate funds can our volunteers go on the same day so they can carpool if desired as they did last year? The response was, "They thought that was a great idea and would try to accommodate that request."

I also asked the question, If the excess funds would get prorated and sent back to our Foundation? The reply was, "No and the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State would keep the excess funds, put it into an account and use it for the next year's festival."

Below is the email request and letter from Tana Hasart, President of the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State. This was also in the 10 October 2023 meeting New Business so everyone could read in advance prior to voting. This will be discussed in Old Business at the Annual Planning Meeting 17 November 2023.

Good afternoon,

I am writing to thank you and the Master Gardener Foundation of Cowlitz County for being a sponsor of the Northwest Flower and Garden Festival in 2023. After discussion with the MGFWS Executive Committee, the MGFWS Board, and many of the volunteers who worked at the event, the State Foundation again agreed to act as the fiscal agent and to be a sponsor for 2024. Attached is a letter with additional information.

Please talk with your Board about sponsoring at the \$400 level for 2024. The outcomes are clear -- this is a highly effective way to spread the word about local and statewide MG programming and the resulting benefit to our public.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Tana Hasart, President  
Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State

*(continued on next page)*



# Foundation Announcements *(continued)*

Dear Colleagues,

The Northwest Flower and Garden Festival was a great success last year. Volunteers enjoyed time working with their colleagues from other counties, and we presented information to more than 3000 people from all around the world about our WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. In fact, based on feedback from volunteers who were involved in 2023, it was so successful, we want to do it again in 2024! The Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State has agreed to provide financial support and so have the King and Pierce County Foundations. The NWFGF is approved as a joint Program and Foundation activity and hours spent volunteering count toward annual certification.

I am asking that you help provide financial support as you did in 2023. Extension Master Gardeners from counties whose Foundations support for our participation will be invited to volunteer at the festival. Here are some facts about this year's event:

- Total estimated costs for our booth at the festival are \$9,000. We will have three spaces, one of which will serve as an active plant clinic. This is a change from last year when the plant clinic was located at a distance from the outreach area.
- We secured an even better location this year – a corner booth on the main aisle leading to the seminars. It is anticipated that this location will result in even more contact with our public.
- We are asking counties that contributed toward costs in 2023 consider sponsoring at the same level. New counties will sponsor an amount in keeping with their financial ability to participate.
- The WSU Extension Master Gardener Program will supply graphic design, donor cultivation, event coordination, and booth supplies and decorations.
- Festival planning is underway with several leadership positions already secured. Next, we will invite volunteers to fill committee positions.

The Northwest Flower and Garden Festival attracts over 60,000 visitors. This presents a unique opportunity to inform and educate the public about the incredible work done by our EMG Program and local counties. We are asking that you continue your support of this worthwhile marketing and outreach event.

Please let me know if you have questions. I can be reached at 253-495-0878, or [president@mastergardenerfoundation.org](mailto:president@mastergardenerfoundation.org). I am happy to schedule time for us to talk more about the NWFGF and look forward to seeing many of you at the Advanced Education Conference this week.



Tana L. Hasart, President  
Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State

Thanks for all you do!  
Art Fuller  
Master Gardener Foundation of Cowlitz County, President





# MGs reporting: CANDIDATES for 2024 BOARD OFFICERS for MGFCC

## CANDIDATES for 2024 BOARD OFFICERS for MG Foundation of Cowlitz Co.

Master Gardener Foundation of Cowlitz Co. will hold an election of officers at the Annual Planning Meeting on Friday, November 17, 2024.

According to our bylaws, the announcement of the candidates who are willing to run for election board officer positions is supposed to be made in the newsletter that will go out before the meeting.

Information about the voting procedure will be available soon to all Foundation Members.

Here are the candidates for the open elected positions on the board. You will also have the opportunity to write in a candidate (with the candidate's approval).

