

DIG THIS by Peg Tillery (for 3-14-07) Plants for Early Spring © 2007

If you grow food in your gardens head out to many of our local nurseries. They're already selling, peas, parsley, lettuce, blueberries and other plants to provide good things to eat. Many nurseries also have seed potatoes and onion sets available. You can also start peas from seed now. Try your hand at chives and radishes too. Kids have great and nearly instant success planting chives and radishes. A little wheat grass planted for family kitties will work too.

Parsley, lettuce, chives, radishes and peas will grow happily in containers if your gardening space is limited. Many gardeners are growing their veggies and fruits in amongst regular landscape plantings. You can find small blueberry bushes developed to live in containers on a patio or deck. Check with your favorite nursery person for advice on which varieties they especially like or recommend.

If you'd like to learn more about starting vegetables from seed, attend the BUGS (Bremerton Urban Garden Society) class on April 2 at 6:30 p.m. at the Sylvan Way Kitsap Regional Library. Jean Schanen a consummate vegetable gardener will inspire you to start plants from seed. She'll show you how to expand your range of choices. Schanen is known in Bremerton for growing abundant food on her small lot. She even utilizes space on the roof areas of her property.

If you purchase your food from our local farmers' markets mid-April is just around the corner. You'll also find that many of our local farmers have CSA subscriptions available. CSA is Community Sustained Agriculture. Pheasant Field Farms on Clearcreek Road and Persephony Farms in Kingston are examples of CSAs. For a list of local farmers markets and CSA farms in your area contact the Extension Office at 360-337-7157. The Master Gardener information booth at the Homebuilders Show at the Fairgrounds on March 16 through 18 will have free booklets available for pickup listing the local farmers markets and CSA farms.

Last weekend I visited Valley Nursery looking for early spring color. The nursery was festooned with sprightly tete-a-tete daffodils, rainbow hued primroses, flowering yellow witch hazel and bright yellow forsythia. But, the plants that struck my fancy the most were several choices of conifers, bred to grow in containers and suitable for growth in a small yard where space is limited. Valley has diminutive varieties of cryptomeria and incense cedar. I also found evergreen clematis with pink blossoms and two evergreen hydrangeas with quite unusual leaves. One variety had fairly large shiny green fairly large oval leaves; the other had leaves reminiscent of camellias. I promise in my next column to tell you more about these varieties of conifers, clematis and evergreen hydrangeas.

Speaking of Valley Nursery, the nursery is celebrating its 35 year anniversary this year. The kickoff begins on March 24 with a live radio broadcast of Ciscoe Morris. The next day, March 25, Ciscoe will be at Kiana Lodge for a \$40 luncheon to benefit Martha and Mary Care Center in Poulsbo. To purchase tickets call Rob Gelder at 360-779-7500.