

I'm singing the praises of several incredible teenagers and their horticulture instructors who showed up in downtown Poulsbo at the very early hour of 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, November 5, to help plant and beautify the barrels lining Front Street, Jensen Way and Anderson Parkway.

Ms. Erin Murphy from Poulsbo Junior High accompanied Raelynn King, Jason Lederer, Tony Lederer, Elizabeth Maier and Holly Jacobsen. Mr. Steve Mahitka brought Kingston Junior High students Lacey Black, Kelsey Vogt and Chrissie Lemay. Mr. John Waller arrived with NK High School students Jacki Brier, Aschlie Mussell, Laura Lederer, Zach Sanford, Ryan Gilboy, Lacey Powell and Tiffany Whisnant. Parent Michael Maier couldn't resist helping out too.

A little over a year ago Karen Suther of Boehms Chocolates and Jim Weiss of Checkers asked me to help plan and coordinate the planting of the barrels in downtown Poulsbo. We enlisted the kids and Mr. Waller at NK High School. Our first planting took place on a pouring wet, windy Sunday in November of 1999. The kids and Mr. Waller helped plant again in May 2000. This fall Ms. Murphy and Mr. Mahitka and their kids from the two junior highs volunteered to help us out each season.

We are also joined by volunteers from the Poulsbo Garden Club, master gardeners and members of the North Kitsap community. Jackie Aitchison, Bill Abbey and Frank McBride have helped us each time. Jim Weiss from Checkers provides the drinks for all the volunteers and Sluys and Liberty Bay Bakeries take turns fueling us with donuts. Andrea Rowe from Marina Market provided a huge thermos of coffee too. This most recent Sunday, Poulsbo Garden Club helpers were: Ellen Ross-Cardoso, Jeanne Whitehead, Venita Caldwell and Paige Lockwood. Judy Jurgens represented the master gardeners. And, of course, Jim, Karen and I cheered them all on. (We did do some serious planting too.) But what really makes the project work is all these enthusiastic kids.

We especially want to thank Brad Watts of Valley Nursery for delivering all our plants at the early hour of 7 a.m. so we could all get planting before the tourists arrived in Poulsbo for the day. Brad said he remembers taking horticulture classes at the high school.

When we change out plants the horticulture classes take care of repotting, dividing and rejuvenation. Last year we planted King Alfred daffodil bulbs and Muscari armeniacum (grape hyacinth) bulbs in pots sunk into the soil in the barrels. These pots were replaced in the spring with pots of geraniums and coreopsis. We'll get two years of blooms from these gallon pots and divide them to make even more plants each year. Extra plants are contributed to the hort classes' plant sales.

The plants will be serving many purposes (and will have many lives). They'll beautify downtown Poulsbo for several seasons and provide the hort classes with lessons on plant culture, division and propagation. Ultimately some of the plants will be used in landscaping at the grade schools in North Kitsap. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

Master Gardeners – If you've signed up to take the master gardener training sessions beginning in mid January start watching your mailboxes for your application forms. Coordinator Patt Kasa said you should receive the application by December first. If you have any questions call Patt at 337-7157.

Garden Clubs – It's often hard to get into the master gardener program but there are numerous opportunities in Kitsap County to learn about gardening. One way is joining the Cross Sound District of Federated Garden Clubs. You can choose from seven clubs: Central Valley, East Bremerton, Bremerton, Belfair, Poulsbo, Sunnyslope and Longlake. To visit a club watch for announcements in this local paper or attend the district meetings at the Westside Improvement Club at 4109 E Street off of National Avenue at 10:00 a.m. the third Monday of the months of February, May, September or November. Their meeting this November 20 is "Holiday for the Birds" in the morning and "Decoration Demonstrations" in the afternoon. Bring a sack lunch. Doris Rogers and Dorothy Martin will tell how to feed the birds living here and/or migrating through this winter. In the afternoon you'll learn how to make seven different decorations for the holidays. Each district meeting also has a flower show. It's a great way to learn about gardening and decorating with plants. Next week we'll talk about other garden clubs.

You can email comments to Peg at gardenmentor@yahoo.com or in care of this newspaper.