

The Dirt

The Newsletter of the Master Gardener Foundation of King County



March 2014

A Note from Our President, Dave Hanower



I want to congratulate the training class of 2014. We are excited about having them join our clinics and gardens in a few short weeks.

A big thanks to all of the Master Gardeners who volunteered at this year's Northwest Flower & Garden Show. Not only is it a fun event, but the show's organizer makes a very generous donation to the Foundation in recognition of your efforts. Great job!

The Plant Sale Committee is hard at work organizing this year's

sale. I hope that you will consider volunteering at the sale and, of course, buying a few plants while you're there. If you are interested in signing up, please contact Horst Momber at momberh@mac.com.

The Plant Sale is our biggest fundraiser of the year, and we appreciate your effort and support.

The Search Committee has begun the process of soliciting nominations to run for the Foundation's Board. We will be electing 5 directors. Nominations are due by March 15, and the election will begin by April 15. The official notice is included in this edition of *The Dirt* and is also available on our website, mgfkc.org. If you are interested in running or have

questions about what's involved, please contact chair Marcia David at nominations@mgfkc.org.

An active and engaged Board is crucial to the long-term success of the Foundation, so I hope that you'll consider running or nominating someone you think would be a great candidate.

Finally, I wanted to report that 2013 was another successful year for the Foundation. Our Treasurer, Peggy Smith, has included a recap of our financial results in this edition. On behalf of the Board, I want to thank each of you for all of your support last year in donating during GiveBig! or the year-end appeal, selling Raffle tickets, or volunteering at the Plant Sale or the Flower & Garden Show. Our financial results are a direct result of your efforts. THANK YOU!

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IN PRAISE OF PRIMROSES by Elaine Anderson

I'll bet this has happened to you. The doors to the supermarket glide open, and you're about to enter in search of a loaf of bread and a jug of wine. The doors glide closed, but you're still outside. You've been drawn to a confection of colors, pastels of yellow, pink, coral, and mauve, brilliant flashes of gold, red, and deep purple. These delightful flowers appear for sale in mid-winter, in 4-inch pots for \$1 or \$2 each. They are primroses, a variety of *Primula vulgaris*. The name *Primula*, derived from *primus*, means first or early. The common name primrose, is a shortening of prime rose, or first rose. It's an appropriate name for a plant that blooms at the beginning of the year. This harbinger of the earth's awakening is also symbolic of renewed spirit, attraction, and love. A primrose path is said to be one free of strife and full of pleasure.

The primrose has been celebrated in myth and literature. When Paraisos (the primrose's ancient name), son of Flora and Priapus, died of a broken heart, primroses sprang from his body. There are many folk tales telling of the power of the primrose to enable people to see fairies. Shakespeare made many mentions of the flower, and poets have sung the praises of this most charming of plants.

There seem to be endless varieties of *Primula vulgaris*. But most cannot be had for \$2. What about those 5-for-\$10 primroses? At that price, you can purchase several dozen, but are you "getting what you pay for," that is, not much? Actually, if you have reasonable expectations for these bargain plants, you will get your money's worth.

You may be disappointed if you put them into the ground and look upon them as perennials. I say *may be*, because I've had some continue growing and blooming year after year. The best use of these cheerful flowers is to add them to containers and tuck them into garden beds to add brightness and color. You don't even need to remove them from their pots. Each time you see them, you'll smile. Primroses will keep that smile on your face until spring awakens the rest of the garden.

Future Foundation Meetings

All Master Gardener's are welcome and encouraged to attend board meetings.

Thursday, April 10, 7 pm to 8:30 pm, CUH

Thursday, May 8, 7 pm to 8:30 pm, CUH

Thursday, June 12, 7 pm to 8:30 pm, CUH

Financial Results for 2013

Revenue

Donations	33,953
Plant sale and Raffle	33,353
Flower & Garden Show	8,500
Other Income	<u>8,143</u>
Total Income	83,949

Expenses

Program Expenses	46,602
Administrative Expenses	<u>6,677</u>
Total Expense	53,279

Net Revenue

30,670



MGF
www.mgfkc.org

We are
**searching for
Board Members**

Send names to nominations@mgfkc.org
before March 15, 2014.



