Scoop o' Dirt
Yakima County Master Gardener News
November 2026

A Harvest of People by Max Coots

Let us give thanks for a bounty of people:

For generous friends, with smiles as bright as their blossoms.
For feisty friends as tart as apples;
For continuous friends who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us that we've had them.
For crotchety friends, as sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;
For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants and as elegant as a row of corn; and the others as plain as potatoes and as good for you.
For friends as unpretentious as cabbages, as subtle as summer squash, as persistent as parsley, as endless as zucchini, and who, like parsnips, can be counted on to see you through the winter.
For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening-time.
For young friends, who wind around like tendrils and hold us.

We give thanks for friends now gone, like gardens past that have been harvested, but who fed us in their times that we might live.

Max Coots (1927-2009) was Minister *Emeritus* at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton, New York, where he created whimsical ceramic sculpture.

Intern Focus

More interns have completed the 40 required hours, in addition to the GreenSchool and in-person labs, to become a certified Master Gardener. ***Carol Baldridge, Christina Nyirati, Don Mayo, Pam DeLaRosa, and Sandy Roselli*** all reached the goal in October. Kudos to them! A job well done. That makes 18!! Honors will come at our Awards Luncheon in February.

Interns, we track your progress through GivePulse. Please update your impacts. Time to work in the Gardens, as well as the Answer Clinic, have passed as those venues have closed for the season. Contact Sarah Judd, Reggie Sanderson, or Sally Mayo regarding helping with the Seed Library, which is part of the Heirloom Garden.

Thanks to everyone who voted, we won the People's Choice award in the America 250 category in the photo contest of the fair! It was titled "Growing America!" More importantly, many, many people were exposed to one of our beautiful gardens!
It had to be entered under a specific photographer, so we could not enter it just under Master Gardeners. The $75 prize awarded for this will be donated to Ahtanum Garden.

~Kelly Klingman



We Grew Lunch 2026: Bountiful

We Grew Lunch

———-Salsa Station Appetizers———

Pear Salsa	Diana Pieti
Apple Salsa	Diana Pieti
Sunset Magazine Salsa	Diana Pieti
Peach Salsa	Melody Westmoreland
Blueberry Salsa	Carol & John Barany
Pico de Gallo	Carol & John Barany
Corn Salsa	Phyllis Pugnetti
Zucchini Dip	Phyllis Pugnetti
Corn Chips	Provided by Camille Smith

———-Main Course———-

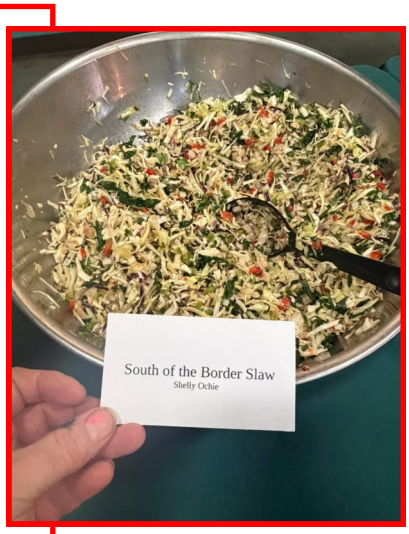
Tamale Pie	Carol Barany
South of the Border Slaw	Shelly Oshie
Spicy Tajin Fruit Cups	Diana Pieti & Sue Schauer

———-Slab Pie Desserts———-

Rhubarb Slab Pie	Melody Westmoreland
Fuji Apple Slab Pie	Carol & John Barany
Peach Slab Pie	Diana Pieti
Pumpkin Slab Pie	Sue Schauer
Whipped Cream	Provided by Marge Conzatti

———Thank you to all who contributed from their gardens and kitchens———-

Diana Pieti	Green & Red Cabbage, Green Peppers, Red Onion, Peaches
Sue Schauer	Pumpkin
Phyllis Pugnetti	Beans, Sweet Onions, Zucchini, Garlic, Sweet Peppers, Tomatoes
Mary Kearney	Apples
John & Carol Barany	Corn, Sweet Peppers, Tomatoes
Melody Westmoreland	Rhubarb
Shelly Oshie	Radishes, Peppers





Slab pies were delicious!



Suzann *shared cuttings from her cranberry vibernum for table centerpiece decorations.*



A great crowd enjoying each others' company while dining on home grown food.



