

One recent Sunday my husband Pat and I looked out to the driveway and a lady was getting out of her car. She went to her trunk, took out a shovel, picked up pruning shears and walked up to our door while putting on her gloves. When I opened the door she said, "Hi I'm Jan Harrison and I'm here to dig up your forsythia." I said, "What address were you looking for?" It turns out she needed our neighbors next door. My husband and I were glad we were home or we would have been forsythia-less because it turns out our forsythia is probably easier to dig. After a few hours I realized I'd let a column opportunity escape. So, dear readers, here's the rest of the story.

Jan Harrison has a passion for plants and for building what she calls "goodwill gardens." Everywhere she's lived – the San Francisco Bay area, Michigan, Kingston – she's shared her plants with other gardeners and delightedly received gifts of plants from other gardeners. She feels she inherited her love of gardening from her grandfather who "could make a fencepost bloom."

Our new neighbor Kathleen Sullivan placed an add in the base newspaper "Forsythia - free to a good home – you dig." Jan works for Lockheed Martin on base and she answered the ad. Kathleen is trying to rescue some of her plants living in the way of a new deck. Alas, the forsythia was too old and too deep-rooted to move, but Jan and Kathleen took starts from the parent plants. Each woman has promised to give the other some of the plantlets when they root.

One of Jan's techniques when planning out her gardens is to house her collected plants in buckets and containers until she's thoroughly studied the sun exposure for her new gardens. Her plant wish list for her current home includes roses, but she wants to build trellises first before going on a quest to find the roses. She says, "I shop with my nose. I love fragrant plants." When she lived in California she shared all her irises with neighbors enjoying the fragrance as she went on her walks through the neighborhood. Her rambunctious sons as they played would accidentally knock the tips off plants and shrubs. Jan would use these pieces to make new plants for her garden and for sharing with other gardeners.

Jan said, "My mom's a gardener too. But she lived in Michigan and didn't know what the Pacific Northwest was like. Many years ago when I moved to Kingston she sent me some vinca packaged in a 'cow pie.' The package arrived on a Friday at the Kingston Post Office. Boy were they glad to see me on Monday."

My niece Kelly Gyllensten who's renovating a garden has been digging up extra plants from my garden and her mom's garden. When I told her about Jan, she said, "Tell her I've got irises she can come dig up." I've duly passed that message on to Jan. This is the great thing about gardeners – we all love to share our plants. Thank you Jan Harrison for sharing your delightful story with me and keep on digging up and rescuing those plants.

If you don't have fertile ground to dig up plants from others, you can purchase an abundance of very affordable plants at all the sales coming up in April and May. The proceeds from the sales benefit local scholarships, educational outreach and garden projects all over Kitsap County. Here's a few I know of so far:

Kitsap Dahlia Society, Saturday and Sunday April 9 and 10, at South Kitsap Mall during Mall hours. Central Valley Garden Club, Friday and Saturday April 29 and 30, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 10200 Central Valley Road. Long Lake Garden Club, Saturday April 30, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. across from Kitsap Bank on Bay Street in Port Orchard. North Kitsap High School Horticulture Site and Kingston Horticulture Site on Thursday and Friday, May 5 and 6, during school hours. Kitsap Master Gardeners Plant Sale at Kitsap Fairgrounds (Cat Barn) Friday and Saturday May 6 and 7, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Evergreen Garden Club, Saturday May 7, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Pope Resources Center in Belfair (by Olympic Savings Bank). Poulsbo Garden Club, Saturday May 7 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the corner of Highway 305 and Hostmark at the Bad Blanch Furniture Center.