

August 2026

Scoop o' Dirt

Yakima County Master Gardener News

Master Gardener Summer Picnic is Just Around The Corner!!

***Wednesday August 5th @ Noon
At the lawn by the Red Barn***



Members are asked to bring potluck items according to the first letter of their last name in the following categories:

A-C: Chips, breads, relishes, condiments, etc.

D-G: Dessert

H-M: Main Dish

N-Z: Side Dish

The Foundation will provide a meat entrée, plates, napkins, plastic table service, some serving utensils, and water.

We are asking for donations of new or gently used garden style items for our summer picnic giveaways. This is a fun part of the picnic that everyone enjoys so your donations are greatly appreciated. Either bring them with you that day or Patty Ferguson can pick them up beforehand, 509-952-2551.

Amazing Food. Door Prizes. Friendly Fellowship!

Program Meeting

**Wednesday August 19th @ 11:00
at the Red Barn**

**The August Answer Clinic Meeting
will be Thursday August 27th.**

**Newsletter submissions are due on the 25th of
each month. Please send to Julie at
jbhunziker@gmail.com.**

**Texting photos with a brief descriptions are fine,
as well: (530)209-4329. Please include your
name so that credit can be given to the source.**

Intern Focus Congratulations!!

Three interns have completed the 40 required hours, in addition to the GreenSchool and in-person labs, to become certified Master Gardeners. **Andrea Jimenez, Connie Mey, and Janet Beck** have reached the goal. Kudos to them! And a job well done. Honors will come at our Awards Luncheon in February.

Save the Date!!

TomatoFest

Wednesday, Sept 2nd

We Remember...



Gini Obert at the Buena Garden in 2016.

I was fortunate to be a part of the Buena Garden. I got to know **Gini** and experienced her teaching style. She had so much patience and empowered the young and old alike. I learned as much as the Buena folks. I not only learned about gardening, but also the deep rooted love and compassion she had for the Buena community, which was inspirational. Gini made a lasting impression and will be greatly missed.

~**Sue Schauer**

Two things that **Gini** was good at were growing good food and teaching the rest of us how to do the same. She did that from Zillah to Selah with Buena in between. In 2016 she talked to us about starting a community garden in Buena, telling us that many people lived in apartments, that many were low income and did not have the means to begin one. Her friend, Sammy, told her she could have a big part of his pasture, but we would have to fence off the horses. **Skip** and former member Darrel built a beautiful fence using repurposed orchard props we gathered from far and wide. **Melody's** son delivered 40 tons of mulch and **Sue Schauer** got a local company to bring a container to store our tools. Ron and Gini brought their trailer to Selah and picked up a set of church pews so we had a place to rest and two wonderful local volunteers built a beautiful table. **Sue McFeat** came every week and established a long lasting relationship with the residents there. We put up a beautiful sign and they came every week: Moms, Dads, Grandmas and kids, lots of kids, and sometimes dogs. Gini taught them, hands on, with patience, and the crops grew, as well as the gardeners. And we did, too. Today we are so proud that she was a big part of our lives and proud of our members who helped her dreams come true.

~**Diana Pieti**



Fred Staloch, Master Gardener class of 2012, passed away on July 20, 2026. Fred was especially proud of the fruit trees he grew in his front yard at his home in Terrace Heights. His ashes will be scattered in those trees. Rest in peace, Fred.

At right: A photo of Fred's home orchard (Fuji apple, pear, nectarine, and cherry) shared by Marjie Taylor in our September 2020 newsletter.



Save the Dates: ***Upcoming Master Gardener Garden Tours 2026***

Celebrate the end of summer with these two special garden tours:

Yakima Master Gardener Veggie Garden Tour

Tuesday, August 25

Meet to carpool at St Timothy's Episcopal Church at 4105 Richey Rd. in Yakima. Please arrive about 8:15 am for an 8:30 departure. The following Master Gardeners have invited us to tour their gardens:

Vickie Bullard

Elieen and Larry Connell

Bev and Jack Vonfield

Mary Kearney

All are encouraged to bring a sack lunch and to stop and enjoy the grounds at St. Joseph's Mission at 17740 Ahtanum Rd., on our return.

Wenatchee Area Garden Tour

Thursday, September 10

Join this fun garden getaway. We'll be carpooling and visiting three venues in our neighboring county:

Derby Canyon Nursery

9750 Derby Canyon Rd., Peshastin, WA 98847

The management has offered to give us a private tour of this native plant nursery.

