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Yellowstone Master Gardener



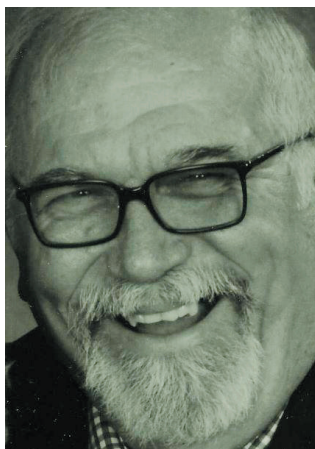
NEWSLETTER

Volume 12, Issue 4 • October/November/December 2021

Charlie Hendricks: A Thirst For Learning

by Sheri Kisch

Charlie Hendricks was born and raised in Billings as was his wife, Janie. They attended first grade together and continued on through high school. Except for eight years in the Navy as a hospital corpsman and five years living in California working as a maintenance man for an apartment complex as well as getting a nursing degree, he has lived in Billings. They both love Montana.



Charlie Hendricks

Charlie attended Eastern Montana College studying Business until going into the Navy. After returning home to Montana, Charlie began his nursing career as a pediatric nurse because he “didn’t want to grow up” as he puts it. He was employed at St. Vincent Healthcare for 29 years, now retired. He exudes a “gentle giant” persona with a “wee bit of leprechaun” included. Charlie’s Irish heritage is evident in his gracious storytelling. He spent his last 10 years at St. Vincent designing nursing charts (electronic records) for the nurses and doctors. He also had to train the nurses and doctors on the program.

His yard includes around 50-60 different kinds of flowers. For many years he grew strictly wildflowers. He grew tired of them and wanted more. Brother Ron and his wife Joyce suggested Charlie join Master Gardener to fill that need. He now enjoys growing in raised beds made with Ron’s help out of repurposed pallets. It is a perfect size of two feet wide and 22 inches

high using water bottles in the bottom for space and drainage.

Charlie likes experimenting and growing just about anything. He gets joy from working with his bare hands, no tools necessary. He finds that moisture, texture and temperature can be sensed only with your hands. He has books on landscaping and hydroponics, but wants to

learn more, especially hydroponics. He also has a desire to learn more about native trees and shrubs and has found “Durr’s Encyclopedia of Trees and Shrubs” by Michael A. Durr a good starter for

understanding the basics of both.

Gardening was not in his background, just a passion for learning something new. That is why there are no favorite plants, etc., he likes them all. Charlie has volunteered at ZooMontana, even helping to put in a new watering system in the kids’ area. He helped build the tall square-foot garden beds in Amy’s garden at the Metra and is also a tough competitor there.

You will enjoy spending time with this “wee leprechaun” and all the stories he can tell. What a great spirit you are, Charlie, and thank you for being part of the Master Gardener program.



We want to hear from you!
Send your submissions for
the newsletter to
ymastergardener@gmail.com
by December 15th
for the next issue.



Master Gardener 2021 Summer Fun

by Amy Grandpre

It was so great to finally be able to venture out as a group and to enjoy each other's company up close and personal. Good as well to see Master Gardener projects fire up and move forward, and to have Farmers Markets again. Summer consisted of some very nice "get outside" opportunities.

June 7th: We once again enjoyed Delane Langton's Eagle Ridge Iris gardens. Delane is iris rich, not only on his ridge, but the valley below is filled with iris as well. Spectacular collection.



June 12th: Not even a week later, we gathered for our first Master Gardener potluck/BBQ post-Covid at MetraPark with a wonderful turnout, great eats and prizes! I think we were all definitely ready for a summer picnic get together.



June 29th was our first 2021 "Master Gardeners on the Town" event at Spinners. And I must add Master Gardeners



Gardeners on the Town". We have some serious ice cream connoisseurs among us.

August 10th: A spectacular evening for a potluck/BBQ at DanWalt Gardens (after having to cancel the July 27th

plans because it was the hottest day of the year). Our gracious hosts Suri and Clint



Lunde spoiled the wonderful crowd of Master Gardeners that gathered to enjoy the gorgeous summer evening. Thanks so much, Suri and Clint.

On **August 24th** Master Gardeners enjoyed the double slam of touring the Roots Garden Center and enjoying coffee treats at the Roots' coffee shop "Black Dog."



Owner Jon Switzer did a marvelous job of sharing not only the history of how Roots came to be, but also his most generous heart of wanting this location to serve the community with more than just a nursery. It must be catching on, as the tables were busy with coffee clients plunking away on computers or just enjoying the beautiful environment.



