

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 7-16-03 What's Up and Bremerton Patriot) , ©2005

I love this time of year because my garden is so profuse with bloom I'm able to go out early in the morning and gather up bouquets to bring inside and enough to share with friends. Annie at Winslow Hardware on Bainbridge Island asked me to spread the word about their service to the community. Everyone on the Island is encouraged to bring their cut flowers to Winslow Hardware where the women of the Interfaith Council will pick them up, gather them into bouquets and then deliver the gifts of colorful flowers to local nursing homes and to shut-ins. For further details call Winslow Hardware and Mercantile at 206-842-3101.

If you have extra flowers to share with your community please call any local nursing or retirement home and ask to speak to the activity director. Talk to the activity director and ask how you can spread flowers of cheer at their retired residences and nursing homes. Why not call the hospital near you and see if they'd like some flowers to cheer the patients. Always check first because some people have allergies and sometimes the hospital or home has restrictions on flowers.

I combined blue Hydrangeas, Red Lucifer Crocosmia, 'Mont Blanc' Lily, deep purple Hebe and both yellow and deep pink Yarrow into bouquets for my home and the Extension Office. The best time to cut flowers is early in the morning. Take a bucket full of water and as soon as you cut the flowers plunge their stems into the bucket. You'll cut the stems again as you arrange the flowers into a vase filled with tepid water.

Even though I appreciate an unopened rosebud it's best to cut roses when the bud is just beginning to open. Some roses refuse to open when cut in the bud stage. Speaking of roses Nancy Ribeiro on Bainbridge Island planted Ajuga reptans (Carpet Bugleweed) as a ground cover under her roses. Nancy's roses have no sign of black spot or any other disease. But of course Olaf's expertise and hers in plant diseases and conditions might have something to do with that. In talking with fellow gardeners who served as docents at Ribeiro's garden on the Bainbridge in Bloom Tour we felt maybe the denseness of the Ajuga prevents any fungus spores from popping up onto the rose stems.

This time of year is a great time to visit friends' gardens. Get together with some of your gardening buddies and plan a progressive luncheon. Have coffee and sweets at one home, a salad lunch at another and finish up with dessert at a third. You'll get inspiration from one another and even feel good about your garden when seen through the eyes of someone else.

WSU Master Gardener Elizabeth Vroom and her husband Herman (they're the owners of FayLee Greenhouse on Bainbridge Island told me about an extremely informative website. Visit <http://plants.usda.gov> to explore a huge data bank about plants. You can look up any plant and see how invasive it could be in your garden. Invasive weeds are listed and illustrated for every state.

If you like to receive email newsletters you might want to subscribe to Garden Guides a bi-weekly newsletter giving vegetable, herb and ornamental plant information, tips and projects. The site is written and maintained by Jackie Carroll. To subscribe visit <http://www.gophercentral.com/sub/sub-garden.html>. If you'd like to contact Jackie Carroll for information send her an email at info@gardenguides.com.

I really shouldn't promote myself in my column but I'm going to today. Please join me on Saturday July 19 (JOE I'LL CALL IN THE TIME TO YOU I FORGET WHEN IT IS) at Savage Plants on Bond Road in Kingston. I'll be talking about carefree plants and stress-free gardening. I'll give you all kinds of tips and be there to answer questions and help you solve your gardening dilemmas.

Contact Peg with questions or comments in care of this newspaper or at ptillery@co.kitsap.wa.us or gardenmentor@yahoo.com