

Scoop o' Dirt

Yakima County Master Gardener News

October 2025



TOMATO FEST 2025

Such a fun event! And the winners were:

Best Tasting: 'Indigo' by **Connie Mey** (trainee)

Sweetest: 'Kellogg's Breakfast' by **Beatrice Reiss**

Most Beautiful: 'Gloria' by **Phyllis Pugnetti**

Best Cherry: 'Sun Sugar' by **Gini Obert**

Ugliest: 'Brandywine' by **Laura Lai** (trainee)

(Photos by **Julie Hunziker**)



Such a spread for the buffet!
Yes, Master Gardeners can cook!!



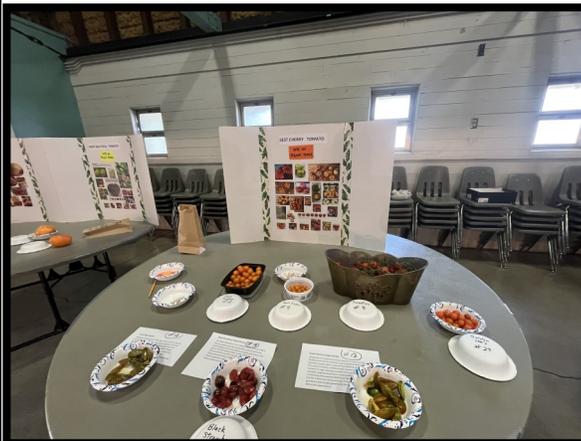
More entries to judge this year



Best Tasting Tomato entries



Over 40 MGs celebrated the tomato



Best Cherry Tomato entries



Ugliest and Most Beautiful Tomato entries

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!
WE DID IT AGAIN!
‘WE GREW LUNCH’
RED BARN, OCTOBER 8 AT NOON
JUST BRING YOUR APPETITES!

Five years ago, some Yakima Master Gardeners were sharing a blog detailing the exploits of two experienced and enthusiastic gardeners who decided to grow all the ingredients for their Thanksgiving dinner. Excessive heat, drought, deer, gophers, and a rambunctious puppy decimated their garden and ruined their plans. We laughed at their plight, and then asked, “Could we actually succeed in Yakima where they failed?”

In the Yakima Valley, autumn is one of the most delicious times of the year, and eating locally is easy. Leave it to a few intrepid Yakima gardeners to turn gardening into an extreme sport! They rounded up a few more gardeners and grew enough food to serve sixty Master Gardeners in late October, 2021. Their ambitious and optimistic project was christened ‘We Grew Lunch’ and has become an annual event.

A planning committee was formed. At the first meeting, members realized they needed to set some ground rules. For instance, all agreed that ingredients for our meal should be locally sourced. It turns out that ‘local’ means different things to different people. Are locally grown foods sourced from within the United States, the Pacific Northwest, the State of Washington, or Yakima County? We decided that for us, ‘local’ would mean all fruits, nuts, vegetables, herbs, eggs, and honey had to be grown or raised by Master Gardeners in their own gardens. We acknowledged that we would have to purchase ingredients like sugar, flour, oil, butter, cheese, and meat. When those ingredients were needed, we would buy from local purveyors whenever possible.

Each year, the team’s biggest hurdle is deciding on the main dish. No two gardening years are exactly alike. Since none of our members raise meat animals, usually the entree is vegetarian. After that, we base the rest of the menu on what we enjoy growing and eating and what we hope will be seasonal in late-October. We’re always aware that backup dishes may be necessary if crop failures spoil our original plan. Nothing in gardening ever goes perfectly, even for Master Gardeners. Based on that menu, seed or-

ders are placed, seedlings are planted, and the rest is left to Mother Nature. She hasn’t let us down.

Each year we’ve tried to showcase different vegetables in our main dish. We’ve served a Frittata with Selah Mushrooms and Spinach; Three Sisters Stew with tomatoes, black beans, corn, and winter squash; Eggplant and Potato Moussaka, and Butternut Squash Lasagna.