Ohme Gardens

3327 Ohme Rd, Wenatchee, WA 98801

A historic, family garden initially developed in the 1930s. Natural stone pathways traverse hillside gardens, past breathtaking panoramic views, towering cedars and firs, lush foliage, waterfalls and tranquil ponds.

WSU Master Gardener Community Education Garden

1100 N. Western Ave., Wenatchee, WA 98801

An outdoor learning environment for demonstrating and teaching sustainable gardening practices.

Put these two special tours on the calendar. And look for all the details, including addresses and signups, to follow in the August 9 Master Gardener Weekly Update.

For more information, contact: Lucy Stevens - lucijs900@gmail.com

Jenny Mansfield - ceeron19@comcast.net or

Barbara Schmitt - Ba.schmitt@comcast.net



Board Service: An Opportunity to Help Shape the Foundation's Future

Over the past several months, Foundation News has explored the Foundation's purpose, our relationship with the Master Gardener Program, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), and the bylaws that guide how the Foundation operates. Last month we discussed Foundation membership and why participation in governance is important. This month, we turn our attention to one of the most significant changes adopted in the Foundation's revised bylaws: a new governance structure designed to strengthen leadership continuity, encourage broader participation, and create a more sustainable path for future Board service.

Why the Foundation Changed Its Governance Model

Historically, Foundation members voted on a complete slate of officers and board members each year. While this approach served the Foundation well for many years, it also created the possibility of significant leadership turnover from one year to the next. Valuable institutional knowledge could be lost, and long-term projects could become difficult to sustain.

The revised bylaws establish a more common nonprofit governance model. The Foundation now has a Board of Directors consisting of seven elected directors. Four of those directors serve as officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Rather than officers being elected directly by the membership, Foundation members elect directors, and the Board then elects its officers from among those directors during its December annual meeting.

This approach allows the Board to match leadership responsibilities with individual experience, interests, and skills while preserving accountability to the membership through the election of directors.

Creating Continuity Through Staggered Terms

Another important change involves director terms.

Under the new bylaws, directors serve three-year terms. To establish a rotation system, the initial Board election will create staggered terms. At the December annual meeting, members will elect:

- Three directors to one-year terms
- Two directors to two-year terms
- Two directors to three-year terms

After this initial transition, all future director positions will

be elected for three-year terms as vacancies occur through the normal expiration of terms.

What this means in practice is that the Foundation will no longer face the prospect of replacing its entire leadership team at once. Instead, experienced directors will remain on the Board while new directors join, creating continuity and helping transfer knowledge from one generation of leaders to the next.

What Members Will See This December

The December 2026 Annual Meeting will be the first election conducted under this new structure.

All seven Board positions will be open for election as we establish the staggered-term system described in the bylaws. Members will elect directors rather than voting on officer positions. Following the election, the newly elected Board will meet and select the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer from among its members for one-year officer terms.

This transition will establish the foundation for future elections where, in most years, one or two director positions will come up for election rather than the entire Board. The result is a more stable governance model that balances continuity with opportunities for new leadership and fresh ideas.

Consider Serving on the Board

As we prepare for this transition, we encourage all Foundation members to consider Board service.

Every Board position will be open during this year's election, making this an exceptional opportunity for interested members to become involved in shaping the future of the Foundation. The Board benefits from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. You do not need prior Board experience to serve effectively.

Serving on the Board provides an opportunity to:

- Help guide the future direction of the Foundation
- Participate in financial stewardship and planning
- Support fundraising and Foundation initiatives
- Work collaboratively with fellow Master Gardeners
- Help ensure the long-term success of the Program and Foundation

If you are curious about Board service, we encourage you to speak with any current Board member or officer. We'd be happy to discuss the responsibilities, time commitment, and rewards of serving, and answer any questions you may have.

{Continued on next page}

(Foundation News, continued from previous page)

Looking Ahead

Over the coming months, Foundation News will continue exploring how strong governance and sound financial stewardship work together to support the Foundation's mission. As we approach the December election, we hope more members will consider becoming involved, whether through membership, committee work, or Board service.

The Foundation's future depends on thoughtful leadership, active participation, and a shared commitment to supporting the Yakima County Master Gardener Program for generations to come.

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:

Audrey Baker

Farmer's Market

Ken and Laura have had a steady crew helping out at the Farmer's Market.



