

Scoop o' Dirt

Yakima County Master Gardener News

February 2025



Annual Soup and Awards Luncheon

When: Wednesday, February 26th at Noon

Where: Ahtanum Youth Park Activities Building (not the Red Barn)

What: Enjoy a delicious soup buffet, followed by a presentation of awards to deserving Master Gardeners. Foundation will supply everything! Please join us for an always fun event. All Master Gardeners are invited.

Awards include intern certification, longevity awards, hourly pins, special effort awards, and “-of the Year” awards. It’s always a day of celebration.



Gilbert Plascencia– 2023 Yakima County MG of the Year



Margaret Morris– 2023 Ed Lacrosse Award nominee



**2023 15-year Longevity Award winners
Gary, Karen O., Carol B., John B., MaryLou**

Reminder! Foundation/ Program Meetings

**Wednesday, February
19th at 10:30 at the
Ahtanum Youth Park
Activity Center**

Save The Date for our Annual Garden Tour!

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE SUMMER

The 2025 Master Gardener Garden Tour has been set for **June 17, 2025**. We will be touring the gardens of:

Laura Willett

Reggie Sanderson

Diana Pieti

Amber Knox

Marguerite Kirby

Mark Your Calendars for this Special Event

Program Coordinator

Corner

A big shout-out to the Yakima County Master Gardener program and kudos to **Debra Kroon** for writing a winning Impact Report! We made it into the **2023 WSU Extension Master Gardener Program Annual Report** under *Water Conservation*. This article, as well as portions of our reports, are shared at many levels and in many ways. Hurray! Hurray!

To read the full annual report, you can find it [here](#).

WSU Extension Master Gardener Impact Report 2023

Water Conservation

ISSUE

Water is a finite resource, and clean, drinkable water is especially precious. With increasingly erratic and drier weather patterns, it's crucial to consider potential droughts and water shortages. Home landscapes can significantly increase water consumption, potentially tripling the average homeowner's usage during the growing season. The EPA estimates that residential outdoor water use across the U.S. accounts for nearly 8 billion gallons of water daily, primarily for landscape irrigation. Implementing water-conserving design principles and efficient irrigation systems is essential for effective water conservation.

CONSEQUENCES

Overusing water can lead to several significant consequences. Environmental impact is one of the primary concerns, as excessive water use can deplete natural water sources, harm ecosystems, and reduce biodiversity. Economic costs also rise due to the increased need for water treatment and infrastructure maintenance. Additionally, agricultural productivity may suffer, as water scarcity can lead to reduced crop yields and increased food prices. Finally, social implications include potential conflicts over water resources and the displacement of communities due to water

shortages. Addressing these issues requires sustainable water management practices and conservation efforts.

OUTREACH

- 2,947 adults and 715 youth learned that water is a finite resource that needs conserving for the benefits of people, agriculture and the environment.
- Extension Master Gardener volunteers answered 3,138 water conservation questions from gardeners who attended *Ask a Master Gardener* plant clinics.
- 93 classes on water conservation and strategies for saving water in the home landscape were taught.
- 21 demonstrations were held to show attendees strategies for saving water in the home landscape.
- 18 hands-on workshops were held where attendees practiced water conserving gardening and irrigation principles.
- 25 field days allowed participants to see water conserving principles at work.
- 75 demonstration gardens showcasing waterwise gardening practices.



REPORTED IMPACTS

Of those surveyed:

- 39% adapted their home landscape to local conditions to conserve water.
- 42% reported beginning or increasing the use of organic mulches to conserve water.
- 45% reported maintaining turf grass only where practical or needed.



PUBLIC VALUE

WSU Extension Master Gardeners improve water conservation efforts among gardeners by teaching practical methods to save water.



By learning universal principles for water conservation, individuals are empowered to adopt sustainable practices that contribute to the preservation of water resources, ensuring environmental sustainability and resilience for future generations.

DOING OUR PART

The **WSU Extension Yakima County Master Gardener Program's** demonstration gardens, including one at Ahtanum Youth Park, faced irrigation challenges due to their desert location and outdated system. To address this, a team of volunteers converted three beds to native plantings, collaborating with the Heritage Garden Program (HGP). Over

18 months, two beds were certified as Heritage Gardens, showcasing water-efficient gardening.

