

I hope this week you've visited one of your favorite nurseries and communed with your gardens. Speaking of plants and gardening, let's talk for a few minutes about keeping records. Do I hear groaning? I know record keeping is sometimes a tedious process, but try your hand at it.

The easiest way is to jot notes in the date squares of your wall calendar (if you have any room). You could buy a spiral notebook, lined tablet or journal. Note details of purchases and make sketches of various garden areas as you prepare and plant them. Try using 3x5 or 5x8 cards (in a recipe file). When you buy plants tape the plant tag to a card and note details such as where and when you purchased the plant, the cost, where you planted it in your garden, the date, and whether it needs any special care. You can take photographs of every new plant in its new location. Don't forget to take photos of your garden throughout the year. (This is an absolute if you're making a new garden.) If you have a computer, try keeping records on your computer. If you have a digital camera you can get really creative with your record keeping.

Why not keep a record of your vegetable garden this year? One of my guru gardening buddies, keeps track of where she purchased her vegetable seeds, the date the seeds were planted, how long they took to germinate, when the first harvest was, any frost dates, weather conditions and which beds held what each year. Even though we'd like to think we can remember everything about our plants and gardens it's a good idea to at least try to keep records. You might even be glad you did.

Mason Bees – Don't despair if you haven't yet seen these great pollinators. Our weather has been windy and/or chilly several times each week. Maybe the bees are saying, "I'm not leaving home yet." So far most gardeners have only seen the males. Pretty soon the females will be active too. It's not too late to plant a *Pieris Japonica* or other pollen-full plant close by. Mason bees rarely travel farther than 100 feet or so from the houses. If you don't get bees this year, next spring you can purchase tubes with bees in them to attach to the houses you've made. If you've put your mason bee houses in your fruit trees be sure the houses remain stationary, the bees don't like a moving house.

Mulching Mowers – I've received quite a bit of mail about the electric mulching mowers. I'm researching this issue more thoroughly. Rumor has it the batteries on the mowers can be charged up and the mowers don't need a long cord like electric mowers of the past. Other e-mailers have reminded me about our very wet weather with damp, sticky grass and difficulty in mulching. I'll write another column about electric mowers, mulching and lawns in general after I do more researching. Mulching mowers are still definitely a good way to care for and fertilize your lawns and remain earth friendly.

USDA Zones – This is a chicken or an egg issue. According to *Sunset* we're in Zone 5 and according to the USDA we're in Zone 7. Sometimes "experts" reclassify these designations. A really excellent source for data on highs, lows, and freezing dates for our area (which has at least ten microclimates) is the County Extension Office Weather Watchers Program. Call 337-7157 for this information.

Fertilizer Info – The products I told about last week were only examples of what I've used before, not endorsements of products. We'll talk about fertilizers and manures in future columns.

Stories on Local Nurseries/Plants-people – It's a hectic time for these folks right now, so we may need to wait a few weeks for more stories on great places to visit in Kitsap County. In the meantime you might want to visit the library to check out Stephanie Feeney's two books: "Gardeners on the Go" and "The Northwest Gardeners' Resource Directory." Both books are jammed full of information. "Gardeners on the Go" gives ideas for twenty gardening related tours around Puget Sound. The Gardeners' Resource is a gigantic index for every topic imaginable in the Northwest gardening world.

Plant Sales – The correct dates for the Master Gardener Plant Sale is Friday and Saturday May 12 and 13. It's held at the 4-H Cat Barn at the Kitsap County Fairgrounds from 9 to 3. The North Kitsap Horticulture Plant Sale is Thursday through Saturday, May 4 through 6. Hours are 2:30 to 6 PM on Thursday, 7 AM to 6 PM Friday and 8 AM to 12 PM on Saturday. The NK Greenhouse is on Hostmark Street in Poulsbo. Don't forget the Poulsbo Garden Club Plant Sale Saturday May 6 from 9 AM to 3 PM at Molly Ward Gardens on Big Valley Road in Poulsbo. You'll find very affordable great plants at these sales. Don't miss them.

Send questions or comments to Peg at gardenmentor@yahoo.com or in care of this newspaper.