Above: **Laura and Jen H** are happy to answer questions



Above: **Ken, Andrea J, and Diana** make a great team, welcoming questions and comments while visiting passersby. Ken always has a pet for the dogs.

Left: Thinking ahead with free handout of fall-planting seeds.

Pacific Power Foundation Grant Supports New Audio Equipment

The Master Gardener Foundation of Yakima County is grateful to receive a \$1,000 grant from the Pacific Power Foundation in support of our Audio/Visual Equipment Upgrade project. The grant helped fund audio equipment that is already being used to support Master Gardener trainings and our Program and Foundation meetings.

The equipment includes wireless microphones, a handheld microphone, and a headset microphone that improve sound quality and audience engagement during classes and presentations. Since being placed into service, the equipment has helped ensure that participants can clearly hear and participate during the events.

Support from the Pacific Power Foundation helps strengthen our ability to provide high-quality educational program-

ming throughout Yakima County and supports the ongoing work of WSU Extension Master Gardeners in serving our community.

About the Pacific Power Foundation

The Pacific Power Foundation is part of the PacifiCorp Foundation, one of the largest utility-endowed foundations in the United States. The foundation was created by PacifiCorp, an energy company that serves more than 2 million customers across six western states. Through its charitable investments, the foundation supports the growth and vitality of the communities it serves. Since 1988, the foundation has awarded more than \$60 million to nonprofit organizations.

For more information, visit PacificPower.net/Foundation.



New audio equipment in use at the July Program meeting at the Red Barn. Top left: PC **Audrey Baker** introduces herself to the group. Top Right: Intern **Julie Rust** speaks about Gini Obert. Bottom left: **Carol B.** gives an update on the Writer's Guild. (Photos by **Kelly K**)

Be on the Look Out!

REPORT
JAPANESE
BEETLE



AGR.WA.GOV/BEEETLES

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.

Around Our Gardens

Heirloom Garden



A welcoming sign.
(Photos by **Kelly K.**)



Sally is getting lost in all that squash.



Getting organized inside the new shed.
(It seems there is a purple theme)



Ashley tends to tomatoes, doing some weeding, pruning, and tying them to the trellis. Just look how she can bend comfortably and kneel on the ground!



Sunflowers reach for the sky, drawing in the pollinators.

Ahtanum Park Garden



The crew always enjoys some downtime with coffee, water, snacks, and visiting.



Welcome to the Garden



Joan and **Karen** appear to be sitting down on the job while tackling the unending task of weeding.



Kelly K and **Mikki** dug, leveled the ground, and placed pavers to smooth out the apron in front of the tool shed.



Louis, the dinosaur, has been welcomed to the garden. All are anxious to see him blossom.



Annette and **Sue S.** dispose of a tarp full of garden debris at the end of the morning work session.

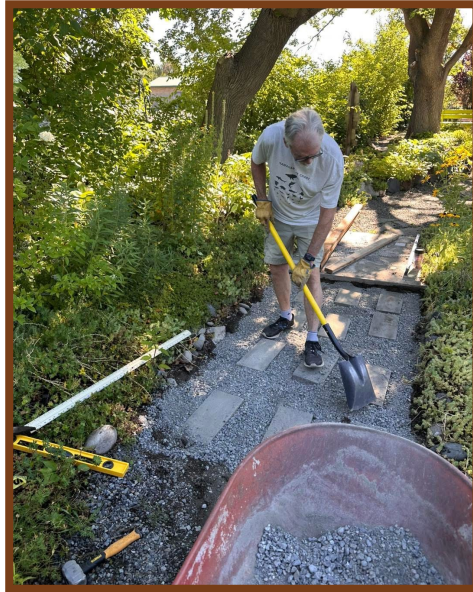
All plants are edible. Some only once.

~Author unknown

Ahtanum Park Garden Bridge Replacement



This last month, a small contingent pulled out the bridge in the path of the Children's Garden as it needed replacing. It was rebuilt in a day! What a great job they did! Thanks, ***Kelli B, Terry, John, and Mike!!***
(Photos by ***Kelly K***)