Visitors can now see native plants with tags and signs provided by HGP. Master Gardeners learned about native plants' growth patterns and companion planting, adjusting plant placements to optimize growth. Two beds are now in their third year, demonstrating successful adaptation to desert conditions.



incorporating them into Master Gardener training. By 2021, they partnered with SpokaneScape employees to offer classes at city libraries, and in 2023, they recruited additional green industry partners and expanded classes to county libraries. In total, 553 residents attended 16 classes across seven locations. Additionally, in 2021, EMGs and SpokaneScape staff designed and built a WaterWise Demonstration and Research Garden at the Spokane County WSU Extension office, transforming a neglected area into a site for tours and hands-on demonstrations. In 2023, 49 volunteers contributed 330 hours of labor, valued at \$10,494, to maintain the garden and conduct mulch performance research.

The **WSU Extension Spokane County Master Gardener** volunteers have collaborated with the City of Spokane Water Stewardship program (SpokaneScape) since 2018 to educate residents on reducing water usage in their landscapes. Although the partnership paused during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has since expanded its outreach.

Volunteers began teaching WaterWise and SpokaneScape landscaping classes in 2018,



Kudos and Thanks!

What a wonderful surprise and honor bestowed on our team of Master Gardener Tree Data Collection members. At the recent Yakima Area Arboretum annual board meeting, the team was honored with an Affiliated Members Award, recognizing their efforts to enhance the YAA's education mission. In addition to a certificate, the team was presented with a lovely wooden basket with an inscribed quote from John Muir, "When one tugs on a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world." Thank you, team, for representing the Yakima County Master

Gardeners and working in such a positive collaboration with our sister organization. Team members are Kelli Barton, Camille Smith, Sue Schauer, Barb Schmitt, Laura Willett, Carrie Chicken, Annette Olson, and Shelly Oshie. Additionally, Karl Graf received the Rose Druse Award that reads, "In grateful recognition of your outstanding contributions to the enhancement of the Yakima Area Arboretum." Joshua Milnes, WSU Extension entomologist, received the Education Award for his enthusiastic participation in YAA's children's nature education. All well-deserved awards.



Award certificate presented to Yakima County Master Gardeners. Photo by Annette Olson.



Wooden basket presented to Tree Data Collection team. Photo by Annette Olson.

2025 MG Enrichment Classes

| Date | Time | Topic | Presenter | Location |
|--------|------------|--|---|----------------------|
| Feb 5 | 12-1:15 | Plant Problems A | Kim Foster/Andrea Almayer, YC Master Gardeners and Clinic Co-leads | Arboretum |
| | 1:30-2:30 | Xerces Talk: Plant a Garden to Raise Insects | Julie Banken, Douglas-Chelan Master Gardener & Xerces Speaker | |
| Feb 12 | 12-1:15 | Plant Problems B | Kim Foster/Andrea Altmayer, YC Master Gardeners and Clinic Co-leads | Arboretum |
| | 1:30-2:30 | Native Plants | Nola Forster/Thess Fenner, Kittitas County Master Gardeners | |
| Feb 15 | 9:30-11:15 | Basic Seed Saving | Phyllis Pugnetti | Arboretum |
| Feb 26 | 12-2 | Awards: Soup & Celebration | Hospitality Team: Reggie Sanderson & Mary Kearney | Ahtanum Activity Ctr |

Demonstration Garden

It's Party Time!

We are having a Garden Party to celebrate twenty years of dedication to the Ahtanum Demonstration Garden! Take a moment right now and put Saturday, June 14th from 10:00 to 2:30 on your calendars. There are just a few of us who have begun a list of possibilities and we want everyone of you to jump in with yours. Our annual Children's Day will be a part, so stay tuned for those leaders to share their ideas and needs. One of our regular garden classes will be included, too. We plan on some demonstrations and fun activities. An invitation has begun to be created, which you will see it soon. We will post something weekly with John to keep everyone in the loop. There will be opportunities for CE or volunteer hours, per Patty's approval, for much of the planning, as well as for much of what we do that day. What great ideas do you have? What would you like to do to be a part of the celebration? Please email me and let's talk about the food, fun, and frolic we will have that day.

~ Diana Pieti
dianapieti509@aol.com

Right photo: Fencing in the Children's Garden.

