

MASTER GARDENERS KITSAP COUNTY – SPECIAL FOR SENIOR LIVING
By Peg Tillery (on 4-7-04), ©2005

Governor Gary Locke has declared April 18 through 24 as Washington State Master Gardener Week. Our Kitsap County Master Gardeners number 242 and you'll see them all over the county in various venues helping home gardeners achieve gardening success. The WSU Master Gardener Program is a volunteer program. Last year volunteers contributed more than 13,000 hours volunteering in Kitsap County alone.

Master Gardeners in South Kitsap have been working with the residents at Retsil Veterans Home in two courtyard areas. The home was undergoing an extensive remodel and the vets were watching all their surroundings being demolished in the process. Only two courtyards remained where the vets could enjoy gardening. The Master Gardeners held a plant sale in 2003 and raised over \$5000 to landscape two inner courtyards at the home. They were trying to raise \$500 and now they have enough funding to keep going for several years.

Vets who had been staying mostly in their rooms came out into the sunlight and began gardening side by side with the Master Gardeners. The vets adopted several planter boxes constructed by Master Gardener Jackie Young. The planter boxes were planted up with tomatoes and other tasty vegetables delightedly devoured by the vets later in the summer and fall. This year the vets and Master Gardeners will take a field trip to select the plants for the containers. Veterans even pooled some of their own limited funds to purchase a small water feature. Another vet who collects rocks donated some of his stash to decorate the two water features they and the Master Gardeners created in the two courtyards. Master Gardeners volunteer at the home on Mondays and both the vets and the volunteers are enjoying growing and gardening together. They're often joined by youth from Kitsap County's Alternatives to Detention Program and by volunteers from the Navy.

Anna Smith Garden on Tracyton Boulevard is the oldest Master Gardener project in Kitsap County. This demonstration and 4H Youth Garden celebrated its fifteenth year in 2003. Master Gardeners are on site working at Anna Smith every Wednesday from 9:30 a.m. to noon. On Wednesdays at Anna Smith you can also visit the diagnostic clinic from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. where gardeners can bring sick plants or come to ask gardening questions. A 4H Club learns at the garden and tends several of the raised bed areas. You'll see the fruits of their labors at the Kitsap Fair each year. The Master Gardeners are currently creating a Native Plant trail where people can come to learn more about growing Native Plants. The first Sunday of April through October from 1-3 p.m. free classes are held on a variety of gardening topics. No reservations are necessary. Parking is available along Tracyton Boulevard and in the parking lot at the corner of Tracyton Boulevard and Fairgrounds Road.

Moving farther North Master Gardeners work with youth and families at the Raab Park Community Garden in Poulsbo on Caldart Street. The Raab Park Youth Garden has activities and classes for families every Monday from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. from the last

week in June through the last week in August every summer. The Youth Garden also features the most extensive home compost demonstration site so far in Kitsap County. Next to the Youth Garden is the Raab Park P-Patch Garden where individuals and groups lease a P-Patch for \$25 (10 foot by 10 foot) and \$35 (20 foot by 20 foot) per year through Poulsbo Parks and Recreation. Master Gardeners are site coordinators and they also conduct classes on growing vegetables and fruit.

At Northwest College of Arts in Suquamish the Master Gardeners plan, create and tend a sunny walled-garden featuring a greenhouse, cold-frame, composting demonstrations, kiwis, vines, herbs, grasses, perennials, sedum, numerous other plants of every shape and variety and also an enabled gardening demonstration area. Compost tea is sold at the garden the first and third Saturdays of each month April through September. Free classes on a wide variety of garden-related topics are held the last Saturday of each month April through July and September and October. No reservations are required.

Master Gardeners on Bainbridge Island have created a vegetable and fruit garden on the west side of Helpline House. You'll find Master Gardeners on site many Saturdays and Sundays tending the garden and classes are held several times during the growing season. All the produce grown is donated to Helpline House. It's a great place to visit to see how to grow your own vegetable and fruit in a small space.

Gardening season is upon us and you'll see Master Gardeners at informational tables all over the county answering questions about gardening and presenting educational materials. You'll also find Master Gardeners volunteering at the Kitsap County Fair all week long in the Horticulture area of President's Hall. In addition MGs volunteer at Guillemot Cove, for Kitsap County Parks and Recreation, in Native Plant Stewardship activities, and at many local parks, preserves and schools. For more information on the WSU Master Gardener Volunteer Program send an email to ptillery@co.kitsap.wa.us or call the WSU Extension Office at 360-337-7157.