

Before we begin today's column I have one announcement to make and one frequently asked question to answer.

If you'd like to be part of the Adopt a Beach program and help control *Spartina* in local waters attend a Workshop for our area from 6:30 to 8:30 PM on May 25 at Kitsap Regional Library Main Branch (Sylvan Way) in East Bremerton. For more details call Adopt a Beach at 1-888-57-BEACH or email aab@halcyon.com.

I've received quite a few questions about the Master Gardener Program. MGs are selected mostly for their willingness to volunteer in their community. If you want to be a Master Gardener call Patt Kasa at 337-7224. She'll put your name on a waiting list and in late November she'll mail you a Master Gardener application. If selected for the program, you'll take classes for eight hours every Friday from mid January until mid March. First year MGs give back 50 hours of volunteer time after that it's 25-30 hours per year.

It's a great time of year to plant containers. They come in all shapes and sizes just like plants. There's one to suit every taste. The critical element is a drainage hole, unless you're making a water or bog garden. Select a container you can lift or at least slide around. You'll find many lightweight plastic containers that look like stone and clay.

You'll also need potting soil. You can also mix up your own, but the ready-mixes are reasonably priced and all the work's done for you. Avoid garden soil, it becomes too compact and doesn't drain. Don't use straight compost it could become soggy or be too rich for your plants. Stick to potting soil for greater success.

Plant selection is entirely up to you. Decide if your plants will be growing in sun, shade or partial shade. Read plant tags and select the right plant for the right place. Don't skimp on plants. You'll be amazed by how many plants will fit in a pot. Mix annuals with perennials. In the fall plant the perennials in your garden and they'll continue to grow and bloom for years to come. Many perennials live happily in pots for several seasons.

If you're in Poulsbo take a peek at the wooden barrels along Front Street. The barrels are planted with *Artemisia*, Mint, Sage, Petunias, *Bacopa*, *Coreopsis*, red Zonal Geraniums, *Ajuga*, Ivy, and a tall airy red sedge called *Carex buechananii*. The Geranium and *Coreopsis* are planted in gallon containers inserted into an empty gallon container acting as a sleeve. In the fall both Geranium and *Coreopsis* are removed and replaced with pots of King Alfred Daffodils planted with a layer of Grape Hyacinth (*Muscari armeniacum*) on top. The bulbs remain in the barrels from November through mid-May when they are replaced with the geranium and *coreopsis*. Everything else stays in the pots through all four seasons. November through May instead of petunias the barrels contain pansies.

One of my favorite container plantings was a huge clay pot full of *Acidanthera* (Peacock Orchid). In our climate they're usually considered an annual. I've been searching for two years and finally found the bulbs at Kingston Garden Center but I'm sure if you search you can find them elsewhere. The flowers are white with magenta centers. Each plant is 25-30 inches tall. *Acidanthera* likes full sun. I just potted mine up so it's not too late to find some for yourselves.

Here's a list of plants I found locally to combine in hanging baskets: Amazon Sunset Lotus, *Calibrachoa* (both Terra Cotta and Trailing Blue with small petunia-like flowers), *Rodanthe anthemoides* Paper Baby Daisy (it's very cute), Babylon Verbena Neon Rose (the color says it all), Peter's Gold Carpet (*Bidens ferulifolia*), and Lavender *Bacopa* (*Sutera cordata*). For more information on gardening in containers visit the library or your favorite bookstore; books on the subject are plentiful. Vegetables (especially lettuce, carrots, onions, garlic and tomatoes) are also a great container gardening choice.

For fertilizing use compost, plant stakes, liquid fertilizer, or time-release capsules. A 10-10-10 or 20-20-20 mix is all you'll need. Follow the label directions. Most containers need water every day; morning and night in full sun. Try your luck at container gardening, you'll be glad you did.

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