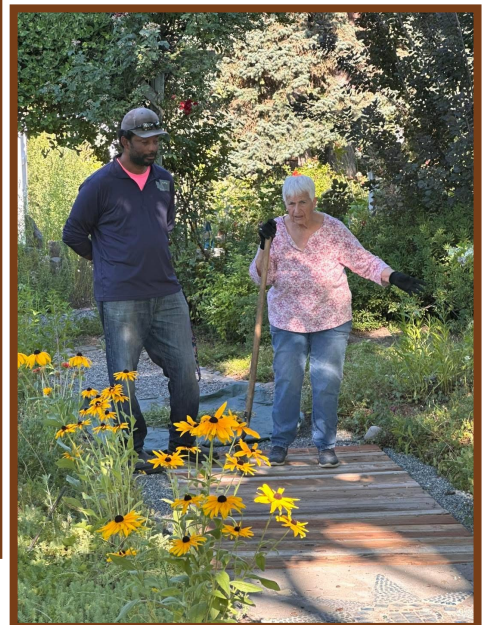
Mike W. spread gravel around the cinder blocks that will support the wood slats.



John brought his chop saw to cut the wooden planks evenly and cleanly.



Mike, John, and Terry laid a solid base, then a line of level planks to complete the bridge.



Rod received input from ***Diana*** about the garden and what needs to be done.

West Valley Food Garden

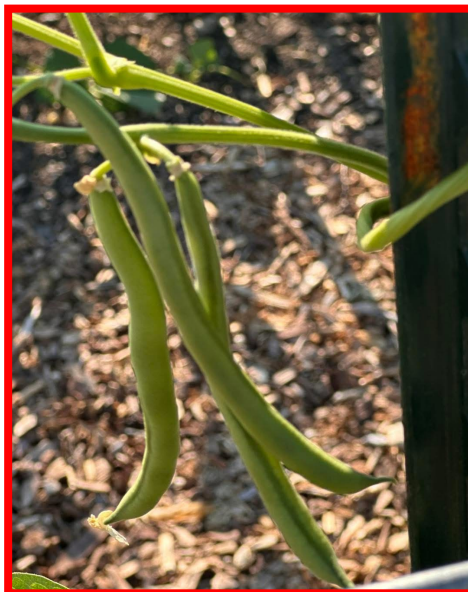
Eagle Scout candidate Wyatt Roof planned, organized, and led the construction of a sturdy picnic table for the West Valley Food Garden. Karen Orange, owner of our property, greeted and congratulated Wyatt on his project. A handful of Master Gardeners were on hand to observe the delivery of the table. Wyatt is a member of Troop 123, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus at Holy Family Church. (Photos by ***Kelly K***)



West Valley Food Garden



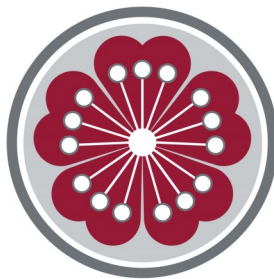
Scenes from WVFG: **John** bundles garlic; **Debra** divides pollinator plants, **Steve** and **Don M.** tackle the weeds; load of fresh vegetables off to market; glorious beans; **Elizabeth** enjoys the seating and shade of the new picnic table.



Youth Outreach



Youth team participated in Gap Camp at Union Gap school put on by Safe Yakima Valley who provide youth mentoring, drug-free colla-
tions and drug free education and resources. Interns **Connie Mey** and **Christina Nyirati** joined **Kelly Klingman** to discuss reading a seed packet, working the cd seed starting project and planting their own beans. All students got to take home carrot seeds as well.



Last Sunday of the month means Youth Table at the Farmer's Market. Interns **Cathy Patnode** worked with veterans **Patty Fendall and Kelly K**, teaching the kids about pollinators and their preferred flowers and guiding them in painting colorful cd flowers.



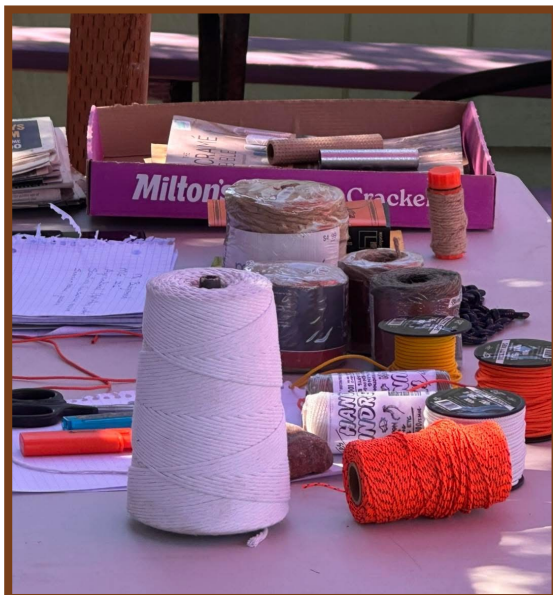
WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension Office.