Laura W. *gave an impromptu talk on a recent topic often asked about at the Farmer's Market.*

Happy Birthday!!

11/1	Marge Conzatti	11/4	Amber Knox	11/12	Guillermo Rivero	11/19	Meg Pittman
11/1	Sally Mayo	11/5	Rick Russell	11/15	Barbara Glover	11/28	John Barany
11/1	Phyllis Pugnetti	11/7	Debra Byrd	11/18	Dan Fortier	11/29	Kelly Navarro

Could This Be Your Year to Serve? A Friendly Guide to December's Election

In August, *Foundation News* introduced the new Board structure adopted in the Foundation's revised bylaws, and in September we set that discussion aside to look at charitable giving. This month, we return to the topic and focus on the mechanics of the December election - how directors will be chosen, how officers will be selected, and what Board service actually involves. The December 2026 Annual Meeting will be the first election held under the new structure, so it is worth understanding how the process will work before we gather to vote.

How the December Election Will Work

At the December 2026 Annual Meeting, Active Members will elect the Foundation's seven directors. This will be the first election held under the new bylaws, and because it establishes the Foundation's staggered rotation, candidates will run for designated seats that carry different term lengths:

- Three one-year seats
- Two two-year seats
- Two three-year seats

Nominations may be made in advance of the Annual Meeting or from the floor during the meeting. Either approach is welcome, and each candidate must be an Active Member of the Foundation in good standing.

Why the Terms Are Staggered

Assigning different term lengths to the initial seats means the seats will expire in different years, so the entire Board will no longer come up for election at the same time. After this transition, director seats will generally be filled for three-year terms as they expire in the normal course. This design preserves continuity: experienced directors remain on the Board as new members join, which helps sustain institutional knowledge and long-term projects while creating regular, predictable openings for members to step into service.

How Officers Will Be Selected

Members of the Foundation elect directors; they do not vote directly on officer positions. Once the seven directors are elected, the newly elected Board will select its officers-President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer-from among those seven directors. Officers serve one-year terms. The three directors who are not selected as officers continue to serve as full voting directors with an equal voice in the Board's decisions. Keeping these two steps distinct allows the Board to align officer responsibilities with each director's experience while keeping the membership's vote at the center of who serves.

What Board Service Involves

The Board now meets on a quarterly schedule, with occasional special meetings when a timely matter arises. Directors are expected to review materials beforehand, attend and take part in the discussion, exercise sound judgment on the decisions before the Board, and follow through on the assignments they accept. Between meetings, service may include committee work, planning, financial oversight, policy review, support for fundraising, and other projects that arise during the year. The time commitment varies by role and season, and officer roles generally call for more preparation and follow-up than non-officer positions.

Prior Board experience is not required to serve effectively; what matters most is a commitment to the Foundation and the Master Gardener Program and a willingness to prepare, collaborate, and follow through. It is also worth stating plainly that there is no expectation for directors to make personal financial contributions to the Foundation. Board members support fundraising through oversight planning, stewardship, and participation-not through a required personal gift.

Preparing for December

Members who are interested in taking part can renew their Foundation membership in November so they are Active Members in good standing, and speak with

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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

(Foundation News, continued from previous page)

a current Board member to learn more about the responsibilities and time commitment. From there, allow your name to be put forward in advance or from the floor, review the meeting materials when they arrive, and join us at the December Annual Meeting. This transition is intended to strengthen leadership continuity and broaden participation, and we hope more members will give thoughtful consideration to Board service. The Foundation's work depends on steady leadership and active participation, and this election offers a meaningful opportunity to help shape what comes next.

Master Gardener Mission Statement:

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

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

Program Meeting

Wednesday Nov 18th @ 11:00
at the Red Barn

Classes in the Garden

Rick Russell taught his annual class on tool maintenance, stressing the cleaning of the whole tool and lubricating the moving parts, then showing how to sharpen the blades.





Newsletter submissions are due on the 25th of each month. Please send to Julie via text at (530)209-4329 or by email: jbhunziker@gmail.com. Please include your name so that credit can be given to the source.

Around Our Gardens

Heirloom Garden

(Photos by ***Kelly K.***)



Janice works on the tomatoes.



Team leads ***Sally*** and ***Sarah*** are hard to miss in their colorful hoodies.