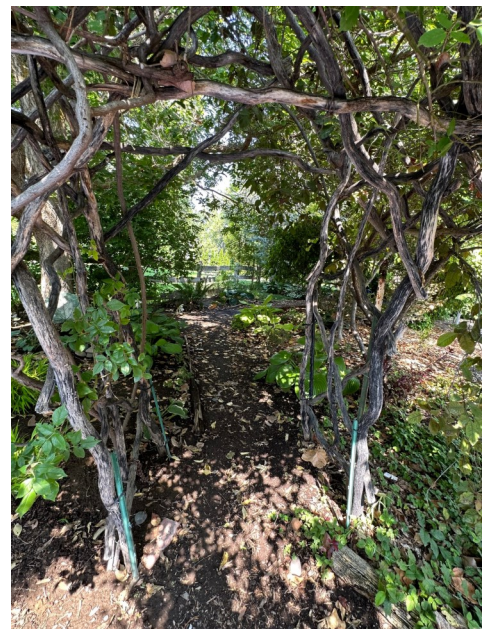
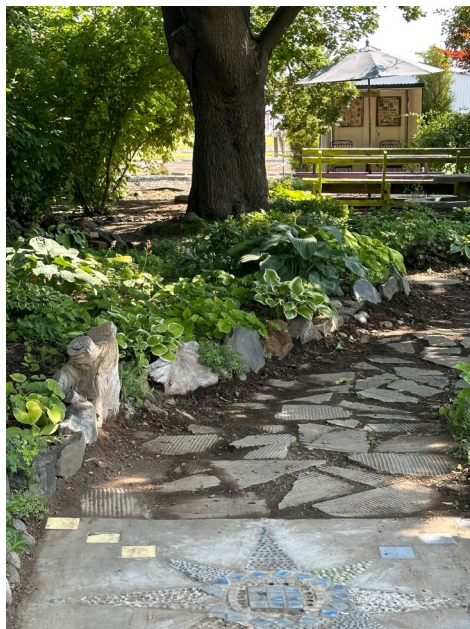
Photos left to right: Entrance to Children's garden, Shade Garden, Wood's Walk.

Demo Garden Pruning Update

A pruning date for the grape arbor in the Ahtanum Demonstration Garden will be determined by consistent low temperatures above freezing. I predict mid to late February.

If you are interested in this opportunity for DG Program Support, please send me an email. I will need only 3 helpers, but of course, any of you reading this are welcome to hang out with us. Depending on availability of who signs up, those details narrow down the date to whether it will be a weekday or weekend.

Mary Kearney
mkearney1960@hotmail.com



Things are Really Buzzing at Selah STEP!

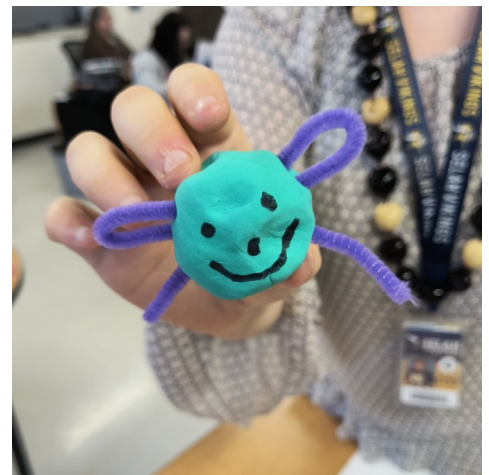
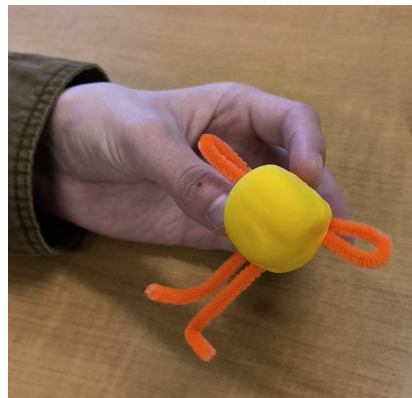
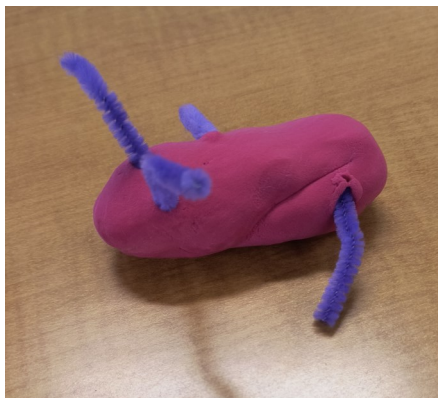
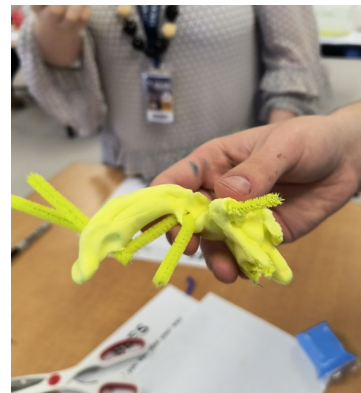
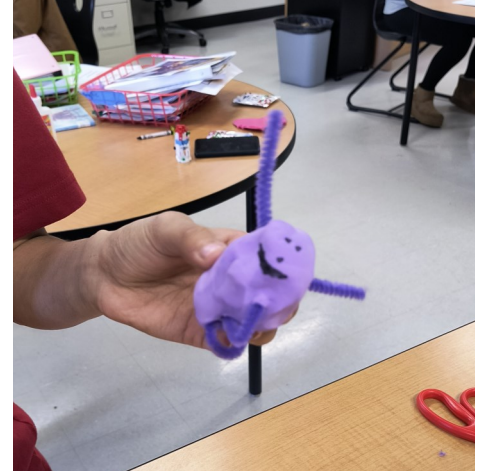
By Michelle Murphy