Classes in the Garden

Master Gardener Knot Extraordinaire, **Darrell Monroe**, taught a hands-on class about a number of different knots that are useful in the garden. Some of the participants were tied in knots trying to figure them out.



Darrell demonstrated the various knots while leading participants through the sequence of steps. He knowingly states that knot-tying is an unlearned skill.



Tools of the trade; better than green plastic tape.



There's an extensive list of knots to use in the garden.

Classes in the Garden

Carol Barany gave a heartfelt talk on growing annuals from seed. A group of about 50 participants learned it's not too late to start some seeds. And she even had some starts for each person to take home. Home-baked goodies, too. Such a wealth of information she shares!



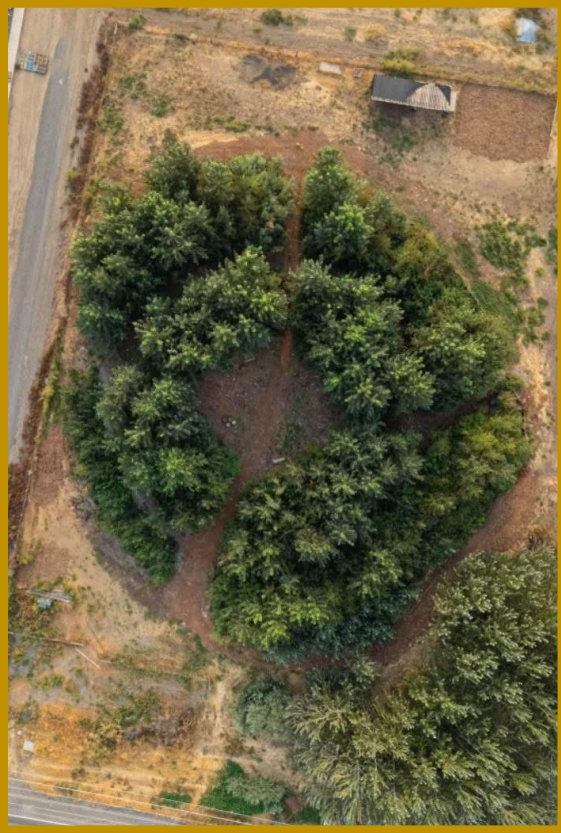
Photos by **Kelly Klingman**



MG Program Priorities

Local Food
Pollinators
Wildfire Preparedness
Water Conservation
Clean Water
Climate Change
Nearby Nature
Plant Biodiversity
Soil Health

Miyawaki Forest Method in our own Backyard



An aerial view of the Yakama Nation's Healing Forest. (Photo courtesy of SUGi)

Our own Master Gardener, **Debra Byrd**, of the Yakama Nation, guided visitors through the Yakima Nation's Miyawaki Healing Forest in Toppenish recently. A handful of our members visited this amazing "pocket forest," of which pictures from ground level just don't do it justice! While the initial labor and expense can be challenging, the benefits exceed the costs:

- ◆ Rapid Growth
- ◆ Increased Biodiversity
- ◆ Improving Air and Soil Quality
- ◆ Protection against Climate Change
- ◆ Aesthetics and Social Benefits

To read more about this amazing little forest in our Yakima high desert, which was featured in a recent NPR broadcast, click on this link: <https://www.nwpb.org/2026-06-25/people-all-over-washington-are-using-this-planting-method-to-adapt-to-a-changing-climate>



Participants stroll through the shade of the healing forest, admiring the growth of the native trees planted just six years ago. (Photos by **Shelly O.**)



Mikki, Ken, and Laura W.

Floribunda: The Heat is On! by Carol Barany

I'm dreaming of long, soaking rains. The windows are open and it's cool enough for an extra blanket. I listen for hours to the rhythm of raindrops tapping the roof and dripping from the trees. Come morning, the garden shimmers, bright green and fresh and renewed.

Instead, millions of Americans are living under heat advisories as temperatures rise to record breaking levels across the country. Just how hot is TOO hot for plants? For most, it's around 90 degrees.

Plants keep cool through evaporation of water from their leaves. On a hot, dry day, or after several days with no rain or watering, transpiration causes more water to be lost than is coming in. Dehydrated cells in the leaves and stems can no longer remain erect, and the plant begins to wilt. To avoid wilting, the plant can close its leaf pores to keep water from evaporating. It comes at a price, since open pores are necessary for the uptake of carbon dioxide, critical to photosynthesis. Plants with limited carbon dioxide grow more slowly. Leaves may turn white for lack of chlorophyll. Some plants, especially trees, will actually shed some of their foliage in an attempt to conserve water.