Connie and ***Sandy*** celebrate having tackled the cutting back of the vines.



Rhubarb says “I’m done.”



End-of-season crew are all smiles: ***Semone, Janice, Kelli J, Reggie.***



The dill has gone to seed.

All photos in the newsletter are submitted by ***Kelly Klingman***, unless otherwise noted. She is a busy lady getting around to all of our venues.



This squash got itself into a pretty tight bind.

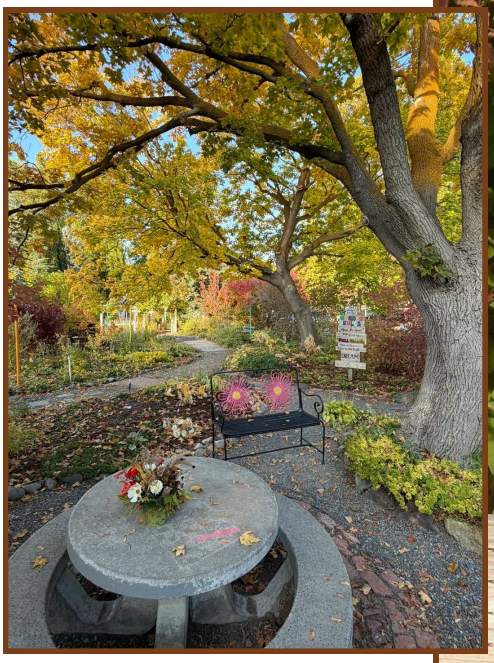
Ahtanum Park



Celebrating the last day of the season. Front row: ***Shelly, Angela, Mary K, Sue S, Janice, Suzann;*** Back Row: ***Phyllis, Sally, Connie, Joan, Kelly K, Reggie, Karen T, Laura W., Debra, Camille, Semone, Annette, Barb, Kelli B, Marge, and Darrell.***



Kelli Barton found ***Amber*** to be perfect amongst the fall colors.



Fall is colorful at the APG Discovery Garden.



A seasonal resident checks on its house.



Garden Guy at park entrance has been dressed for the season.

West Valley Food Garden

John reported that this year over 1300 pounds of produce have been harvested and taken to the Tieton food bank, which serves 120 families. Clients rarely get fresh crops. What a great service to the community!



Kelli J, Catherine, and ***Joe*** moving wood chips to the garden.,



Semone gets her hands dirty.



A day's harvest.



It was a cold, cold morning.



Pruners, string, and U-stakes ready for winter storage.

Farmer's Market



It's getting colder and our volunteers, ***Ken*** *and* ***Elizabeth*** *are having to bundle up.*



Ken *and* ***Laura L.*** *man the table.*



Jenny, Angela, and Ken welcome the public and their questions..



Steve and Sue S. *man the table at the fair booth.*



Team leads Kelly K and Jenny (Youth) and Laura W. and Ken (Farmer's Market)



Pumpkin Patty day at the Farmers Market Youth table with Patty Ferguson, Patty Fendall, and Patty Dion engaging with the young visitors.

Youth Outreach

On Sept 24, the Ahtanum Youth Park Garden welcomed 48 homeschoolers and their 22 parents for a tour. ***Diana Pieti*** and ***Sue Schauer*** led tours around the garden as kids worked on their AYP scavenger hunt. ***Suzann McFeat*** and ***Annette Olson*** helped students build their own mini worm composter. ***Laura Willett*** showed how to read a seed packet, planting carrot seeds (that students took home) and explained Plant a Row. ***Kelly Klingman*** and ***Pam DeLaRosa*** did the CD case seed germination project. ***Kelli Barton*** kept us all on track and kept the groups flowing. *(Photo release provided)* ***~Kelly Klingman***















Garden Swap 2026



Another successful garden swap was held at the Ahtanum Park Garden in September. Lots of fun things were shared...seeds, houseplants, garden plants, tools (electric hedge shears were donated to the APG Demonstration Garden), décor. All had fun "shopping" and visiting.