No meal is complete without dessert. Over the years, ours have featured fabulous fruits from our own gardens or orchards, either fresh or dried. Wine grapes, apples, pears, apricots, blueberries, rhubarb, and cherries have been baked into fruit crisps, cookies, and bars.

Ingredients for cooking aren’t the only things we grow. Dried grasses, pods, seed heads, and even a few October fresh flowers make beautiful centerpieces for the tables.

Gardeners know that preparing and eating our own homegrown food is pure happiness. These wonderful emotional experiences gain even more meaning when they are shared. Sharing is what gardeners do, whether it’s giving advice, seeds, plants, or produce. Sharing a meal is a timeless, yet becoming increasingly rare, means to human connection.

Please mark your calendars and gather with us in the Red Barn at noon on October 8. All trainees are especially invited to attend. We would love to get to know you better!



Tasty offerings at the 2024 We Grew Lunch

Trainee Spotlight

Welcome the Class of 2026!



Pam Delarosa arrived in Yakima in mid-September and, as a newcomer, says she is “definitely looking for a community.” Her first involvement with gardening was a balcony garden in college. She is fascinated with the magic of seeing something grow. She is perpetually amazed with the amount of information in one seed. After living for some time without outdoor space she has been dreaming about having a garden of her own. Pamela moved here from New York City with her fiancé Zach, who is an ER doctor at MultiCare Memorial, and their blue heeler dog named Zoey. They are planning an October wedding. She is currently taking a career break, but has a master’s degree in tech doing policy, investigative and AI related work. She has previously lived in Washington DC, Atlanta, and San Francisco. Pamela’s hobbies and interests include listening to podcasts, studying philosophy, traveling, baking/cooking, and horseback riding.

Another newcomer to Yakima is **Sandy Roscelli**, who lived in San Diego for the last decade. She is a data analyst at Taboola, a digital advertising company. She has loved gardening since she was a toddler, helping out in her grandma’s Bainbridge Island garden. She hopes to replicate elements of that English-inspired garden in her Yakima home. Besides the experience of nurturing and watching plants grow into something more than she’d have imagined possible, she hopes her Master Gardening experience will help her learn the “why” of her successes and failures, and help her learn how to increase the successes. And, being new in town, she is excited to make some new friends who also find playing in the dirt fun and exciting! Sandy enjoys spending time with family and friends, cooking, traveling, skiing and dancing. Ask her sometime about her dancing days with the San Diego Gay Men’s Chorus! Exciting news is that she recently became engaged to her wonderful partner and best friend, Jackson Sutton. They have a super cute rescue dog named Eddie van Halen, or Ed for short.



Susan Martin is excited for the opportunity to learn about water-wise gardening, native plants, propagation, and growing dahlias. As the granddaughter of a Park Naturalist and daughter of two avid gardeners, she has had a life-long interest in gardening. A 36-year resident of Yakima County, Susan retired three years ago from a varied 40-year career in education. Her education career started in the Home Economics room and led her to community education, working with teens, parents and community members in communication, substance abuse prevention and suicide prevention. She also taught community education, students, parents and school staff training. Susan likes to travel, visit botanical gardens, look for birds and spend time with friends and family. She is married, with three grown daughters, three sons-in law and four grandchildren.

With a name that may sound a little familiar, **Elizabeth Chicken** has lived in Yakima 17 years and is a librarian at Ridgeview Elementary. Although raised by gardening parents, she did not develop an interest in gardening until she bought her first home in 2009. She loves flowers and has been recently transitioning to water-wise, native, and plants to attract pollinators. She loves that through gardening she can help increase the biodiversity of her neighborhood and still be a good steward of our natural resources, namely water. She considers herself a “chaos gardener,” never having planned where something might go, so she’d like to learn more to help her garden thrive without using pesticides or fungicides, while also growing her skill in composting as well as attracting pollinators. She is also interested in sharing her knowledge with the neighborhood as well as the wider county. When not gardening, Elizabeth enjoys reading, water coloring, and building LEGO.