The students at Selah STEP are looking forward to springtime. We recently learned many “fun facts” about our bee friends and how important they are to the environment. The students then used clay to make a bee of their own. We have budding artists in the classroom!

About the STEP program: Selah Transition Education Program serves Selah special needs students who are 18 to 21 years of age. The program goal is to help young adults transition smoothly into life after school so that they can live as independently as possible within the community. Each student is gifted and can become a valuable asset to the workplace, as well as the community. STEP provides instruction in independent living skills, such as social skills, organizational skills, cooking, budgeting, and transportation by providing opportunities within our community. Through community-based instruction and employment, each student can lead a full and successful life.

The Yakima County Master Gardeners Youth Team has partnered with STEP since 2017.

Youth Team



The young adults in Selah STEP enjoyed the activity of creating their own bees out of clay. ***Photos by Michelle Murphy***

ART TEAM IS LOOKING FOR DONATIONS

Pine cones - tiny, medium or large sizes

Driftwood pieces

Large size rattan or wicker baskets – larger than 8" x 10" sizes preferred

Bowling ball or two

Chunky wood picture frames 8.5" x 11" or larger. I can cut down larger sizes. No metal frames and don't need glass

Small containers of **brightly colored paint**

Sand paper, any grit

Cedar fence boards, new or used

Three ways to donate:

- Contact **Jenny Mansfield** at ceeron19@comcast.net or 509 480 8829
- Bring to the Foundation Meeting.
- We are usually at the Green House every Friday 9:00 to 11:30 am.



In the News...

Did you see? In the Explore Yakima section of the January 11th edition of the Yakima Herald, the history and an update was given of the Rosedell Mansion in the Barge-Chestnut neighborhood. Since July 12, 1990, it has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. As of 2021, newly minted Master Gardener **Laura Gaviglio** and her husband, Gregg, have made it their personal home. They have lovingly maintained the home, the grounds, and the carriage house. It was interesting to read how Laura and Gregg came to be the owners and caretakers of the house. The home is situated at the corner of Yakima and Park Avenues. If you are a subscriber to the paper, you can click the link [here](#) to read the full article.



*Photo courtesy of Ellen Allmendinger/
Yakima Magazine*

WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension Office.

Floribunda: Forcing Early Blooms

Submitted by Carol Barany

Having flowers to bring into the house for bouquets is what drew me to gardening in the first place. In late winter more than any other time of year, I crave home-grown flowers.

Who wouldn't want to speed up spring's arrival? It's the perfect time to gather branches from an array of trees and shrubs for early forcing to bloom indoors. Their flower buds were formed last fall before the plants went dormant, and their cold-weather requirements to bloom have been met (a period of at least 8 weeks of temperatures below 40 degrees). With the branch structure of trees and shrubs so easy to see now, you may already be heading out to do some pruning, so why not collect the trimmings for indoor bouquets?

Every time I pick up a pair of pruners, I hear the late Cass Turnbull caution, "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should." The esteemed founder of PlantAmnesty spoke at a Master Gardener Spring Symposium several years ago. I was her driver, and enroute from the Yakima airport to her hotel, Cass pointed out dozens of trees and shrubs that were "unhealthy, unpretty, unmanageable, and costly to maintain because of poor pruning." It was a revelation. I'd created identical messes in my own garden because of the way I cut branches to force indoors or later, when they were in bloom.