*Did you get **Janice Miller's** variegated leaf tiny sunflower seeds at our swap? She shared plants with me in spring and they are the sweetest.*

~Diana Pieti



When I moved here there was a Virginia Creeper growing here, and each summer I just kept it pruned off but this year I let it grow and did it ever. Many of you know I make wreaths but usually buy the forms, but this year I harvested and am set for awhile. ***~ Diana Pieti***

Floribunda: Earthworms at Night

by Carol Barany

Early November found me digging my dahlias for winter storage. Finding handfuls of earthworms in the moist soil clinging to the tubers made me realize that I wasn't the only one working in the garden that day. Discovering so many earthworms near the surface made me wonder what happened when the days grew even colder and the soil began to freeze. Looking for an answer, I was in for some surprises.

Over the last 11,000 years our local ecosystems developed without earthworms. The native earthworms that once inhabited central Washington were lost during the Pleistocene Ice Age. The earthworms that Yakima gardeners are familiar with didn't arrive until early settlers brought them in soils, plants, or ship ballast from Europe.

Charles Darwin, whose book on earthworms was more widely read than his book on natural selection, guessed that most of the fertile soil on earth must have passed through the gut of an earthworm. While not entirely correct, earthworms do play a critical role in soil and plant health. Instead of teeth, earthworms have a gizzard like a chicken. In a soil ecosystem, earthworms decompose plant and animal materials, converting them into nutrient-rich, moisture-retaining organic matter excreted as castings, or worm poop. As they tunnel and eat their way through the soil, earthworms also improve soil quality and texture. This makes it easier for plant roots to access water, air and nutrients. Over one million worms may be present in one acre of soil and these worms can produce 700 pounds of castings each day.

The world's 5,000 species of earthworms are one of three main types. Epigeic earthworms, like red wigglers (Eisenia fetida) used in compost bins, feed on surface soil and decaying organic matter. They do not form permanent burrows and are usually killed when the upper foot of soil freezes in Yakima winters. But, before they die, they lay eggs in cocoons to hatch when the weather warms up. The earthworms that gardeners most frequently notice when digging are the anecic and endogeic types. Anecic earthworms, including the familiar night crawler (Lumbricus terrestris), come to the surface at night and drag organic matter from the soil surface into their vertical burrows which can be 6' deep. Endogeic earthworms build extensive horizontal burrows up to 20" deep.



They live exclusively in soil, feeding on available organic matter. They're usually not noticed, except after a heavy rain when they come to the surface. While worms need moisture to survive, waterlogged soil will kill them.

Within their burrows, earthworms form a mucus-lined chamber where they curl into a tight ball to prevent moisture loss. They may feel slimy, but earthworms are actually covered in tiny hair-like bristles called setae, which they use to burrow through the soil.

Earthworms breathe through their skin and must be in an environment that has at least 40% moisture or they will die. As the upper soil freezes, anecic and endogeic worms create mucus-lined chambers below the frost line. They remain there in a reduced metabolic state called estivation until the soil warms again. Worms also survive dry seasons this way, becoming active when wetter conditions return.

In some parts of the United States, earthworms are doing their jobs too well. In the Great Lakes region, non-native worms have moved into hardwood forests that evolved without dependence on earthworms for recycling. These hungry new arrivals are removing organic matter that would have decomposed more slowly, releasing nutrients and contributing to the growth of native species. The activities of these non-natives have degraded the ecosystem and led to an increase in invasive plant species and a decrease in the diversity of wildlife. Studies indicate that the Lumbricus species are the most destructive.

Scientists are determining whether earthworms help sequester carbon in the soil with their recycling activities or if they're actually releasing it into the atmos-

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{Earthworms, Continued from previous page)
phere, contributing to global climate change. It's a complex issue that will be studied closely in the future.

In the meantime, never dump leftover live bait, which is mostly non-native worms, when fishing in remote areas.

There is some good news for worm enthusiasts. The giant Palouse earthworm (Driloleirus americanus), native to Washington's southeastern prairie, seemed to have disappeared as grasslands became farmlands and was feared to be extinct. However, two new specimens have recently been discovered on opposite sides of the interior Columbia River basin.

As for earthworms, the best way to sustainably support their populations is to encourage existing populations, not introduce new ones into an ecosystem. Here are a few tips.

- Add organic material to garden soils.
- Leave organic mulch on soil surface.
- Keep soils moist.
- Don't till deeply.
- Do not use pesticides.
- Avoid introducing earthworms, including fishing worms, into sensitive areas, especially forests.