Then **September 8th**, we gathered again at MetraPark for a summers-end potluck/BBQ. Another fabulous evening with good eats, tomato tasting (thanks Tom Kress and Wayne Burleson), prizes and the special honor of receiving a "40 Years of Dedicated Service" plaque from Roni Baker. (Can that be possible?) What can I say: I like you all so much and love the opportunities this job offers, not only to serve Yellowstone county, but to also interact with Master Gardeners and share our common passion. I am hoping to carry on for a good bit longer.



Note: A picnic in October is being planned; date and location will be announced soon.





Amy Grandpre (second from right) with her well-deserved award

In 2020 **Amy Grandpre** was recognized by MSU Extension Service Yellowstone County for “40 Years Of Dedicated Service”, but COVID restricted opportunities to gather together to celebrate. In September, Master Gardeners and Extension staff were able to present Amy with a plaque and share stories of her success! Amy’s commitment to helping clientele with gardening, trees, lawns, bugs, and everything in between is unparalleled. Her professionalism, enthusiasm and a touch of humor make her a treasured office team member, Master Gardener Coordinator and Urban Horticulturist. Congratulations Amy!

Leslie Idstrom, Administrative Coordinator
MSU Extension Service Yellowstone County

Master Gardeners Certificates and Rewards

by Amy Grandpre

Below is a list of Master Gardeners who have attained their Certification or Hour rewards.

Level 1 Shirt & Certificate: Gina Jakupca • Martha Redmon
Inger Tognetti • Stephanie Ligon • Pam Jones

Level 2 Shirt & Certificate: Jo Lamey • Patti Doble
Joy Culver

200 Volunteer Hours (Yellowstone County Pin):
Charlie Hendricks • Karen Honkomp

400 Volunteer Hours (\$25): Fay Danielson

1000 Volunteer Hours (\$100): Elaine Allard

1600 Volunteer Hours (\$150): Joann Glasser



RECIPE submitted by Joel & Ann Guthals

Instant Pot Spaghetti Sauce



Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. fresh tomatoes, unpeeled, quartered
(Romas work best)
- 2 small onions, quartered
- 2 large carrots, cut in chunks
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 tsp. dried basil (or 2 Tbsp. fresh basil)
- 2 tsp. dried oregano (or 2 Tbsp. fresh oregano)
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp. fresh ground pepper
- 6-oz can tomato paste
- Optional: peeled eggplant cut in chunks,
seeded bell pepper cut in chunks



Directions:

Place vegetables in Instant Pot in layers, starting with tomatoes, then onions, optional veggies if using, carrots, garlic, herbs, seasonings. Tomatoes go in first because they provide liquid to prevent burning.

Secure lid, seal release valve, select “Pressure Cook” (some pots say “Manual”).

Set cook time for 20 minutes. Select High Pressure. Note: Pot takes about 10 minutes to reach pressure, then cook time starts.

At end of cook time, let pot “keep warm” for 10 minutes. Then manually release pressure. When all pressure is released, carefully lift lid.

Mash cooked vegetables with potato masher and/or puree with immersion blender. Add tomato paste. You could puree the mixture in a blender, but let it cool down first.

Check seasonings. Some people add a little sweetener, such as sugar, maple syrup, or dark chocolate.

If too thin, simmer for a while.

Yield: 1 quart. You can double recipe if you have at least a 6-qt. Instant Pot.



2021 4x4 Square Foot Garden Competition Winners

by Amy Grandpre

1st Place winner: **Marilyn Lockwood** (\$50)

2nd Place winner: **Marla Patterson** (\$25)

3rd Place winner: **Gloria Ervin** (\$10)

With special thanks to our distinguished judges Mary Davis, Debbie Werholz, Rosemary Power, and Marion Grummett.



And special thanks to all the competitors including Charlie Hendricks, Ron & Joyce Hendricks, Brian Godfrey, and Roy Wahl. Your hard work was enjoyed by so many who took in the MontanaFair this year – a beautiful respite for weary fair goers.

Planting Trees in Billings' Boulevards

by Elizabeth Waddington

Those stately trees around town that give our city a “Tree City U.S.A.” designation by the Arbor Day Foundation are not there by accident. Our city employs an arborist and has a process for planting trees in the boulevards (or parking strips, depending on where you previously lived).

You need a permit to plant in that 5 or 7-1/2 foot strip between the sidewalk and street! Contact the city for an application to plant a boulevard tree (Engineering, 2224 Montana Avenue, Billings, MT 59101; phone 406.657.8231). This also applies to pruning or removing a tree on that land.