WHAT TO PICK: Branches at least 2-3' long make the most dramatic arrangements at a time when floral drama is just what we need. The forcing process is easiest if you harvest on days when the temperature is above freezing. Some species will take as little as two weeks to bloom, while others as much as five. The easiest branches to force include forsythia, pussy willow, honeysuckle, crabapple, redbud, magnolia, and flowering dogwood. I've learned the hard way that dogwood and magnolia are especially prone to water sprout in response to even a touch of mal-

pruning, while forsythia, quince, and bridal wreath spiraea can be very forgiving. A list of suggested plants and their forcing times can be found at www.finegardening.com/article/forcing-branches.



MAKING THE CUTS: Flower buds are usually fatter than leaf buds. This helps in determining which stems to cut for your bouquet. With fruit trees, branches with lots of side-shoots (spurs) will have the most flowers. Branches removed from crowded areas, or branches that are crossing or rubbing each other, won't be missed. Avoid all nonselective heading cuts, which means no whacking the branch at no place in particular. If you do, hidden dormant buds located directly below the cut are stimulated to rapidly grow out into new branches. What you'll end up with are plenty of unattractive, unhealthy water sprouts that can be difficult to fix with more pruning. Instead, cut $\frac{1}{4}$ " above a side bud or branch, being careful to leave no stubs. Cuts like these channel re-growth through the existing branch or limb. Plants are programmed for survival. Except for deadwood, everything you prune off will be put back on as the plant quickly re-grows to provide enough leaves for

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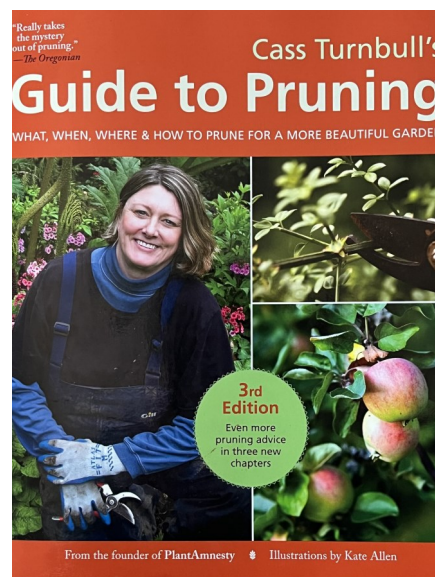
(Floribunda, continued from previous page)

photosynthesis. Proper pruning encourages healthy regrowth in the right places.

BRINGING THEM INDOORS: Strip off any buds, twigs, or leaves that will be underwater in the vase. Before placing the branches in containers, re-cutting the stem ends on an angle under water in a sink filled with the hottest water you can tolerate will yield maximum water uptake. If some branches are more than ½" in diameter, use sharp pruners to make a few 1-2" long splits in the end of the stem to help draw up water. Some gardeners recommend placing the containers in a cool, dimly lit location until the buds begin to show color, and then bringing them into the rooms where they'll be displayed. I skip this step and just arrange them immediately. Even tightly closed buds thrill me this time of year, and I enjoy watching them unfurl a little more each day. Keep the arrangements away from direct sunlight or a direct heat source. The delicate buds will appreciate an occasional misting of water. Use a floral preservative,

and be prepared to change the water several times if the branches have a long forcing time. Blooms usually hold for about a week.

This time of year, Turnbull's Guide to Pruning is a good read. Or, learn to prune in one of PlantAmnesty's videos posted on YouTube. Doing it right the first time is far easier than having to fix mistakes later.



Give Pulse Tip of the Month

by Julie Hunziker

As more members contribute to the weekly columns in the Yakima Herald, here are directions to enter impacts:

For the actual writing of your article:

- ⇒ Other Educational Delivery
- ⇒ Writing/Editing
- ⇒ "Title/subject of article"

For research done for the article:

- ⇒ Continuing Education (up to 4 hours)
- ⇒ Research for Speakers Guild Talk or Writers Guild Article
- ⇒ Topic of article

Reflection of the month: "meeting was a marathon but so much planned...now to get the rest of the group involved with their ideas and their commitment to help implement this fun event.....fun and educational at the same time..."

Why be timely in entering your impacts? In case of injury claim, L&I needs a record of activity/work. Also, when applying for grants, our hours matter.



Rays of Sunshine

One of our active members has been under the weather recently. Rhonda Gardinier has been laid up with a herniated disc in her back. She has recently worked tirelessly on the 2025 directory as well as on updating the seed library catalog. We sure hope she's back on her feet soon!