While respected and valued for their soil building efforts, there now is concern that many of the earthworms actually are non-native species. In fact, research indicates that the worms creating bumps in lawns, being pulled from the ground by birds and surfacing on sidewalks during wet weather are predominantly non-native species. WSU and University of Idaho researchers checking earthworm populations in the Palouse area found that non-native species of earthworms predominate in home gardens and agricultural lands. Why the concern? Scientists are worried because they are so good at recycling organic matter, maybe a little too good. In the Great Lakes, these over-achieving non-native worms have invaded hardwood forests that don't depend on earthworms to recycle organic matter on the forest floor. The invading worms are removing organic matter that would have decomposed more slowly, releasing nutrients and contributing to the growth of native species. The activities of the non-native earthworms significantly have changed the ecosystem and led to an increase in invasive plant species and a decrease in the diversity of wildlife. Studies indicate that the Lumbricus species, including the robust night crawler, are the most destructive.

GivePulse Tip of the Month

by Julie Hunziker

Yakima County access: **https://wsu.givepulse.com/group/453187-WSU-Yakima-County-Master-Gardeners**

GivePulse

Confused about how to enter an impact?? Many are, as is evident by their entries. Here are a couple of helpful hints:

1) ***Refer to the Sunday weekly email.*** John does a stupendous job guiding us on how to enter an impact for each activity.

2) ***Refer to the back of your directory*** where there is a chart on how to report your hours in GivePulse. The top row (in blue) is the Event Category (the first category requested by GP). Listed under each Event Category is a column with Reporting Codes. Find what you did (ie. Set up at the Farmer's Market or Fair) and go to the top of that column to find the appropriate Event Category.

Reflections of the month: *"I liked the term "fall rest" instead of "fall cleanup" so there is something left in the garden to support insects during winter. Also, like her idea of selecting plants that also are attractive in the winter."* entered under Continuing Education/Zoom or Podcast approved classes.

Focus on Continuing Education

Looking for Continuing Education?

Local Resources:

* **Arboretum Classes**
* **Staying Mission Driven**: Wednesday, Dec. 16th @ 9 am— News and updates about Master Gardener program from state program coordinator, Jennifer Marquis, and other WSU Extension faculty and staff. Register for Zoom meeting through GivePulse. Or watch recordings of past sessions on YouTube.
* **Evergreen Thumb Podcast** (WSU Master Gardeners)

  Recent episodes: Episode 84: What Gardeners Can Learn From Washington Ecoregions
  Episode 83: Urban Tree Canopy: How Trees in Cities Keep Temperatures Low
  Episode 82: How to Grow Thriving Garlic in the PNW
  Edpisode 81: Clean Plant Center NW: Protecting Trees, Grapes, and Hops
  Episode 80: Bulb Season: Setting Up Your Garden For Colorful Spring Bloom
* King County MG 2026 Garden Savvy Series (via Zoom recording): Three series of 6 classes ($42 for the series or $9 per class. Register here.
* **NW Flower and Garden Show** Feb 17-21st, Downtown Seattle. Early Bird special saves $5/Cyber week special is half-price (available Nov 30th-Dec 4th)
* **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.

MG Program Priorities

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

Thank You For Your Time!!

In the month of October,
Yakima County Master Gardeners
volunteered:

274 impacts

562.21 hours

50 volunteers

Year-to-date:

4542 impacts

9407.68 hours

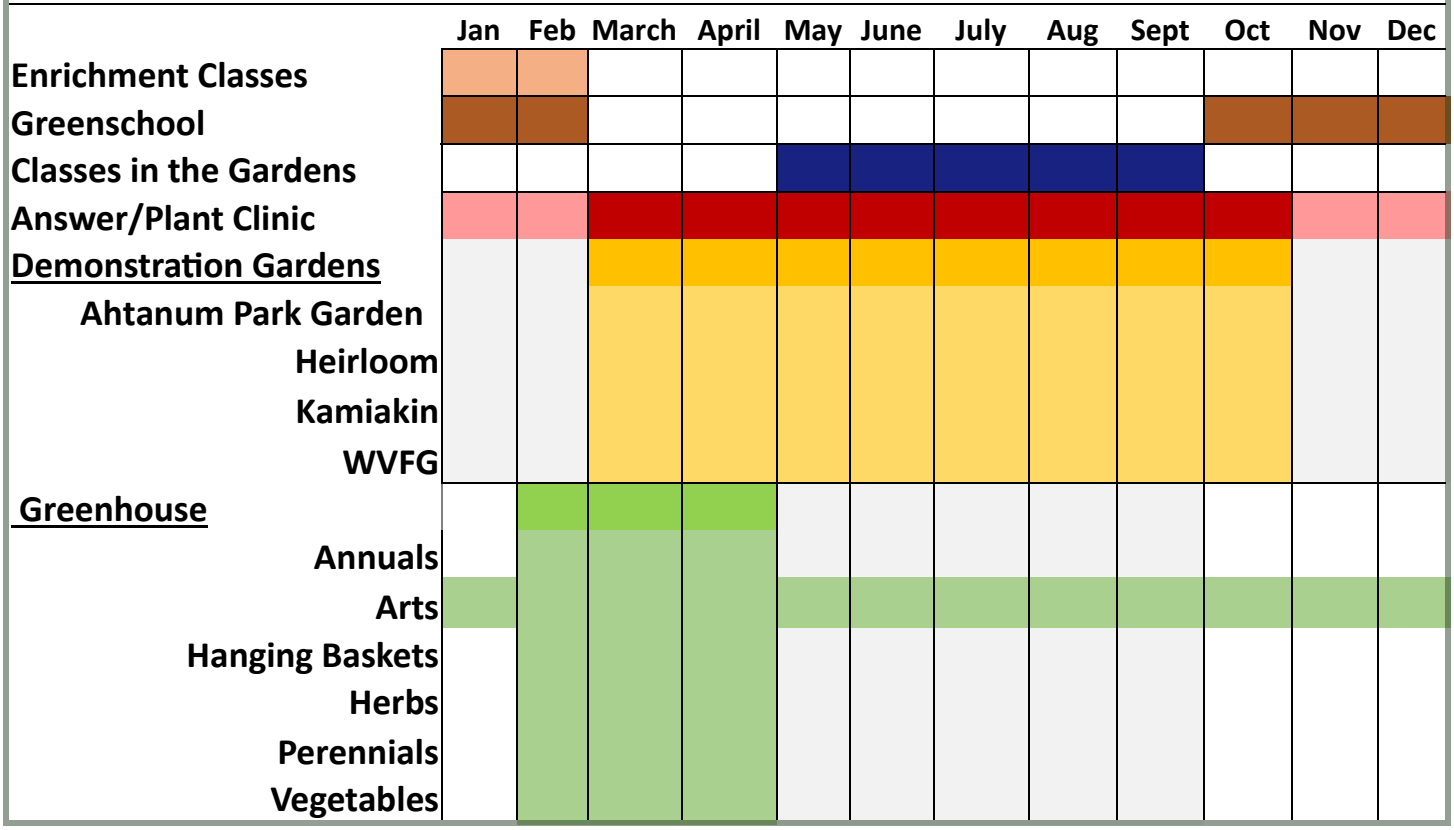
105 volunteers

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

Yakima County MG Leaders

Answer/Plant Clinic: Andrea Altmayer/Kim Foster/Kathy Paulson
Greenhouse: Camille Smith/Kelli Barton
Annuals: Lorie Harrison/Camille Smith
Perennials: Carol Barany/Melody Westmoreland
Herbs: Diana Pieti/Diane Berthon
Hanging Baskets: Mary Hewitt/Shelly Oshie
Vegetables: Don Flyckt/Beatrice Reiss /Kelly Klingman
Art: Jenny Mansfield/Debbie Sundlee
Plant Sale: Laura Willet, Reggie Sanderson
Demonstration Gardens:
Ahtanum: Sue Schauer/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/Debra Kroon
Publications: Julie Hunziker/Debra Kroon/Rhonda Gardinier/Steve Kuhn/Barbara Schmitt
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/Barbara Schmitt
Mentor Team: Debra Kroon/Melody Westmoreland/Julie Hunziker

Master Gardener Venue Work Seasons





November 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Yakima Herald Article	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Yakima Herald Article	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Yakima Herald Article	16	17	18 Program Mtg @ 11:00 Red Barn	19	20	21
22 Yakima Herald Article	23	24	25	26 *Thanksgiving Day*	27	28
29 Yakima Herald Article	30					

The Gardens and Answer Clinic have closed for the winter.

Guiding Principles

Act Respectfully Work Together
Lead Supportively **Always Learning**
Adaptability Emphasize Quality

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.