While wilting slows the rate of water loss, it causes leaf temperatures to increase. Again, if unfavorably high temperatures persist, this cycle can worsen until a portion or all of the leaf is killed. The tips of leaves on trees and perennials throughout my garden are turning brown and crispy. I have faith that as long as there is some green foliage, the plant should recover.

Some gardeners choose not to remove damaged leaves from a burned plant because they may be shading healthy foliage that could also burn when suddenly exposed. It's not a pretty sight, and it takes strong resolve to step away from the pruners.

Weak and under stress, plants are more vulnerable to disease and insect pests. For example, blossom end rot is common during hot weather in tomatoes, peppers, and squash. Spider mites flourish in high heat.

In excessively hot weather, vegetables can stop producing. Tomatoes, squash, peppers, melons, cucumbers, pumpkins, and beans can drop their blossoms, while cool-season crops like lettuce and broccoli will bolt.

What can a gardener do?

- * Water your garden early and deeply to give your plants time to absorb the water they'll need to get them through the day. Overhead watering during the hotter parts of the day wastes water because much of it evaporates before it reaches your thirsty garden. However, if heat stress is apparent midday, go ahead and water. Watering at night can lead to powdery mildew, but you may have to take that chance.

- * Feel the soil with your fingers one inch under the surface for containers, and two inches deep for beds. If it's dry, your plants need water. Apply water as close to the root ball as possible. Properly placed soaker hoses and drip irrigation do this best, with the least wasted water.



- * The temperature under shade cloth can be 10 degrees cooler, so use it to shelter precious or vulnerable plants. Rig up some sort of frame and spread the cloth over it.
- * Postpone pruning, which can add to plant stress.
- * Move seedlings to a shady spot and wait for cooler weather before you transplant them. I learned this the hard way, when all the divisions I took from a clump of Japanese Forest Grass to line a sidewalk died in 24 hours last week.
- * Stop fertilizing. Plants need even more water to process fertilizer. A sudden flush of nutrients also spurs plant growth at a time when the plant's resources are already stressed.
- * Applying 2-4" of mulch around plants will slow evaporation of soil moisture. One day, when the air temperature hit 113 degrees, the soil temperature in a full-sun, unmulched area of our garden was 102 degrees. Over in my dahlia bed, where the soil was covered by 4" of chopped leaves, it was 84 degrees.
- * Even when soil moisture is adequate, extreme air and soil temperatures can damage plants. If possible, move your potted plants into indirect sunlight. I thought my heat-loving tender succulents could handle it, but some were badly damaged or killed by heat and light reflecting off the stucco walls of our house. It's ironic that a few weeks ago, I worried that I had too many tender succulents to take care of.

In times like these, our concerns are for the most vulnerable members of our community, our animals, and our crops. Do the best you can in your garden, and stay safe.

Focus on Continuing Education

Our Own Demonstration Garden Classes

Date	Topic	Presenter	Location
Aug 1st	Winter Tomatoes	MG Phyllis Pugnetti	Heirloom Garden
Aug 8th	Attracting Birds, Pollinators and Creatures to Your Native Garden	Mikki Boughton, Heritage Garden Coordinator	Ahtanum Park Garden
Aug 22nd	Adopt a Monarch + Best Native Plants for Beneficial Insects and Pollinators	Dr. David James, WSU Associate Professor, Entomology	Ahtanum Park Garden
Sept 5th	Pollinators	MG Don Flyckt	Heirloom Garden
Oct 3rd	Fall Tool Maintenance	MG Rick Russell	Heirloom Garden

Looking for Continuing Education?

Local Resources:

- * **Arboretum Classes**
- * Upcoming **Demonstration Garden classes**: August 1st (Heirloom Garden); August 8th (Ahtanum Park) & August 22nd (Ahtanum Park)

Online Resources:

- * **Evergreen Thumb Podcast** (WSU Master Gardeners)
Recent episodes: How to Clean Up Your Fall Garden that Supports Overwintering Insects
Garden Mistakes and Lessons Learned Over Time
How to Keep Gardening Fun and Safe as We Age
Gardening When Water is Scarce
- * **WSU Extension Master Gardeners Virtual AEC** (look for the next session coming fall 2027)
- * **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](#).
- * **From Roots to Results: Exploring the Cooperative Extensions Role and Impact**. Click [here](#)
- * **WSU Program Priority Videos and Literature**, "Discover What You Can Do about (Program Priority)": Click [here](#).