Demonstration Garden

With the recent 20th anniversary celebration of the Ahtanum Demonstration Garden, *Diana Pieti* shared photos from the scrapbook, showing what the garden looked like in the beginning stages in 2005. Twenty years later, *Kelly Klingman* made a successful attempt at replicating the photos, showing the tremendous progress our gardeners have made and the fruits of their labors.



Demonstration Garden



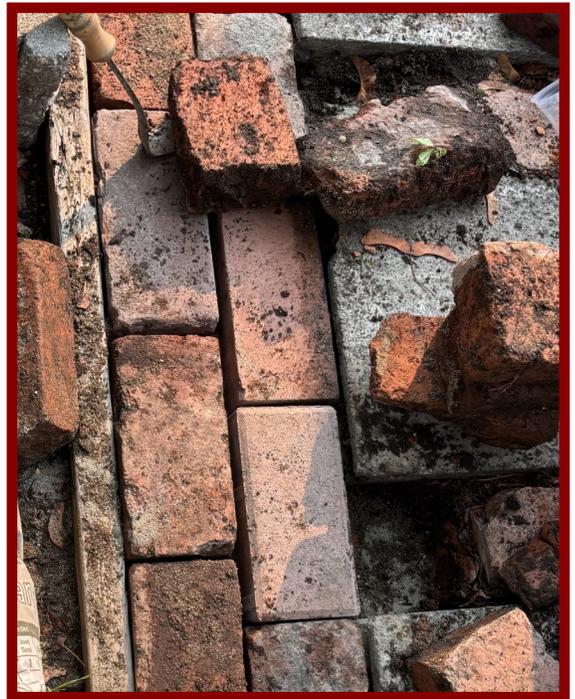
Diana poses with the new guy in the garden, her newly created scarecrow.
(Photo by *Kelli Barton*)

Ahtanum Demonstration Garden Bistro Area Undergoing Patio Update

Do you have a few or more than a few used red bricks hiding behind your house or garage?

Reggie is replacing some of the uneven brick in the bistro area at the Ahtanum Demonstration Garden and could use them to complete this project.

Contact Reggie Sanderson (509)853-8112; call or text.



Master Gardener Mission Statement:

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

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

Youth Team

Another fabulous activity for the kids at the September 28th Farmer's Market was put together by **Jennifer Harris** and **Kelly Klingman** and assisted by **Patty Fendall** and **Deborah Moucka**. The hands-on activity looked at soil and how erosion occurs and what prevents erosion. (Photos by **Kelly Klingman**)



Congratulations!

At the recent awards ceremony celebrated following the State Foundation meeting, several of our members were recognized. The Lifetime Award is given to a member just once and recognizes their 4000+ hours of service. From throughout the state, twelve members were recognized. Of these twelve, three were from Yakima County! We know these ladies well...

Phyllis Pugnetti

Jenny Mansfield

Carol Barany

Kudos to all of you and thank you for your tireless efforts!

LOST AND FOUND:

In all the excitement, one of the winners of one of 5 judged tomato categories at Tomato Fest left their gift bag prize behind at the Red Barn. Call Carol Barany! (509)901-9018

Foundation and Program Meetings

Wednesday October 15th @ 10:30
Red Barn at Ahtanum Youth Park

GivePulse Tip of the Month

by Julie Hunziker

Can't find your category when entering an impact? The menu appears to be limited to seven categories, which does not include some items. Type the category you are looking for in the box and it should pop up. A member recently reached out regarding entering a CE impact for the AEC. She found "MG Basic Training," but it appeared "CE" was not an option. When she typed in "Continuing Education" as instructed, she was able to find it.



Quick Guides

Three Quick Guides have been created to help members navigate several areas of GivePulse New View. The first gives guidance in how to record hours. The second instructs on how to edit or delete an impact. The third guide, as explained in last month's newsletter, shows how to obtain a transcript, which is helpful as we approach the end of the year and people want to know how many hours they have or what they need. Verifiers will share these guides as needed. If you would like them sent to you, please request.

