

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 7-09-03 and Bremerton Patriot) , ©2005

Next time your travels take you near Fourth or Fifth and Warren in Bremerton notice the wonderful perennial plantings surrounding the KPS Building. The KPS crew of Nancy Koch, Vivien Gabriel, Rita Hoak, Teresa Haigh-Braget and Diane DiGleria have lovingly and enthusiastically created a place of delight and inspiration for their fellow workers and for visitors to the building.

Diane DiGleria is the mastermind behind the design of each mini garden flowing around the building. She says her fellow gardeners have “gotten used to me being the little dictator. I welcome all suggestions. But, bottom line is I end up making the final decision because we’re all comfortable with that. Our team is wonderful and everyone is so hard working. We tend the garden before and after work and on our lunch hours. It’s all volunteer.”

When KPS moved into the building the plantings were starting to die and were composed mostly of juniper tams. Juniper eventually dies back in our climate so KPS decided to enlist the enthusiasm of their employees making creating the garden a company wide effort. Diane says, “The first thing we did was dig out the junipers and bring in lots of compost. We had a big May day event where everyone pitched in and started planting.”

They planted one bed with perennials and woody shrubs to fill in quickly using cranesbill geranium, Centranthus ruber (Jupiter’s Beard), barberry, white nicotiana (an annual), sprawling blue campanula, rose, pink and white campanula, sedum, carex, Arabis (rockcress), Cerastium tomentosum (Snow-in-Summer), Helictotrichon sempervirens (Blue Oat Grass), and Blue Fescue (Festuca). “The first plants grew so well we were able to divide them and donate them to our company wide auction,” said Diane.

The beds on the Fourth Street side are full of herbs. The team planted rosemary, fennel, grasses, chives, catmint, lambs ear, red bee balm, lemon balm, sorrel, pineapple mint, sage, fever few, yarrow, purple sage, Russian sage and then blended in sedums and grasses for more color and texture. “It’s so packed we only have to weed once or twice a year,” Diane explained. Also found in this long planting area are four kinds of lavender, mugwort, astrantia and more blue fescue and carex. “When we first planted the mugwort I got a lot of calls saying, ‘What’s that weed?’” she added.

The project has been a “great learning experience” for the group. Most joined the gardening committee to learn more about plants. “I am so proud of us. The project has been amazing at every stage,” Diane said. “The plantings surround a professional building but when you step outside to the gardens it’s a feel of your own back yard.”

On Warren Avenue passers by will see lamium, hebe, leopard’s bane, autumn joy sedum, Phygelius (Cape Fuchsia) ‘Devil’s Tears’ scarlet with a yellow throat, light pink Japanese anemone, Snowball Viburnum and more grasses and perennials. “We wanted plants that people would walk by and touch,” Diane explained. “The sales staff window looks out on

the garden and when we're moving plants around they come out and say, where are you going with our plants?"

The most recent planting is a bed near the main entrance. The concrete container is on a diagonal and the area gets full sun and is quite dry. The group wanted plants that would have interest all year long. They chose: Witch Hazel, Sarcococco ruscifolia, lady's mantle, a white and yellow green striped grass, chicken and hens Sempervivum, striped saxifrage and Persicaria. If you plan to put Persicaria in your own garden be wary, it has an enticing mottled maroon color and interesting form but it's related to knotweed (think invasive Japanese knotweed). Persicaria is perfect for the space in which it's planted where it can't spread.

Every time you drive by the KPS building I hope you'll take pleasure and inspiration from this spot of beauty. Diane is also a Master Composter and she says the secret to the garden is "lots of compost." The garden is a testament to good soil and good soul. Thanks Diane and gardening gals for the spot of beauty you've created on Warren and Fourth/Fifth Streets.

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