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ANNUAL SEED CATALOGS by Wendy Lagozzino

As catalogs go, I get my fair share in the mail every year. But the ones I look forward to the most are the ones full of new things I've yet to learn about. Gone are the days of thick volumes full of glossy pictures and a wide array of choices; however, the internet can be of some use when only text is to be found.

As a lover of flowers, my number one favorite seed catalog has to be Chiltern Seeds out of England. Could you have ever imaged that there could be 26 kinds of Lobelia? Or 25 kinds of Cosmos? It is very exciting to see the first flowers bloom on a plant you have never seen let alone anyone else you know. I find selections are staggered so that they change from year to year in any category.

They aptly state on the cover "Grow something new from seed." So I do, and my recent new favorites have been *Linaria triornithophora* 'Pink Birds' with grey-green foliage and relatively large *Linaria*-type blooms in pink with long spurs. It has been a short lived perennial for me and worth replanting every few years. A 2011 favorite was *Gilia rubra*. Taking most of the summer to mature, it finally shot up a slender spike 3' feet tall lined with red trumpet shaped flowers lingering into fall that attracted hummingbirds as much as the late blooming salvias.

Over the years, Thompson and Morgan have been a big favorite of mine. They led the way to my heart with a plethora of glossy, colorful pictures of each cultivar. In this way, I learned to recognize every annual to be had that would grow in our climate. As the years went by, they have had to downsize, but it is still exciting to see the new choices and learn what the trends are. They tell you how easy the seeds are to grow, the light requirement, the height, germination time, soil type and temperature required, as well as a short description. Proper names are used to identify the plant as opposed to some catalogs that use nicknames such that you never know what it truly is.

Annie's Annuals can offer annuals as full grown plants if one wants to skip the process of seed starting on your own. Their catalog certainly pulls at your horticultural heartstrings with its beautifully enticing pictures. It is also a good way to obtain seeds off a plant you cannot otherwise find albeit at some expense.

Dozens of catalogs of all kinds grace my gardening bookshelf, but these are some of my longstanding favorites.



**'THE FIRST DAY OF
SPRING IS ONE
THING, AND THE
FIRST SPRING DAY IS
ANOTHER. THE
DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THEM IS
SOMETIMES AS
GREAT AS A
MONTH.'**

HENRY VAN DYKE



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Master Gardener Foundation of King County



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MASTER GARDENER FOUNDATION OF KING COUNTY Request for Nominations for 2014 Board Election

The Master Gardener Foundation of King County is soliciting nominations for Master Gardeners interested in serving on its Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning on June 1, 2014, and ending on May 31, 2017. Five (5) directors will be elected in May 2014 to the Board.

In accordance with the Foundation's By-Laws, a Search Committee will solicit and interview Board nominees. If you know of a Master Gardener who might be interested, feel free to forward their name to the Search Committee at nominations@mgfkc.org before March 15, 2014.

If you are interested in serving on the Board, please submit a brief bio-sketch (one or two paragraphs), including your contact information and a description of your involvement in the Master Gardener program, to the Search Committee **before March 15, 2014** at nominations@mgfkc.org or by mail to:

MGFKC Search Committee
Center for Urban Horticulture
Box 354115
Seattle, WA 98195

If you have any questions or want additional information, please send an e-mail to nominations@mgfkc.org or call Dave Hanower at (206) 365-1122.

About the Foundation and the Board of Directors

The Master Gardener Foundation of King County is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt entity that provides two thirds of the financial support for the Master Gardener Program in King County. Membership in the Foundation is free and open to all Master Gardeners in good standing in the King County program.

The Foundation seeks to include board members who are skilled in one or more of the activities in which the Board is engaged, such as, but not limited to, fund raising, communications, finance, marketing, education, clinic and garden management, etc. We also try to have representation on the Board from each of our program areas, including clinics, school and youth programs, diagnosticians, and gardens. Experience with non-profit organizations is helpful but not required.