Reflection of the month: "Very knowledgeable presentation. Idea that I am a land manager and my decisions go beyond just my yard - help or harm? Loved "Native is the new exotic," and how to fill the role of more traditional type landscaping. Good examples and gorgeous photos with plant names (very useful)." listed under Continuing Educations/Advanced Education Conference.

Also: "Provided a huge thank you to the Foundation for their financial support of the Answer Clinic this year and invited the members to come and take a look at our new office furniture and the books we will be donating in October." listed under Program Support/Foundation and Program Meetings.

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

In the Community



Diana Pieti's lovingly constructed Scarecrow hitched a ride on the Viking Ship at the Sunfair Parade on September 20th. Ole disguised himself in a Norway flag t-shirt and Viking horned helmet. Odin Lodge No. 41 members welcomed Ole with open arms!

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.

Master Gardeners at Home



Beatrice gets great amusement out of her garden. Above left, she shares that she has zucchini coming out her ears! Below right, her vegetables demonstrate that they have a mind of their own!



Save The Date!!

Saturday, October 25th
9am-4pm

MG Fall Symposium at PNWU

Click [here](#) for details and registration

Floribunda: Seasonal Change

by Carol Barany

It's funny how one day, you can be out gardening in your favorite pair of shorts, and just a few days later, you're pulling on extra layers of polar fleece. Even though I do my best to mentally prepare, I'm never quite ready to see another gardening year come to an end.

Over the last few weeks, I've found myself checking the extended weather forecast multiple times each day, searching for borrowed time. But I've been a gardener long enough to know that Jack Frost will ultimately win our race.

If all I grew were locally native plants, I'd have no reason to fret over the weather forecast. These dependable stalwarts evolved to shake-off big chills. But I'm a collector, adding peonies from China, sedges from New Zealand, and maples from Japan. Will these transplants survive a deep freeze in central Washington? Horticulturists at the United States Department of Agriculture can help us make these predictions.

The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map is an important guide in determining which plants are most likely to thrive at any location. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature, divided into 10-degree F zones. It divides the United States into thirteen zones, with Zone 1 marking the colder regions of Alaska and Canada, and Zone 13 including southern Mexico and Hawaii. Further divisions of 'a' and 'b' in a single zone indicate a 5 degree variability.

My Yakima urban-area garden is in USDA Zone 7a. With some confidence, I can choose perennials that survive low temperatures between zero and 5 degrees. Some of my friends in West Valley and Selah occasionally record even lower readings and look for plants hardy to Zone 5b (-15 to -10 degrees) or Zone 6a (-10 to -5 degrees). If you've carefully chosen your plants, you'll need the polar fleece more than they do.

Remember that soil temperatures drop slower than air temperatures. Insulated by the soil, underground roots have a measure of protection. Roots freeze even slower if the soil is well mulched or snow covered, or if the soil was moist when it froze. Yet no matter how hardy a plant, few would survive even a mild Yakima winter without going through seasonal

changes called 'acclimation', a process that leads to dormancy. Most plants are well on their way to their genetically determined winter hardiness by now, and stand well-prepared to face the freeze.

Hardiness zones are a guide and not the only factor to weigh when determining whether a plant will be perennial in Yakima. Gardens with south facing brick walls or courtyards, or near concrete parking lots or bodies of water, may have microclimates that are significantly warmer than the surrounding area. I often visit urban gardens in Buffalo, New York where plants rated hardy to Zone 6b thrive, despite Buffalo's overall Zone 5 rating. Brick houses built very close together, just blocks from Lake Erie and the Niagara River, offer protection to plants that will freeze to death in gardens just a few miles away.