Happy Birthday!!

8/1 Marguerite Kirby
8/2 Judi Hemenway
8/5 John Strong
8/5 Alice Wikstrom
8/6 Terry Travis

8/12 Julie Hunziker
8/19 Edna Pettyjohn
8/21 Melody Westmoreland
8/27 Cary Ascunsion-Tauscher

GivePulse Tip of the Month

by Julie Hunziker

- ♦ At the end of June, there was a hiccup in the GivePulse system. When a member entered more than one impact and they clicked on the “Would you like to add additional impacts?” it took the person back to the previous impact and just changed the data; the original impact was lost. We had a dozen members who were affected. We all have had to reenter the missing impacts. A few people had A LOT of impacts to reenter. **This is a good reminder to be prompt in entering your impacts. Don't let them back up.**
- ♦ Please check your GivePulse profile for emergency contact information. It's important that we have that so that the contact can be reached when needed. Click the down arrow by your photo, select “Profile,” then “Edit Profile;” you will have to go through several pages to find the emergency contact page. It has been advised that this information be on the back of each member's name tag. (Use a Sharpie pen)

Reflection of the month:

“What did I do?...Perspired!” entered under Demonstration Gardens/Work at Ahtanum

Total number of impacts entered in June: **219**

Total number of hours volunteered in June: **421.18**

Number of volunteers: **44**

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.



Last year, **Diana's** Norski Scarecrow ran off to the Fall Symposium. He heard that he may have a chance to be in this year's SunFair Parade so he showed back up! Let's see if he makes two parades in a row!

Yakima County MG Garden Locations

Ahtanum Park Garden:

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

Kamiakin Gardens:

1020 Fort Road, Toppenish

Remembering Gini, a Community's Positive Force: 'Growing More than Food: Buena Community Garden'

by Carol Barany, Yakima Magazine 2018

Something extraordinary is growing in a community garden in Buena, Washington. You might think that a program about vegetable gardening is all about how to grow fresh, nutritious food.

That's part of it, but by gardening together and learning from each other, a flush of community pride and unity is also blossoming in this Lower Valley town of 1,000 residents, 23 miles southeast of Yakima.

As Gini Obert, a third generation Buena farm girl and godmother of the garden explains it, "the women of Buena have always taken care of Buena."

Without a local school district of their own, Buena's children are bused to schools in Toppenish. They can't participate in after-school programs there because they can't miss the bus back to Buena. Gini felt Buena's children deserved more opportunities for learning. In 2005, she and a group of concerned women, all members of the non-profit Friends of the Buena Library (FOBL), started an after school enrichment and tutoring program at the library with the help of volunteer teachers. The library building was a double-wide trailer, owned by FOBL.

The Yakima Valley Regional Library provided books and staff, but the facility was old, and bursting at the seams. Buena clearly needed a new library, and FOBL raised the money to build it. Opening in 2012, the new library is a vital hub in this unincorporated community, and 1,200 visits are made to this branch of the Yakima Valley Regional Library EACH month. FOBL's after-school enrichment programs are even more popular and effective in the new building.

A few years ago, Gini asked some residents, "What do you think we need in Buena?" A young woman "wished we had a garden."

Surrounded by orchards and vineyards, it's ironic that Buena meets the USDA's definition of a food desert. Residents looking for fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthy whole foods have to drive somewhere else

to shop, since Buena lacks a large supermarket.

Buena has two mini-marts, a library, post office, and a tavern.

Buena and that young woman were about to get a garden.

In 2014, Gini, now a newly minted Master Gardener, invited that group's Community Involvement Committee down to share her vision of establishing a garden where Buena residents could maintain plots and grow their own vegetables.

Some of those early meetings were held over plates of chicken at the Buena Tavern where Sammy Henry worked. Right across the street was an unused pasture growing rocks, weeds, and barbed wire. Sammy owns that property and lives next door in one of Buena's oldest homes. Sammy wanted something beautiful growing in the town he's lived in for over sixty years. One of the garden's most ardent supporters, he donated the use of that pasture, as well as water and electricity.