Board positions do require a time commitment. All directors are expected to attend our monthly Board meetings and other program events, and to participate on one or more of our committees. The Board generally meets at the CUH on the second Thursday of each month, although summer meetings are often held at our demonstration or youth education gardens.

If you have questions about what's required, please feel free to contact the Search Committee, and we'll be happy to discuss them with you. Time spent working on the Board does count as Program Support hours.

Please consider applying for one of these very important positions. An active and engaged Board is critical to the long-term success of our program!

Center for Urban Horticulture University of Washington Box 354115 Seattle, WA 98195
(206) 685-5104. www.MGFKC.org

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JOIN THE FUN AT THE PREVIEW PARTY!

Friday, May 2 5:30-8:00 pm Tickets \$40

Master Gardeners know the MG Plant Sale is the place to buy your best plants. But everyone should know about the great time you have at the Preview Party the Friday evening before the Plant Sale itself on May 3 and 4.



You will enjoy delicious appetizers and wine AND have the **first pick of the plants** on sale!

Guest chefs offer up their finest selections, and a surprise celebrity chef will pick the winner of the *Chef's Choice Award*.

Everyone votes for their favorite guest chef, and our own **Ciscoe Morris** will award the coveted *Golden Brussels Sprout Award* to the winner.

The **Preview Party** tickets are \$40 for the May 2 event at [Brown Paper Tickets](#) . The number of tickets is limited so plan to get your tickets early!



Ciscoe Bestowing the Golden Brussels Sprout Award 2013



Some of the delectable desserts on offer at the 2013 Preview Party

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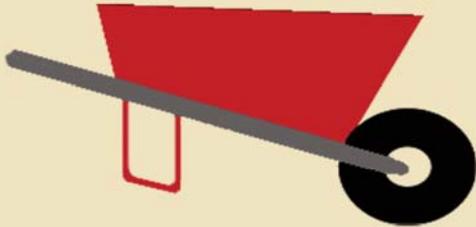
WSU Extension

Master Gardeners



grasses
NATIVES • perennials
VEGGIES bulbs
berries • EDIBLES
trees & shrubs
TOMATOES
perennials •
HERBS NATIVES
ornamentals

Master Gardener PLANT SALE
Preview Party May 2-5:30PM Plant Sale May 3 and 4



More details at mgfkc.org

Plant Sale

Pick it! Plant it!

May 3
8am to 5pm

May 4
10am to 3pm

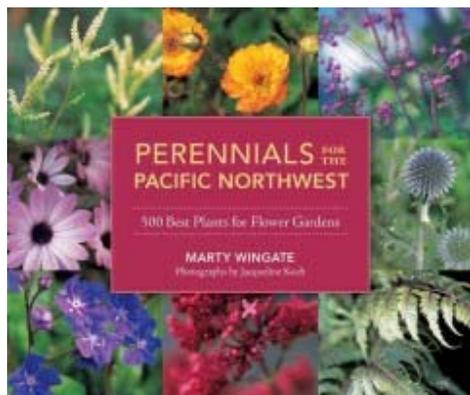
**Center for
Urban Horticulture**
3501 NE 41st St Seattle

Preview Party
Friday, May 2
5:30 to 8pm
Purchase tickets early
at mgfkc.org

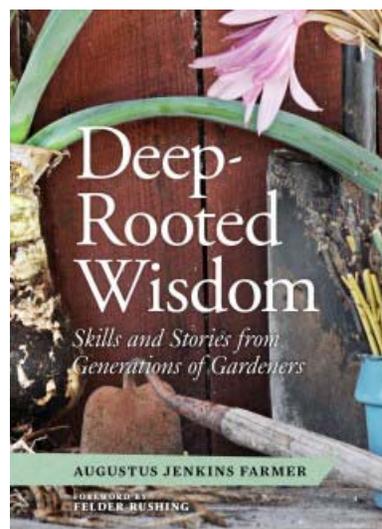
Proceeds from this sale go to the **Master Gardener Foundation** of King County
which supports all the Master Gardener programs in the county.

