DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 07-10-02) , ©2005

Many gardeners like to create art in their gardens. I thought today you'd enjoy ideas for building rebar and copper pipe trellises.

The rebar trellis is really a tripod made with four rebar pieces. (Does that make it a quarterpod?) It might be more accurately called a teepee for roses, or beans or any tall or climbing plant. I saw one created by Master Gardener Henri-Ann Holt and her husband when their beautiful garden was featured at the South Kitsap Gifts of the Garden tour.

The Holts had a tall yellow rose bush. The rains caused it to droop and flop a bit. Rebar was the solution. Holts took four twelve-foot long pieces of rebar and pushed them into the ground several inches, gathering the tops together making a teepee shape. Henri-Ann then used flexible quarter-inch copper tubing decoratively wrapped a few times around the top of the teepee and meandered and draped the tubing in and out of the tripod for added ornamental flair. The effect of the trellis was striking but simply elegant.

Last year a group of us garden gals gathered to create copper-pipe trellises. We got the idea from Black and Decker's "The Complete Guide to Creative Landscapes" published by Creative Publishing (ISBN 0-86573-579-4) $24.95. I personally plan to work my way through the whole book over the years creating great things to put in our garden.

Black & Decker's example shows directions and diagrams for a curved free standing trellis and a peaked-roof-shaped arbor. You can draw your own diagram to suit your particular needs. (That's what I did.)

Next you'll select half-inch pipe for your trellis. When calculating the footage remember to allow for the fittings needed between each length of copper pipe to form the trellis framework. If you know a plumber he can show you how to cut the pipe and what tools to use. I also found pipe pre-measured and cut in the hardware and building supply stores.

You'll also need elbows and tees to form angles and corners. Some of the elbows are 90-degree angles. You'll be using the geometry and algebra you thought you'd never ever use. The only other item needed is two-part epoxy glue for gluing copper pipe. Or, if you're really handy, weld the pieces together.

This same idea works with plastic pipe too. Plastic pipe comes in both black and white. Some plastic pipe can be painted. Ask your friendly hardware helper for advice. Remember you'll be using plastic pipe epoxy instead.

It's more fun to work with friends to create these works of art. You'll get inspiration from each other. We laid our trellises out flat on a deck putting paper underneath the angles and fittings where we'd be gluing. This protected the deck from damage. We worked as a team with one person gluing and one fitting the pieces together. We were done in a

relatively short time. The hardest part was waiting for it all to dry. Follow the glue container's directions. And, wear gloves to protect your hands.
The final step was buying two-foot long pieces of rebar to pound into the ground to slide the trellis pipe onto, for stability. The very final step was to plant vines or roses on the trellis. I chose variegated honeysuckle and clematis. My sister, Jackie, propped a climbing rose on hers. Both look equally great.

You and your friends can make these trellises for between twenty to thirty dollars. "It's a good thing," as the Martha likes to say.

I'll close today's column by reminding you that the Award-Winning Compost Queens will have a compost class tomorrow night, Thursday July 11, from 6:30 to 8:30 at the Raab Park Community Garden in Poulsbo. Call 337-5777 or 800-825-4940 with any questions.

Contact Peg with questions or comments at gardenmentor@yahoo.com or in care of this newspaper.