In the beginning, Master Gardeners held epic work parties, clearing debris, mowing chest-high weeds, and building a fence from old orchard props. Raised beds were constructed from reclaimed lumber. A semi-load of compost was donated, and Walt's Hauling brought in a truckload of leaves for mulch. Two local farmers installed the irrigation system. A Buena business donated a roomy storage shed to keep gardening tools secure. Someone came up with a Porta-Potty. Another volunteer built an expansive picnic table to go with two long and brightly painted church pews, making the garden a place to relax and linger, as well as work.

In 2015, a handful of families requested plots. The number grew to twenty in 2016. In 2018, 30 families maintain 36 raised beds, and there's talk of more ex-

(continued on next page)

(Buena Garden, continued)

pansion. In many cases, children heard about the garden at the library and encouraged their parents to participate. This year, some kids are maintaining two beds dedicated to Katie's Krops, making Buena one of 100 gardens across the country participating in a program where the next gardening generation grows and donates produce to the needy.

While Master Gardeners will continue to provide education at the garden, their goal is to turn its management over to the gardeners themselves. Carlos, an enthusiastic 18 year old with three years of experience at the garden, has learned to repair the irrigation system, and has become a garden manager. I met Mario, who was encouraged by his daughter, who also has a plot, to participate. Mario and Carlos just finished building an arbor over the picnic table, and before long, it will be covered with verdant vines of table grapes, providing food and welcoming shade.

Gardens like these are communities within themselves, as well as part of a larger community.

Gini and a group of Master Gardeners meet at the garden every Tuesday at 5:00 pm to teach and encourage families they now consider their neighbors and friends.

I was there on a hot evening in mid-July. Carlos was edging the garden's raised beds and watering his own plot, lush with cilantro, peppers, and tomatoes. As I walked along the rows, I could see that gardeners recently weeded, staked and pruned tomatoes, and pulled spent pea vines to make room for a second crop.

Master Gardener Mission Statement:

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

Many work in the fields and warehouses all day, and wait until temperatures cool down before working again. By 7:00 pm, 6 or 7 families had arrived and were enjoying snacks. One Master Gardener baked brownies, while others brought a fresh jicama salad and gingerbread to share. There were radishes with ranch dressing, and many of us tasted fresh garbanzo beans for the first time.

Master Gardener Deb Mathieu was offering instruction in Spanish. All the ice needed to put a chill on beverages is supplied by the tavern. Small children play while their older siblings and parents tend their gardens.

Unlike so many public places, there is no litter or graffiti here. When tavern patrons noticed that a donkey had wandered in and was eating the garden's strawberries, they promptly corralled it and returned it to its owner. Townspeople are watching over this labor of love.

'Buena Bill', the tavern's owner since 1976, remembers the days when most talk at the bar was about the town's gangs, crime and drugs. Law enforcement worked hard to make Buena safer.

These days, Bill hears a lot of bragging about tomatoes and pride in the garden. Local people, transforming a forlorn pasture into a landscape of green abundance: now that's something to talk about.

Guiding Principles

Act Respectfully

Lead Supportively

Adaptability

Work Together

Always Learning

Emphasize Quality

Communicate Effectively

Be Honest



August 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Garden Class: <i>Winter Tomatoes</i> 10 am Heirloom
2 Farmer's Market 9-1 Yakima Herald Article	3 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	4	5 APG Garden 7-10 PICNIC! Noon @ Red Barn Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	6 Heirloom Garden 7- WVFG 7-10	7 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	8 Garden Class: <i>Birds, Pollina- tors, etc. in Na- tive Gardens</i> 10 am Ahtanum
9 Farmer's Market 9-1 Yakima Herald Article	10 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	11	12 APG Garden 7-10 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	13 Heirloom Garden 7-10 WVFG 7-10	14 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	15
16 Farmer's Market 9-1 Yakima Herald Article	17 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	18	19 APG Garden 7-10 Answer Clinic Foundation/ Program Mtg @ 10:30 Red Barn	20 Heirloom Garden 7-10 WVFG 7-10	21 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	22 Garden Class: <i>Native Plants/ Pollinators</i> 10 am Ahtanum (rescheduled)
23 Farmer's Market 9-1 Yakima Herald Article	24 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	25	26 APG Garden 7-10 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	27 Heirloom Garden 7-10 WVFG 7-10 Clinic Mtg @ Ext 1:30-3	28 Answer Clinic 9-12/1-4	29
30 Farmer's Market/ Youth Team 9-1 Yakima Herald Article	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. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.				