Even without a microclimate, what gardener hasn't



A burning bush in its seasonal change in the Hunziker yard. (Photo by Julie H.)

gambled on zonal denial (zonal denial refers to trying to grow plants that are not hardy in your climate zone)? In consecutive years with mild winters, plants with a tender pedigree may pull through, lulling us into believing we've fooled Mother Nature. It serves us right when, the very next winter, weather blows in straight from the Arctic, and May finds us shopping for replacements.

Just like plants, the birds that stay in Yakima for the winter are well-equipped to face winter. Stored fat and fluffed feathers that trap heat help keep them

(Continued on next page)

Art Team

Art Team Wish List

The Art team is looking for the following items to begin work on projects to sell at the Plant Sale next spring:

Small metal toolboxes 6-8" x 12-16"

Medium size pieces of driftwood to hold a small plant

Small bowling ball (cannot be cracked)

Wood letters from a scrabble board game (missing letters is okay)

Old leather lace up boots (condition is not an issue)

Terra Cotta clay pots, resin pots or other vessels that can hold plants

Also, **large size saucers** (plastic is okay but not thin clear flimsy ones)

Metal or wood trellises

Child's metal Lil' Red Wagon pull toy

Your **unwanted, gently used garden items**

Someone to build rustic birdhouses, potting bench or seating bench,

welder to create garden art

(I have access to orchard props, buckets of horse-shoes and other supplies)

Please email **Jenny Mansfield**

@ Ceeron19@comcast.net

or text 509 480 8829 to schedule a time and date to drop off donations off at Green House or if you have any questions about donating items.

Thank you.

(Floribunda, continued from previous page)

warm during the long, cold nights. A slowed nighttime metabolism helps with energy conservation until they can find food in the morning.

A garden filled with plants for food and shelter becomes an oasis for these birds. While most rely on wild foods, they will supplement with seed, suet and fruit from feeders when it's hard to find natural sources, especially after a snowfall. If that's not reason enough to keep your feeders full, then the amazing sights and sounds of birds, just outside your window, should do it. In addition to food, try to provide as many different habitats as possible, whether in birdhouses, natural tree cavities, copses of ornamental grasses and dried perennials, or evergreens and shrubs.

Materials Needed

Dear Pressed Flower Enthusiasts,

We Master Gardeners who enjoy pressed flower art are low in material. Projects in the fall and winter include greeting cards for our sunshine committee and then to community outreach classes and demonstrations. Please take some time each week as you garden to collect and press material to include flowers, herbs, leaves, stems, etc. There are many techniques to press. However, simply sandwich material on paper towel and place a heavy book on top. Let dry for 2 weeks. Store in a dry place. It's that easy.

We can advise, help collect, and/or store your stuff. Just reach out.

~Mary Kearney and Diana Pieti

Guiding Principles

Act Respectfully

Lead Supportively

Adaptability

Work Together

Always Learning

Emphasize Quality

Communicate Effectively

Be Honest

Take Responsibility

Happy Birthday!!

10/1 Larry Connell

10/10 Kelli Barton

10/10 Jennifer Harris

10/18 Robin Kabrich

10/28 Nancy Colleran

10/30 Fred Staloch

Focus on Continuing Education



THE EVERGREEN THUMB

Gardening Tips and Insights with Washington State University Extension Master Gardeners

Are you familiar with [The Evergreen Thumb](#) podcast? Sponsored by the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State and produced by WSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers, it is hosted by Erin Hoover of Grays Harbor County. Producing biweekly podcasts, The Evergreen Thumb has produced 57 episodes and has had over 22,000 listens. With a wide range of gardening topics, from “Soil Health” (episodes 56 and 57) to “The Washington Bee Atlas: Discovering the Secrets of our Native Bees” (episode 55) to “Inside the WSU Extension Green School with Jennifer Marquis” (episode 49), a bevy of expert horticulturists, seasoned Master Gardeners, and passionate plant enthusiasts share their wisdom, practical tips, and hands-on experiences. It’s an easy 30-40 minute listen while you drive or walk or work around the house or yard. Find the podcast through your device’s app store or click on the above link to access it online.

Looking for Continuing Education?