- President: Jerry Winchell
- Vice President: Sue Fardell
- Treasurer: Jen Swanson
- Secretary: Erin Chambers

Respectfully submitted,  
Patricia Bosh  
Alice Slusher  
Nomination Committee  
MGFCC

**BALLOT**


*Pres.-Jerry Winchell*

*VP-Sue Fardell*

*Treas.-Jen Swanson*

*Sec.-Erin Chambers*

*Write-ins*





# MGs reporting: MG of the Year Nomination

My goodness, how time flies. Once again, it is time to nominate a veteran master gardener as well as an intern for their outstanding efforts in helping our organization succeed. We do this by honoring each of these individuals with a Cowlitz County Master Gardener of the Year Veteran and Intern award. These awards are given once-in-a lifetime.

Please take the time to think about those who have shown exceptional dedication in making this a great program by nominating them.

You will be asked to give examples of ways your nominee shows:

- Commitment
- Community involvement
- Educational impact
- Promoting WSU MG programs and Leadership

The nomination form is available on the following page and is **due by NOVEMBER 1st**. After completing the questions, please email it to Jo Tuom at [ituommg@gmail.com](mailto:ituommg@gmail.com) or simply drop it off at the Extension office. You can contact Jo Tuom directly at 360-423-5688.

The highest honor (just behind becoming a veteran MG) is being recognized as MG of the year. In Cowlitz County, we honor both a Veteran and an Intern. Once the nominations are submitted, the winners will be selected by the awards committee. As you think about filling out the nomination, consider the following frequently asked questions...

**I don't know if the person is an intern or veteran.**

*Not a problem, the committee will put them in the correct group*

**You may be thinking, "I am positive that someone else will nominate this person."**

*Not usually, so don't take the chance of someone being missed. It doesn't take that long so please make the effort.*

**What if a person who is truly deserving is not nominated for the award?**

*Then they will not be recognized. Only those MGs having a completed nomination form turned into the committee will be considered. Nominees will not be submitted by committee member's during the meeting when nominations are being evaluated.*

**What if a committee member is nominated?**

*They will be excused from the committee before the meeting.*

**I can't fill out an application since I don't know everything this person has done.**

*Put down what you know about the person. Then ask other MGs who have worked with the person, or perhaps you can ask your nominee what they've done. It's important for the committee to consider all the good work you nominee has contributed.*

While only 1 Veteran and 1 Intern MG are awarded, all MG that are nominated will be recognized. Please take the time to recognize an MG you think has done a fantastic job.

Thank you,  
Cowlitz County Master Gardeners Awards Committee

*You may also pick up a printed form at the Extension office on the shelf outside the secretary's office.*



# MGs Reporting: Master Gardener of the Year Nomination 2023

## Cowlitz County Master Gardener of the Year Nomination 2023 (November 1st Deadline)

Nominee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator (s): Thank you for using your time and knowledge of this Master Gardener to nominate him/her for this once in a lifetime award.

Provide as much information as you can to describe your nominee's involvement in Master Gardeners. Your answers to the prompts below will help us discover your nominee's level of involvement in Master Gardening. If you need more information reach out to other Master Gardeners or to the nominee. Only completed nomination forms will be considered. The MG of the Y committee can only base their decision on the information which is provided in this document.

Please fill out a separate form for each person you nominate.

1. Describe evidence of **COMMITMENT**. Give explanations and specific examples of ways your nominee has demonstrated commitment by volunteering hours of service and an investment of personal ability and skill.
2. Describe evidence of **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**. Give explanations and specific examples of ways your nominee has demonstrated participation in activities which bring positive change to our community, including responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices.
3. Describe evidence of **EDUCATIONAL IMPACT**. Give explanations and specific examples of ways your nominee has contributed to educating Master Gardeners and the community at large.
4. Describe evidence of **PROMOTING WSU MG PROGRAMS**. Give explanations and specific examples of ways your nominee has supported the Master Gardener Foundation's efforts to spread the Master Gardener educational message, to recruit and mentor new members and to promote other Master Gardener goals like the 9 Priorities.
5. Describe evidence of **LEADERSHIP**. Give explanations and specific examples of ways your nominee has been able to create enthusiasm for Master Gardening, to promote team building and to encourage others to develop their skills, interests and strengths.

Nominator (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Send this nomination to Jo Tuom ([jtuommg@gmail.com](mailto:jtuommg@gmail.com)) or drop off at the Ext. Office for the awards committee.



