

This year's new crop of Master Gardeners is graduating today. These new rookies attended classes in Port Orchard every Friday for eight hours for ten weeks and learned as much as they could about growing plants, diagnosing diseases, integrated pest management (IPM) and everything else imaginable about gardening in our Pacific Northwest. Many of the rookies have used their vacation time taking ten Fridays off from work to complete the training. These newly trained, dedicated men and women will be giving at least 50 hours of volunteer time helping other gardeners in the county from April through October in Master Gardener Plant Diagnostic Clinics and Demonstration Gardens.

Congratulations to: **Susan Baker, Martha Balmer, Hetty Bizzell, Jay Blinkinsop, Shawna Bliss, Marjorie Brazier, Sandy Charbonneau, Cris Craig, Rose Cullinane, Susan Donahue, Sonja Dyer, Kathleen Engblom, Debra George, Susan Holland, Walter Holland, Gary Ingram, Lorraine Jackson, David Kalamar, Joe Machcinski, Virginia MacKinnon, Debbie McLaughlin, Doug Millard, Jim Moore, Wanita Reed Morris, Tina O'Brien, Mary Pedersen, Vince Peetz, Nikki Pelliciotta, Ann Pyles, Elizabeth Sander, Eileen Sorg, Roger Stoleson, Angela Stratton, Butch Sword, Beth Taylor, Regina Thompson, Linda Waltie, Joni White, Mary F. Williams, Virginia Williams, Kathleen Wilson, and Carol Wood.**

Gardeners throughout the county can visit with Master Gardeners on nearly every day of the week. Take your sick plants or your gardening questions to the County Extension Office Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to four. You can also call the Extension Office at 337-7157 from 8 AM to 4 PM Monday through Friday with questions and problems. Clinics run at several other locations from April through September (sometimes October) each year. Kingston, Bainbridge, Port Orchard and Belfair Farmer's Market Diagnostic Clinics are Saturdays from 9 AM to 1 PM. Thursday Diagnostic Clinics are from 10 AM to 2 PM at Bremerton WalMart, Poulsbo Market Thriftway and Bainbridge Island Thriftway. Home Depot's Diagnostic Clinic is Friday from 10 AM to 2 PM. Central Market in Poulsbo has a Clinic on Saturdays from 10 AM to 2 PM.

For diagnosis of problems of plants and woody shrubs or trees it's always best to bring in samples of both healthy and sick sections of the plant. Capture insects in a Ziploc bag or jar with a lid. If you're squeamish you can put the container with the bug in it in the freezer for several hours or even a day. But it's easiest to diagnosis or identify live bugs. Dead bugs deteriorate quite rapidly. Master Gardeners love to help people. If you ever stump them with a question be assured that they'll know someone who can help you with an answer.

Master Gardeners also plant and maintain several public gardens throughout the county. Anyone who wants to learn about gardening can show up and work with veteran gardeners. It's a great way to discover tips, techniques and plant lore. In Port Orchard visit Givens Community Center (Waterwise Garden) and the Kitsap Visitor's Center. On Bainbridge Island you'll want to visit the Bainbridge Commons and Bainbridge Helpline House. In Poulsbo you'll find gardens at the Northwest College of Art (at Milepost 9 on Highway 305) and the Raab Park Youth Garden (on Caldart). In Central Kitsap stop at the Anna Smith Children's Park (on Tracyton Boulevard just north of Fairgrounds Road). A new garden is being built at Anderson Cove in Bremerton this year, you'll want to watch it grow and develop. For more information about these gardens call the Extension Office at 337-7157 or email or write to me in care of the Herald.

I know it's only March but you'll want to start saving your money for all the spring plant sales coming up. In May you'll want to attend the plant sales at North Kitsap High School's Horticulture Department, the Fuchsia Society, Poulsbo Garden Club (Saturday May 6, 10 AM to 4 PM at Molly Ward Gardens on Big Valley Road) and Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale (Saturday and Sunday May 12 and 13 from 9 AM to 3 PM at Kitsap Fairgrounds). All of these sales in May have great plants at really reasonable prices. Give yourselves and your gardens a few presents. To quote my friend Ann Lovejoy, "You can never have too many plants."

You can email Peg with your gardening questions or comments at gardenmentor@yahoo.com.