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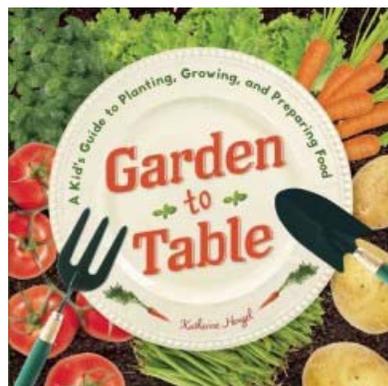
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Perennials for the Pacific Northwest: 500 Best Plants for Flower Gardens
by Marty Wingate
Sasquatch Books, 2013

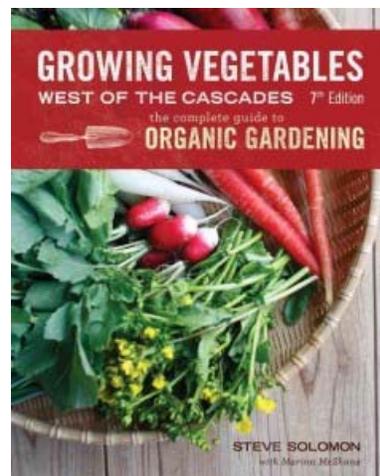


Deep-Rooted Wisdom: Stories and Skills From Generations of Gardeners
by Augustus Jenkins Farmer
Timber Press, 2014



Garden to Table: A Kid's Guide to Planting, Growing, and Preparing Food
by Katherine Hengel
Scarletta Junior Readers, 2014

Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades: The Complete Guide to Organic Gardening, 7th Edition
By Steve Solomon
Sasquatch Books, 2013



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PROPAGATION NOTES by Gordon Polson

Spring is a good time to divide established plants, and many herbaceous perennials need to be divided every few years anyway to stay healthy.

Plan to dig on a cool morning, preferably one with cloud cover – not too hard around here.

Before digging sharpen your tools. Use a spading fork or flat-bottomed spade rather than a shovel.

Water plants thoroughly between 12 and 24 hours in advance. Sink a spade into a nearby spot to test that the soil has indeed been saturated to the depth of the root ball.

Remove any mulch from around the plant, 6 to 8" beyond the foliage spread.

Dig out the plant by sinking the spade or fork vertically to its full depth outside the foliage spread/drip line. Continue lifting and sinking the spade in a line all around the plant. Repeat this process a **second time**, pushing even further into the soil. On the **third go-round**, use the spade like a lever to begin lifting the root ball out of the hole.

When lifting a very large plant, ask a friend to push a 2x12 board under the root ball as you work to add leverage to allow you to remove the root ball from the hole.

Keep roots moist and cool until they are replanted. If not potting up or replanting immediately, then "heel" them in by covering them with a blanket of soil, mulch, or moistened burlap until ready to plant.

After planting, water well. Avoid leaving air pockets in the soil around the new planting.

Dividing Fibrous-rooted Plants

There seem to be two types of plants with fibrous root systems: those whose roots grow in every direction, and those whose roots are a tidy collection of well organized, and often delicate, strands.

Gently **tease apart the roots** with your bare hands or use a tool to cut the clump into pieces, whichever is appropriate.

Look for the buds at the top of the root system when the plant is dormant. Each of these will become a new stem as the plant begins its spring growth. Give each division two or three buds to improve its ability to withstand the transplant process.

Timing is important: Divide **Fall bloomers** in the early Spring. Divide **Spring and summer bloomers** in the Fall.

Dividing Fleshy or Woody Crowned Plants

Crowns of these types of plants are sizable, dense and packed with growth.

Once the plant is out of the hole, **check the growth buds** to work out the best path for cutting the plant apart. Give each division 3 to 4 growth buds with lots of roots.