# MGs Reporting: Vacation Damage, Sugar Hubbard and New Gardening Solutions

## Vacation Damage

By: Jerry Winchell

Most reasonable people go on vacation when the weather is awful (say January when it's been drizzling for months.) They go to places like Hawaii, Italy, or even Florida where it's warm and beautiful. Oh, no! Not us... This year we waited until September when the Pacific NW was gorgeous and our garden was in full swing.

We went to Tennessee and Alabama where we worked and sweated through 90° days at 90% humidity. Two weeks later we got back home. Ahh, but as our car lights fell on the garden, our hearts sank—Do you have any idea what two weeks of summer can do to 42 tomato plants... beans, melons?

Summer happens every year. It's beautiful here and gardens need us—So I suggest you do it right and vacation in December, January or February.

Jerry

P.S. Oh crud! There's another convention in Tennessee NEXT AUGUST!



## Sugar Hubbard

By: Alice Slusher

This was my first try at growing winter squash. While my Sugar Hubbard squash doesn't rival Jerry's, I'm more than happy with the monsters! The biggest of my six squash weight in at 33.8, 26.6, and 21 pounds! If they taste as good as the one Jerry shared last year, we are going to have VERY good pumpkin pies at Thanksgiving!



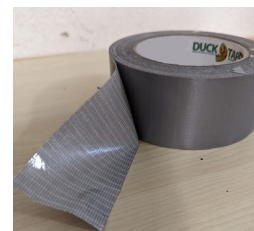
## NEW GARDENING SOLUTIONS

By: Alice Slusher

You know those wicked tiny splinters or thistle prickles that embed themselves in the most sensitive areas of your skin? And you can't even see them with a magnifying glass? Or they are embedded in your favorite garden gloves, socks or shoes and they torture you every time you put them on?

I have two solutions. You know the old adage, "There are only two tricks a homeowner needs to know: "If it sticks and it shouldn't: WD-40. If it doesn't stick and it should: duct tape!" Well, as a slight twist on that, if it's sticking in your skin and it shouldn't, use duct tape! Seriously! Apply a strip of tape to your skin or your sock, rub it firmly to make sure it's got excellent contact, then quickly (and painfully) tear it off! Might take a couple of times, but it almost always works, on both skin (ouch) and fabric.

My other solution is if Option A doesn't work—I will gently scrape it with a shaving razor—the old credit card trick is useless at this point. Try it!





# MGs Reporting: Winchell's Applesauce

**Do I hear apple-lause for Jerry and Carolyn's applesauce bounty?**

This is a text conversation between Jerry, Carolyn, and Alice, who was trying to drum up some articles for this newsletter. Hope you find it a-peel-ing!

**Me:** So I'm thinking you should send in an article for the newsletter about your method of making applesauce in bulk. I'm impressed and intrigued!! Can you write something up for the newsletter, and add the pics for it? You must have some industrial canning equipment! I'm not being "manipulative," am I? 😊 I like to think that I'm "facilitating!"

**Jerry:** Our son Matthew and I put up 254 quarts one Sunday!!

**Carolyn:** It's "Jerry-rigged" --regularly available equipment--just improved for speed and volume. He adapted the Victorio Strainer: he took the handle off and uses a drill instead because hand cranking is too slow. Then put a shield over the screen so you don't spray applesauce on the ceiling (again!!). Next, get a piece of conduit to feed the applesauce into a five-gallon bucket below because smaller amounts are too tedious. Then set up twelve burners on the deck so you can process faster...After the quarts are cooled, take a hose and rinse them off. Let them air dry and carry in canning racks to your storage shelves.

**Me:** Pun-pun 😊 berry punny! Interesting adaptation!

**Jerry:** Don't punish me!! I admit - we are in the sauce here!

**Me:** Jerry's hitting the sauce again!

**Jerry:** Hay - this is feeling "punnative!"

**Me:** You should apple-ogize for the puns. However, I have to admit, your sauce really does look so a-peel-ing. One core belief is that apple puns are food for the soul.