Local Resources:

- * **Arboretum Classes**
- * **YCMG Fall Symposium** (October 25th at PNWU)
- * **Master Gardener Demonstration Garden Classes** (Every Saturday in a different Garden)
- * **Master Gardener Yard Tours** (June)/ **Veggie Garden Tour** (September 9th)
- * **Enrichment Classes** (January and February...they’ve passed, but look for them in 2026)
- * **In-person labs for trainees** (and veterans): Oct 1st & 29th, Nov 19th, Jan 29th, March 11th & 18th

Online Resources:

- * **Evergreen Thumb Podcast** (WSU Master Gardeners)
- * **WSU Extension Master Gardeners Virtual AEC** (Sept 26th-27th, recordings available online until 2/6/26) Register [here](#).
- * **Oregon State University** (Free webinars the 2nd Tuesday of each month at noon) Click [here](#).
- * **Oregon State University MG Short Course Series** (some free, most have a low cost). Click [here](#).
- * **Cowlitz County Master Gardeners Online classes** [here](#). Most Tuesdays at noon.
- * **From Roots to Results: Exploring the Cooperative Extensions Role and Impact**. Click [here](#)
- * **San Juan County WSU MG Garden Workshop Series** (\$35; online webinar Oct 14, 16, 18, & 23) Click [here](#) for information and registration

Master Gardener Venue Work Seasons

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Enrichment Classes at Arboretum												
Greenschool												
Classes in the Gardens												
Answer/Plant Clinic												
Demonstration Gardens												
Demonstration Garden (Ahtanum)												
Heirloom												
Kamiakin												
WVFG												
Greenhouse												
Annuals												
Arts												
Hanging Baskets												
Herbs												
Perennials												
Vegetables												



Program Priority Focus: Soil Health

The Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program encourages the building of healthy soils to prevent depletion and ensure the long-term viability of local food security and natural resources.

- * Healthy Soil Definition
- * How to Build Healthy Soil
- * Soil Structure
- * Soil Testing
- * Soils and Mulches
- * pH and Soil Chemistry
- * Composting
- * Preventing Soil Erosion

Yakima County MG Leaders

Answer/Plant Clinic: Andrea Altmayer/Kim Foster

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 /Kelly Klingman

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/Sue Schauer

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

Facilities: Reggie Sanderson/Mary Kearney

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

Mentor Team: Debra Kroon/Melody Westmoreland/Julie Hunziker

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

MG Program Priorities

Local Food

Pollinators

Wildfire Preparedness

Water Conservation

Clean Water

Climate Change

Nearby Nature

Plant Biodiversity

Soil Health

Foundation Board

President: Rick Russell

Vice President: Dick Larson

Treasurer: Gilbert Plascencia

Secretary: Carrie Chicken

Members at Large: Beatrice Reiss/Steve Kuhn

Past President: Dan Fortier

Program Coordinator: Patricia Ratzlaff

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.



October 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Answer Clinic Demonstration Garden <i>Trainee Lab 1-4 @ Arboretum</i>	2 WVFG 8-11 Heirloom Garden 8-11	3 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	4
5 Yakima Herald Article Farmer's Market 9-1	6 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	7	8 Answer Clinic Demonstration Garden 8-11 We Grew Lunch @ noon Red Barn	9 WVFG 8-11 Heirloom Garden 8-11 Answer Clinic Mtg 1:30-3	10 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	11
12 Yakima Herald Article Farmer's Market 9-1	13 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	14	15 Answer Clinic Demo Garden Foundation/Program Mtg @ 10:30 Red Barn	16 WVFG 8-11 Heirloom Garden 8-11	17 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	18
19 Yakima Herald Article Farmer's Market 9-1	20 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	21	22 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4 Demonstration Garden 8-11	23 WVFG 8-11 Heirloom Garden 8-11	24 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	25
26 YKM Herald Article	27 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	28	29 Answer Clinic Demonstration Garden <i>Trainee Lab 1-4 @ Red Barn</i>	30	31 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	



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.