Plants resistant to division, such as Peonies and *Dicentra* may be better divided by taking cuttings.

Use sharp tools to **cut through the fleshy or woody crowns** without applying too much pressure. Pressure will cause bruising, leaving a chance of rot at the site.

Dividing Suckers from Plants

Suckers form at nodes along a plant's underground stems, known as stolons or rhizomes. Each sucker is capable of becoming an independent plant. You can easily divide the suckers formed the previous summer. If you are unsure about separating a sucker, follow these steps the year before you plan to dig the plant.

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In early Spring, find the stolon from which the sucker is growing.

Sink the spade in a circle around the sucker, 8 to 12 inches away, on all sides **except** through the stolon.

Repeat this process throughout the growing season, so by season's end the sucker will have created new roots "inside the pot" you have created.

Dig the sucker as usual when you are ready, cutting through the stolon this last time.

Dividing Plants with Rhizomes

Many rhizomatous plants should be dug and divided every 3 to 5 years. Keep a watch on the plant's performance to determine when to do this. Divide when flowering decreases or flower size diminishes, or it just looks crowded.

Best time to divide these plants is in the Fall when blooms are finished, and the root system is firmly established.

Divide in Spring as long as the flower buds forming are snapped off. This will allow the plant to put its energy into forming a strong root system before it blooms.

Dig the entire plant taking care not to damage the roots.

Divide leaving at least two buds per division and a good supply of roots.

Cut off the leaves so the plant is not stressed having to provide water to the leaf area.

Replant rhizomes at the same depth as the original plant. Water well.

Dividing Plant with Tubers

Technically, tubers are swollen underground stems, like rhizomes, which they resemble. These plants are propagated in the same way as rhizomatous plants, the structure is the same. *Dahlias* are treated like tubers although they are technically a swollen root.

Many tuberous plants come from warm regions, so they need to be lifted before they freeze in the Fall, and stored in a frost-free environment. Replant in the Spring after the last frost.

Dig the plant after the top growth has been killed by frost. Allow to rest and for a week to harden the skin. This also allows the soil adhering to the tuber to dry out before handling.

Cut back stems to several inches above the tuber. The next year's eyes will grow from this area, so check for disease or broken stem necks. If found, discard the tuber.

Gently wash the tuber to remove soil, and let the surface dry completely.

Cut the tubers apart, making sure each tuber has at least one eye. Otherwise, leave it.

Allow the cut surfaces to dry overnight, then **pack upside down** on top of a layer of sand or peat moss in a sturdy box.

Dividing Plants with Offsets

Offsets are young plants that grow from the crown or stolon of a parent plant. An offset is similar to, but not the same as a sucker. Sever the offset from the parent in much the same way as a sucker.

Many plants that produce offsets are from warm, dry regions where seed germination is not guaranteed. Offsets take water and nutrients from the parent plant until they can safely be rooted on their own. Many houseplants grow this way, and, consequently, you will be moving them into plants rather than into the garden.

Examine the plant to **find the offsets** large enough to live on their own.

Remove the plant from its pot, and gently **tease the offset**, along with its roots, away from the parent plant.

Plant the offset into its own pot as soon as possible. Do not let it dry out.

Place the pot in indirect light, and allow it to grow there until well established.

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Questions?

[Master Gardener Foundation of King County](http://www.mastergardenerfoundationofkingcounty.org)

Comments?

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Submissions?

Send us an e-mail!

newsletter@mgfkc.org

Newsletter Co-editors

Anne Ellett
Cecilia McGowan

We Want Your Ideas for Recurring Columns! Send us an email: newsletter@mgfkc.org

What's Happening in Your Patch?

Here's where you tell us what's going on in your clinic and demo garden.

Trips You've Taken/Gardens You Have Visited

Please include some photos!

Garden Visits

Provide reasons why and address.

Catalogs

What are your favorite/least favorite catalogs and why?

News

What do you want other MG's to know about? Events, classes, happenings?