**Jerry:**

It's good though. We only got 200 lbs. off our tree so we only got 90 qt. Processor has a worm drive. (hopefully no white clitellum) [disgusting reference to the [evil jumping worms](#)]

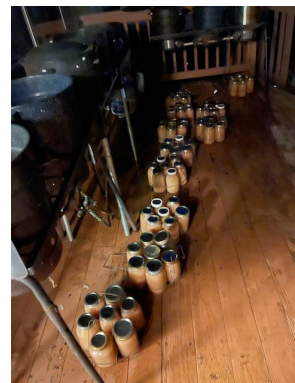
**Me:** Aaaaagh! 🤢🤢 Take it back!

**Jerry:**

The key is burners and pots enough to process. You must go to pot!

**Me:** That's from ONE tree?

**Jerry:** It's a Spartan and usually produces twice that. This year the deer took their toll... It is fun. Gardening is fun - add eating and it's even better! Just keep well "grounded" in your gardening. It's bean good! Maybe next fall we could do an 🍎 APPLEFEST 🍎



# MGs Reporting: Overwintering Geraniums and Fuchsias

Sad to say, winter IS coming! It's time to bring in your geraniums and fuchsias for the winter. There's something very satisfying about saving your favorite warm-season plants, and bringing them back to life the next year. Not only that, but you will frequently get a jumpstart on the season and have beautiful flowering plants earlier!

## Geraniums

You have a couple of options with geraniums.

### Overwintering Geraniums indoors in Pots:

- Dig up the geraniums you want to save, making sure you get most of the roots.
- Put them in big pots with fresh potting soil and cut them back to about 6 inches. Give them a good soaking with water. Spray any remaining leaves with water to knock off any pests.
- Put these pots in a sunny window or under artificial light, in a room where it's between 60°-65° F during the day and a little cooler at night.
- Water them about every two weeks.
- By late winter, they might get tall and thin. To fix this, cut them back by half to two-thirds in March. They'll start growing again in a few days and should look nice by May—much earlier than you can find for sale!
- Plant them outdoors after the last frost date.

This is my preferred method. I have a room downstairs with great west-facing light. I keep it unheated, and apparently, it's the ideal environment for keeping geraniums happy over the winter, even without artificial light. This surprised me, considering our overcast winters.

### Overwintering Geraniums as Bare-Root Plants:

- Before the first fall frost, gently pull up your geraniums.
- Remove all the soil from the roots.
- You can either put one or two plants in a big paper bag and store them somewhere cool and dry (about 45-50 degrees F), or you can hang them upside down in the same kind of place. The leaves and tips will eventually die.
- In March, cut away dried up leaves or stems, and prune them back to where you see healthy, green stems.
- Pot them up in fresh potting soil and give them a good watering.
- Place the newly-potted geraniums in a sunny window or under artificial light. If you do this in March, they should look great and be ready to go outside after the last frost.



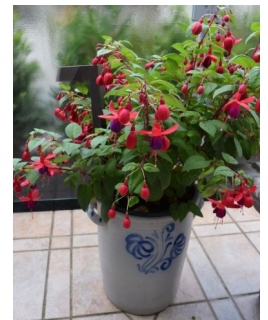
Some MGs I know swear by this method. I've had limited success with it, mostly because I forget that they're in bags in the basement. Last time I tried it I put a reminder note on my calendar. It's amazing how actually putting them back into soil in a timely fashion helps to ensure success!

## Fuchsias

Fuchsia hardiness depends on the cultivar. Some can survive here in protected spots like a back porch close to the house. Hanging basket fuchsias are typically more tender, so check the label for information if available. We'll be talking specifically about the "hanging basket" fuchsias.

