

Two quick announcements before we start today's column. Don't forget the Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale at the Fairgrounds this Saturday September 15 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. And, the same day, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. please join me at the Manchester Library for "Dessert in the Garden." I'm the featured speaker and the \$5 donation includes a homemade dessert. Proceeds benefit the library garden. Call 360-871-7820 for tickets.

Last week I stopped at Clear Creek Nursery located at 11688 Clear Creek Road (about a mile north of the Silverdale Mall). I'll be returning again and again. The Olmsted family is creating a place of delight for gardeners and non gardeners alike. Their phone numbers are 360-308-8210, 360-697-1815 and 360-377-0064. Don't miss their "year end" sale on Saturday and Sunday September 29 and 30. They'll be open Saturday night so customers can view the gardens' special lighting.

Newly-expanded eight-acre Clear Creek Nursery was purchased four years ago by Sean and Veronica Olmsted of Olmsted Land Development. Sean's brothers John and Matt are the foreman for the Landscaping side of the business. Veronica manages the nursery and is assisted by a staff of eleven. Staff member Kelly Dawson visits gardeners at their homes for consultations. There are three other Olmsted generations represented in this family-run business: Grandpa Harland, his son Paul, and 17-month-old Zach (Sean and Veronica's son).

Clear Creek runs along the southern border of the nursery. Sean says, "We took out 220 tons of garbage lining the creek." Olmsted doesn't use pesticides or herbicides at the nursery "especially because of the salmon." In October visitors can witness nearly 5,000 chum traveling upstream to spawn. He said, "In the future we're putting an observation bridge across the stream and will have information signs." Olmsted works in partnership with the Suquamish tribe. The tribe monitors the stream, counting and tracking the salmon. "Tell everyone to come see the nursery and the salmon," Sean said.

You'll want to allow ample time to visit the nursery. The grounds are a delight to the senses and spirit. One of Sean's specialties is raising Koi and building water features. If you sit on the stone bench near the pond next to the aquatic and bird houses you'll be joined by about twenty elegantly nature-painted Koi. Two are black with orange bellies and flowing orange-edged fins. Another is bright yellow. They're extremely friendly. You can almost hear them whispering. (Actually they were probably saying, "Feed me please.")

The exquisitely landscaped grounds are available for weddings, celebrations and business functions. The nursery recently hosted a wedding and already has three more booked for 2002. "We'll have a video available soon to help our customers plan their own event here," said Sean. Concealed lighting threaded throughout the grounds and plantings make the area perfect for evening functions too.

A house on the grounds is being converted into a gift shop with an adjoining meeting room with a stone floor and a kitchen. The space will hold forty and Sean hopes garden clubs will use it for their meetings. In the next year two more greenhouses will be added. One will house tropical plants. Additionally, peacocks stroll the grounds adding to the park-like atmosphere.

A wisteria-lavished arbor leads strolling visitors along a flagstone path up to the edge of Clear Creek. I wandered up the path and turned around to be amazed by a gorgeous ten-tiered, eighty-five-foot-long waterfall. Sean said it took ten days to install the water feature with a rise of twenty-seven feet. Water features are his forte'. He's been building and creating appealing landscapes since the age of sixteen. Sean always wanted a nursery to house all the plants he needs. "Our plants are very affordable, to landscapers and home gardeners," said Olmsted.

If you've been searching for flagstone (or any stone for that matter) you'll love all the choices available at the nursery. One variety is river stone with fossils in it. Another variety is celadon green. His crew also builds appealing wooden arbors, railings and decks. Olmsted says their landscape design style has been called "Northwest Asian." His overall philosophy is to "make my products and plants affordable to landscapers and gardeners."

I asked him if being so successful at a young age ever made him worry. He said, "Until I had a seventeen-month old kid I didn't get scared about much." I'll bet at the age of sixteen Sean and Veronica's son Zach will be working side by side with all the other Olmsteds creating incredible landscaped gardens.

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