

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 3-15-06) Formosan Termites and Upcoming Classes  
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I'll start today's column with the subject of Formosan termites. An email is being circulated faster than any of the "urban myths" I've received so far. This one is growing rapidly through the gardening world. Even the Garden Writers Association members received the email warning about Formosan termites. The rumor goes something like this, "Don't purchase packaged mulch from Lowe's and Home Depot, because the woody debris left from hurricanes Katrina and Rita is being turned into mulch and shipped all over the United States."

Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott, Horticulturist, from WSU Extension, Puyallup, recommends reading the information at [http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/bl\\_mulch\\_termites.htm](http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/bl_mulch_termites.htm). Garden Writers Association recommended the following websites for information:  
[http://www.nationalplantboard.org/la\\_mulch.html](http://www.nationalplantboard.org/la_mulch.html)  
<http://www.snopes.com/inboxer/household/termites.asp>  
<http://agnews.tamu.edu/dailynews/stories/ENTO/Mar0306a.htm>  
[http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/environment/insects/Termites/formosan\\_tern](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/environment/insects/Termites/formosan_tern)

The counties in Louisiana where Formosan termites abound have a state and federal mandated quarantine where no wood debris can be transported out of the counties. The process is being carefully monitored and tested daily. The debris is being buried in landfills. Additionally any of the materials under suspicion are treated with insecticide to prevent the spread of the termites. University experts from Louisiana and Texas are saying the composting process reaching temperatures of 120 degrees Fahrenheit will kill the insects. According to information from the aforementioned websites, Lowe's and Home Depot have issued statements saying they will not and have not purchased mulch products from the regions struck by hurricanes Katrina or Rita.

The United States Mulch and Soil Council says, "Examine the packaging of bagged mulch. Look for the MSC certification statement and symbol. MSC says, "Buying mulch from reliable vendors is the best way assure the quality of garden mulch."

I could not find any sources that were totally definitive, nor who said it would not be a problem in some areas of the country. But, the information did seem to say it was a very slight problem. Our local Kitsap County nurseries and landscape supply businesses use products from local sources. When in doubt about a product ask questions. If the businesses can't supply you with information you may want to hop in your car and drive on down the road.

Don't miss the Home Builders Home and Garden Show at the Fairgrounds March 17, 18 and 19. Friday hours are 2 p.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday is 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday is 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. General admission is \$5, seniors and teens \$4 and children under 12 are free. The show fills up the Pavilion, Presidents Hall and the Van Zee Building. Master Gardeners will be in the mezzanine (up the stairs) in the Pavilion, you can look for a

designer, purchase nursery items, home décor and remodel materials and much much more. Speakers and demonstrations will be available too.

If you miss the HBA show, you still have another chance to get a home and garden fix. Attend the Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce annual Home and Garden Show at Woodward Middle School, 9125 Sportsman Club Road from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday March 25. Admission is \$3 and children 12 and under are free.

If you love to grow vegetables and want inspiration head over to the Sylvan Way Kitsap Regional Library Branch on Monday March 27 at 6:30 p.m. BUGS (Bremerton Urban Garden Society) is hosting Betsy Wittig who will talk about growing potatoes, garlic and onions. Jean Schanen will give information and tips on vegetable seedlings. This workshop is free and BUGS members want everyone to come out to learn about growing healthy, organic produce.