- Experiment: If you're open to it, leave the fuchsia plant outside for a season in a protected area and see how it fares. If it doesn't survive, consider switching to a hardier variety for the next year or bringing it indoors next year.
- Initiate dormancy: Bring the plant indoors, after spraying with water to knock off any pests. The leaves will eventually shrivel and fall off. It may look dead, but it's just taking a winter nap.
- The cold spot: Move hanging baskets or pots to a cool, dark spot with temperatures between 40 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Options include a cold frame, cool greenhouse, garage, shed, or a cool room inside the house.
- Pruning: While not necessary, pruning can help plants fit more closely together. Prune them back to their woody stems, but don't over-prune or cut off all green wood. Start with the larger branches and then work on the smaller ones to shape them as you like.
- Watering: Fuchsias require more water compared to geraniums. Check the soil regularly to ensure it remains moist but not waterlogged.
- Spring revival: In March, take your fuchsias out of their winter spot. Give them a severe pruning, water them generously, and then put them under artificial lighting or in an east or west-facing window. Keep them evenly moist and fertilize with a diluted fertilizer solution every two weeks.
- Move outdoors gradually after the danger of frost is past.

Most people treat fuchsias like annuals, and with proper care during the winter, they can come back to life in the spring year after year.





# MGs Reporting: Onions & First Experiment with Propagation

## Onions

By: Sara Clark

In spite of my best efforts to stunt their growth by delaying planting the mail-ordered starts by several weeks, and by planting them in the middle of a rainstorm in April, followed by neglecting to water them on a regular basis...I harvested over 150 beautiful Patterson onions that should last in storage for months!



Onions, sweet meat squash, and one Hubbard.  
Note: the two onions with stiff green tops will not store well. They tried to go to seed, and have hollow cores.



## First Experiment With Propagation

By: Mark Atkinson

Propagating anything in my garden always seemed to be above my novice gardening skill set. I watched a YouTube video on propagating rosemary. It seemed like a fail-proof process. It was! The process is really quite simple.

I clipped a number of non-woody stems about 6-8 inches off my rosemary plant and stripped away the leaves from the bottom half. Using a half-pint mason jar, I placed the stems in a few inches of water. It is that simple. Every few days I threw out the water and refilled the jar with fresh water. After a couple of weeks, roots started to appear. Once each stem had a good supply of roots, I planted the stems in pots. They will spend the winter in the greenhouse and be ready to go out to the garden next spring.

Go clip some rosemary and give it a shot. It really is a guaranteed success.



# MGs Reporting: Hold The Coffee

## HOLD THE COFFEE

Article review by Patricia Bosh

In the Autumn 2023 issue of New Scientist under



the topic of “Debunking gardening myths” James Wong, botanist and science writer, researched the negative effects of adding used coffee grounds to garden soil.

In the article, Wong clarifies that used coffee grounds are a rich source of caffeine. He explains the caffeine compound  $C_8H_{10}N_4O_2$  (carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen & oxygen) is produced by coffee bushes in part as an herbicide. Around the coffee plant, the growth of small competing plants is suppressed by the release of caffeine by leaves and beans falling from the plant and decomposing. This herbicidal phenomenon is called allelopathy. Many plants have evolved this way of reducing competition for light, food, water & space.

In the garden, caffeine leaches (washes) out of the coffee grounds into the surrounding area, percolating (seeping) through the soil to neighboring plant roots. The caffeine liquid is absorbed by the plant's root system, causing stunted growth and decreased seed germination. Wong found the potential allelopathy of caffeine has been a known factor since at least 1980. The conclusions from this first study have been supported by many follow-up studies.

**Additional info:** Linda Chalker Scott, WSU's Garden Professor, is a firm believer in backing up gardening practices by evaluating all available scientific studies on the topic. Here is her lowdown on using caffeine as a garden amendment.

- **Germination Effects:** The impact of coffee ground composts and mulches on plant growth cannot be reliably predicted. Some seeds may benefit from the nutrients and organic matter in coffee grounds, while others may be inhibited due to factors like compaction and potential allelopathic properties of coffee. For example, the use of coffee grounds has positively influ-



enced the germination of sugar beet seeds and has led to improved growth and increased yields in cabbage and soybean crops. However, they can inhibit the growth of plants such as tomatoes, alfalfa, red and white clovers, Chinese ryegrass, geranium, and asparagus ferns.

- **Compost Usage:** To use coffee grounds in compost, it is advisable to **limit their content to no more than 20% of the total compost volume**. This helps maintain the proper carbon-to-nitrogen ratio in the compost pile and prevents overloading with coffee grounds. As the grounds break down in the soil, they seem to inhibit certain common fungal diseases like Fusarium, Pythium, and Sclerotinia, which can cause rots and wilting in plants.
- **Mulch Usage:** Pure coffee grounds are not recommended as mulch because they are finely textured and can easily compact, creating barriers to moisture and air movement. Instead, if you want to use coffee grounds as mulch, **apply a thin layer of no more than half an inch and cover it with a thicker layer (around four inches) of coarse organic mulch**, like wood chips. This layering technique allows for better aeration and moisture retention while minimizing the negative effects of coffee grounds.

Incorporating these recommendations into your gardening practices can help you take advantage of the benefits of coffee grounds as a soil amendment while mitigating any potential drawbacks, especially when it comes to seed germination and plant growth.



soil amended with peat moss



Soil amended with composted coffee grounds



# MGs Reporting: Fall Leaves & Annual Leaf Exchange

## Fall Leaves: Nature's Gold for Your Garden Landscape

By: Alice Slusher

Although it's tempting to rake up leaves as soon as they fall, you'll be wasting a valuable and cost-free resource for your landscaping needs. Before you dispose of all your leaves, take a look at some great uses for autumn leaves.

**Create a pollinator habitat:** Tolerate some garden chaos and make fall cleanup even easier! Bumblebees and other beneficial insects require undisturbed areas to nest, lay eggs, and overwinter, so it's important to tolerate some garden disorder. Fresh fallen leaves on the ground are a great way to provide a pollinator sanctuary.

**Mulch:** Shred or chop the fall leaves into smaller pieces. Spread a layer of shredded leaves around the base of your plants, trees, and shrubs, but don't cover the plants themselves or their crowns. Mulching garden pathways with shredded leaves is an attractive option, too, and provides a cushioned surface to walk on. Mulch helps retain soil moisture, suppress weeds, and regulate soil temperature. Add two to four inches of chopped leaves to your vegetable garden beds, and use a garden fork to "wiggle" them into the soil. They will compost over winter, enriching the soil for spring planting. If you want to speed up the composting, you can sprinkle some nitrogen-only fertilizer on the leaves. I lightly cover the composting garden beds with a tarp to take advantage of any daytime heat and remove them in spring.

**Compost:** Layer leaves in your compost bin along with other organic materi-

als like kitchen scraps and grass clippings. They break down over time, adding valuable nutrients to your compost.

**Lawn Care:** Mow over leaves to shred them and allow them to decompose on the lawn. A one-inch layer will add nitrogen and other nutrients back into the soil. Don't put it on too thick—you should be able to see the grass blades peeking through.

**Worm Bedding:** Shredded leaves can be added to your regular bedding material. Don't add too much—they aren't absorbent like shredded paper. Worms will consume the leaves and turn them into nutrient-rich worm castings.

Remember to avoid using leaves from trees that may have been treated with pesticides or herbicides. It's also a good idea to mix leaves with other organic materials to balance their carbon-to-nitrogen ratio when using them in composting. Properly managed, fall leaves can be a free, valuable, and sustainable resource to improve your garden's health and productivity.

WSU Cowlitz County  
EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Annual Leaf Exchange  
Got too many leaves?  
Need leave to put your garden to bed?

SOIL HEALTH

**Date: Saturday, Nov. 4 and 11**

**Time: 10 am-1 pm**

Location: Cowlitz County Fairgrounds, Longview, WA  
Washington St. entrance

We've got you covered! All you need to do is gather up those fallen leaves, bag 'em, and bring 'em over. Our fellow gardeners and compost enthusiasts will grab them and put them to fantastic use in their garden beds this winter.

<https://extension.wsu.edu/cowlitz/mg/>

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WSU EXTENSION  
Cowlitz County

Meeting Minutes Sep. 10, 2023—will be available next issue

# ADVICE FROM A GARDEN

*Cultivate lasting friendships  
Sow seeds of kindness  
Listen to sage advice  
Don't let the little things bug you  
Be outstanding in your field  
Take thyme for yourself  
No vining!!*

## Cowlitz County Master Gardener 2023 Foundation Board

