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By Peg Tillery

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Tomorrow is my birthday. I'm celebrating with my first official column in What's Up." Each week I'll be sharing my gardening secrets and those of other gardeners in Kitsap County. I'll keep you posted on plant sales, garden shows and other activities in and around Puget Sound. Whether you're a seasoned or a fledgling gardener, I hope to encourage, inform and entertain you. Most of all I hope you'll get out into your gardens and enjoy yourselves. Please email me at gardenmentor@yahoo.com or write to me in care of The North Kitsap Herald in Poulsbo. I definitely want to answer your gardening questions and write about topics that interest you.

Gardening season for many Kitsap County gardeners begins with the Northwest Flower and Garden Show. This year's show is February 2 – 6 at the Washington State Convention Center at 8th Avenue and Pike Street. Tickets are \$14.50 for adults. Kids eleven and under are admitted free. Before February 1 the price is \$12.50. Groups of 20 or more are admitted at \$11.50 each. Once you're inside everything except food and purchases from vendors is free. For more information call 1-800-229-6311 or 1-206-789-5333. You can also visit the Garden Show Website at www.gardenshow.com.

Rodgers Landscaping and Elandan Gardens from Kitsap County are show garden creators and award winners nearly every year. Elandan's display is called "Balancing the Elements – Feng Shui in the Garden." Rodgers Landscaping teamed up with Design Northwest of Hansville to create "The Great Plan Robbery." Be sure to check out their creations.

Kitsap Master Gardeners have created a vignette called "Children at Play in Y2K" which will greet you as you reach the top of the escalator. Megan Allen, Kim Schleis, Karen Schoeppel, Jean and Bob Webb, Georgene Smith, Jeannette Fox, Margie Breunig, Virginia Jones, Sue Bennett, Delona Kent, Marye Jackson, Joann Weber and Gary Gratrix put in countless hours planning and developing this delightful vignette. Raab Park and Poulsbo Elementary children Sara and Katie Stephens, John and Josie Ball, Hannah Anderson, Simone Maule, Ali Howe, Alyssa Roach, Autumn and Garret Johnson, and Claire and Gus Cardoso made bird feeders and birdhouses created from milk cartons, pop bottles and other discarded materials for the vignette. Many items in the display are created from recyclable materials. Port Orchard and Brothers Nurseries in South Kitsap and Roadhouse Nursery on Central Valley Road are providing plants.

The Pacific Science Center has become a yearly participant in the Garden Show. This year's exhibit is called "A Bug's Eye view." It's predicted to keep children enthralled for hours. The exhibit offers live insects, a fragrance display of insect-attracting odors, and an ultra-violet spectrum demonstration that reveals the nectar pathways inside flowers. Kids will be able to crawl through the display at "bug's eye" level. It sounds great, I wonder if they'll let adults crawl through?

Lynn Warner Program Manager for King County Commission for Marketing Recyclable Materials (KCCMRM) told me about their display designed by Phil Wood. Their exhibit called "Many Happy Returns" features twenty garden products made from recycled materials. Kids from First Place, Orca Elementary, 4-H Rabbit Club in Issaquah, and a West Seattle high school art class served as advisors for the garden's design. The 4-H group will have their show rabbits in the garden. The art class created decorative tiles leading up to a water feature. You'll see a two-story gazebo observatory made from rebar arches. Pavers are made out of recycled tires turned into crumb rubber, molded and covered with pea gravel. Bedrock Industries provided tiles out of recycled glass. You'll also see recycled glass ornaments, mosaics and a retaining wall out of broken up concrete with glass decoratively embedded. Be sure to visit Booth #601 to ask KCCMRM representatives questions about recycling in your own gardens.

You'll be able to see 27 showpiece gardens, visit 300 retail booths, walk through five acres of exhibits, see and meet famous garden experts, enjoy garden vignettes, window boxes, miniature gardens, professional floral arrangements and see my favorite display the Orchid Show. Other informational booths include Plant Amnesty, the Perennial Society, Mushroom Growers, and several master gardener groups. The list is endless. You can attend free lectures by top horticulture experts including Ann Lovejoy and Dan Hinckley. The Northwest Flower and Garden Show is well worth the price of the ticket. It will make you feel like spring is just around the corner.