Master Gardener Mission Statement:

"Engaging university-trained volunteers to empower and sustain communities with relevant, unbiased, research-based horticulture and environmental stewardship education."

ANYONE WHO THINKS THAT GARDENING
BEGINS IN THE SPRING & ENDS IN THE FALL
IS MISSING THE BEST PART OF THE YEAR.



GARDENING BEGINS

IN JANUARY WITH THE DREAM.

Clods of Dirt

Guiding Principles

Act Respectfully

Lead Supportively

Adaptability

Work Together

Always Learning

Emphasize Quality

Communicate Effectively

Be Honest

Take Responsibility

REPORT JAPANESE
BEETLE



AGR.WA.GOV/BEETLES

Be on the Look Out!

Have you seen this pest? Thousands of Japanese beetles have been found in Yakima, Benton, and Franklin counties. If you spot this pest, take a photo and report it at agr.wa.gov/beetles. See it? Report it! Japanese beetles are destructive, invasive pests that attack over 300 types of plants. Snap a photo and report at agr.wa.gov/beetles.

CE Opportunity!

Cowlitz County Master Gardeners offer free online videos. Click here: <https://www.cowlitzcomg.com/workshops-videos>

King County Master Gardeners offer their Growing Groceries series, \$8 per class or \$40 for the 6 classes: Cool Season classes run Jan 22nd-April 2nd; Warm Season classes run April 16th– June 25th. Click here for information and to register: <https://kingcounty.mastergardenerfoundation.org/education/gg/>

Yakima County MG Leaders

Answer/Plant Clinic: Andrea Altmayer/Kim Foster/Kelli Barton

Greenhouse: Camille Smith/Skip Brockman/Kelli Barton

Annuals: Lorie Harrison/Camille Smith/Deanna Husch

Perennials: Carol Barany/Melody Westmoreland

Herbs: Diana Pieti/Diane Berthon

Hanging Baskets: Mary Hewitt/Shellie Oshie/Cathy Penny

Vegetables: Don Flyckt/ Beatrice Reiss

Art: Jenny Mansfield/Mary Hewitt/Debbie Sundlee

Plant Sale: Laura Willet, Reggie Sanderson

Demonstration Gardens:

Ahtanum: Sue Schauer/Skip Brockman/Kelli Barton

Classes: Annette Olson

Heirloom Garden: Sally Mayo/Reggie Sanderson/Sarah Judd

West Valley: Camille Smith/Kelli Barton/John Strong

Youth Program: Kelly Klingman/Jennifer Harris

Writer's Guild/Speaker's Bureau: Carol Barany/Melody Westmoreland/Claudia Steen

Publications: Julie Hunziker/Debra Kroon/Rhonda Gardinier/Steve Kuhn

Social Media: Kelly Klingman

Garden Tour: Jenny Mansfield/Lucy Stevens/ Barbara Schmitt

Hospitality: Reggie Sanderson/Mary Kearney

Advisory Board: Debra Kroon/John Strong/Melody Westmoreland/Michelle Murphy

Yakima County Master Gardener Garden Locations

Demonstration Garden (Ahtanum):

1000 Ahtanum Road, Union Gap
(by Red Barn)

Heirloom Garden:

1522 South 18th Avenue, Yakima
(just south of the greenhouses)

West Valley Food Garden:

602 South 123rd Ave, Yakima



We use knowledge to empower healthy and resilient communities, but what if we could do more?

The WSU Extension Master Gardener Program is raising \$1.5 million to hire a horticulture professor fully dedicated to the Program and to the volunteers who give their time and talents.

Learn how your gift will support a greener, healthier Washington when you give to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Endowed Chair Fund.



To support this campaign, scan the QR code or visit mastergardener.wsu.edu/how-to-donate

Newsletter submissions are due on the 25th of each month. Please send to Julie at jbhunziker@gmail.com. Texting photos (portrait format preferred) and brief descriptions are fine, as well: (530)209-4329. Please include your name so that credit can be given to the source.

Foundation Board

President: Dan Fortier

Vice President: Rick Russell

Treasurer: Gilbert Plascencia

Secretary: Annette Olson

Members at Large: Beatrice Reiss/Sheila Gunderson

Past President: Debra Kroon

Program Coordinator: Patricia Ratzlaff



February 2025

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication or program information or reasonable accommodation need to contact: WSU Extension/2403 South 18th Street/ Union Gap, WA 98903/509-574-1600.

For accommodation please call at least two weeks prior to the event. WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination.