

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 8-11-04) Black Gold Manure Spreader, ©2005

The Kitsap County Fair is fast approaching. Mark your calendars for August 25 through 29 (Wednesday through Sunday). If you have prize vegetables, fruit or flowers or maybe just regular vegetables, fruits and flowers you might want to try entering them in the fair.

WSU Master Gardener Donna Alber is Open Class Horticulture Superintendent and every year she and her crew of Master Gardeners are at the fair starting on Sunday, on sign in day (this year it's Monday August 23) and continue through the run of the Fair. The WSU Master Gardeners and community volunteers under Donna's guidance create displays and help the public with their entries. You can pick up a Premium Book at the Kitsap County Parks and Rec Office on Fair Grounds Road to read the rules and you'll be amazed at how easy it is to enter your prize-grown produce in the Fair. Just think you might even win a ribbon. Each year there are a few unusual categories too. Make sure you read the rules carefully so you don't get disqualified.

Open Class Horticulture is housed in President's Hall. During the Fair you'll also find WSU Master Gardeners there all day to answer your gardening questions. The WSU Extension Tent is across from President's Hall. Come visit Extension volunteers and staff. They'll provide advice on clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, safe food preparation and preservation, sustainable agriculture, forestry, Noxious Weeds, composting, horticulture, 4H and a host of other life-skills. Volunteers on duty at the Extension tent will include Clothing and Textile Advisors, Food Safety Advisors, Weed Advisors, Master Composters and Master Gardeners. Master Composter Becky Croston will have her famous worm bin on display. You can stop by to learn how to make one inexpensively to suit your worm composting needs. The ever-popular "Germ City" will be at the Extension Tent this year too.

Vermicompost has been called "black gold" at times, but the Kitsap County Conservation District has a "black gold" spreading machine on a much bigger scale. Director Carla Pizzano asked me to tell everyone to come see them at the fair. They're located right outside the Milking Barn and they'll tell you all about turning animal manure into compost. In addition the Conservation District is having a Raffle for an 8-cubic foot capacity manure spreader. The spreader can be pulled with a lawnmower or ATV. It will discharge manure at ¼-inch to ½-inch depth. It's made of low-maintenance aluminum and is valued at \$560. Tickets are five dollars and proceeds from the raffle will support district programs and activities. You can also purchase tickets at Sack's Feed and Garden in Kingston (360-297-2443) and Stroh's Feed and Garden Supplies in Gig Harbor (253-858-2051).

If you have cows or horses and need advice on how to cope with all the manure generated you will want to contact the Conservation District for advice. If you're already composting your manure and want to give it away you'll want to contact Carla to find out how to get on the manure resource list. Carla says, "The benefits of managing livestock waste on individual farms in Kitsap County include farm and neighborhood aesthetics, a

return to slow release of nutrients to the soil for the long term health of the pasture grasses, and are a great way to show that farming activities are compatible with the protection of natural resources. The Conservation District encourages livestock owners to compost livestock manure and apply the resulting “black gold” back on the land.”

The manure spreader holds three to four stalls worth of composted material and spreads it in minutes. Help support the educational programs offered by the Conservation District. Purchase your raffle tickets now or at the fair. The drawing is Sunday August 29 at 2 p.m. at the Fairgrounds at the Conservation Booth. For more information on the Conservation District visit their website at www.kitsapcd.org or call 360-337-7172. You can also email KCD@wa.nacdnet.org.

Remember while you're in your garden looking for the perfect specimens for the Fair to pick and harvest some of the bounty of your garden to donate to our local Foodbanks. You could also still plant some seeds for “winter vegetable” harvesting beginning in October and sometimes carrying into spring. Renee's Garden 888-880-7228 and website www.reneesgarden.com and Nichols Garden Nursery www.nicholsgardennursery.com 541-928-9280 have great seeds to plant now for winter harvesting. Check it out.

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