There is a list of “Recommended boulevard trees for City of Billings”. The list is divided into sections for large, medium and small trees, and provides the common name, the Latin name and cultivar if pertinent. Most trees on the list have some notes about disease susceptibility, special considerations, or suitability to the Billings area. Look over the list of suggested trees and start calling



local nurseries (rather than depend on shipped from out-of-state box store stock) to see what they have in stock or can get. Select trees that you are willing to care for (prune, pick up fruit and leaves, etc.) and will not obstruct pedestrians or vehicles on the street. Make sure the watering needs of your tree will easily be met.

Because your application includes a map indicating where you will plant your tree(s), call an underground utilities locator service to determine if you have underground pipes or wires to consider. A comprehensive list will include public and private entities such as water, sewer, cable tv (multiple), gas, etc.

Send in your application and wait for approval in three days to three weeks. When your approval is granted, grab that tree and get it in the ground following the advice of the folks at the nursery and your best practices guidance from the Master Gardeners’ program.

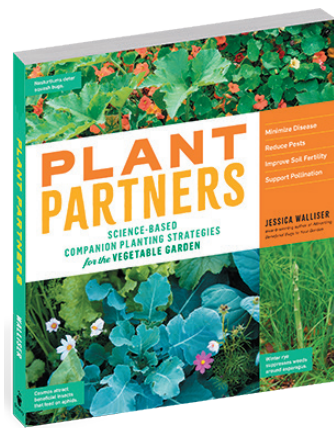


Plant Partners by Jessica Walliser

Ever since reading *Carrots Love Tomatoes* about 50 years ago, I have had the idea of companion planting in the back of my mind every gardening year (I never did plant carrots near tomatoes that I can recall, though). Now I have read an incredibly useful book on this idea that goes beyond just pairing certain plants with others, that explains many strategies of plant partnership in a variety of ways, and that backs up almost every plan or suggestion by specific research references in the Bibliography.

In a well-organized, logical and readable format, the author lays out the benefits of companion planting in separate chapters with numerous illustrated practical examples of plant pairings which include how to achieve the partnerships. In addition, every idea and planting example is elegantly illustrated with lovely photographs.

The first chapter explains the current understanding

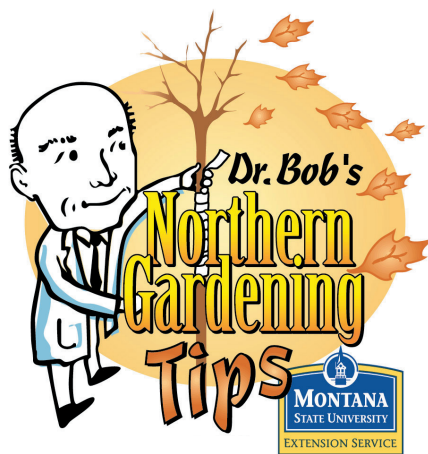


of how plants influence each other and the overall garden environment and how this can be used to advantage. Chapters 2 through 8 cover specific gardening problems with several plant partnering solutions for each of these problems: soil conditioning, weed suppression, living trellises, pests, diseases, supporting pest-eating insects, and supporting pollinators.

I have earmarked many pages of suggested pairings to try next season such as beans/potatoes (more nitrogen for potatoes), mustard/summer squash (living mulch), zucchini/nasturtium (suppression of squash bugs), radishes/tomatoes (trap crop for flea beetles), mustard/potatoes (suppression of potato scab), and lettuce/sweet alyssum (aphid control).

An important result of implementing the ideas in this book will be to increase the diversity and, hence, stability and health of the garden. The resulting diverse mix, which includes an increase in non-plant garden inhabitants, will more closely mimic nature and hopefully result in greater sustainability. A non-scientific result is a more beautiful and pleasing garden than a monoculture creates.

There is such a wealth of garden information in this book that I plan to both read it again and keep it as a reference on my garden bookshelf.



Question to Dr. Bob

by Corry Mordeaux

How come my fruit trees do not produce much fruit?

Are your apple trees blooming OK, producing bushels of juicy yellow or red apples? Most of us have little trouble with getting apples, but some have been waiting for years to get some fruit with no results. Nothing is happening. Could there be something wrong? Yup.

I have previously discussed your apple tree's need for good cross-pollination and your need to wait long enough for the tree to come into bearing. But suppose you have two semi-dwarf trees on M7 stocks, say McIntosh and Delicious, that are 8 years old and have still not flowered. What could be wrong? There are a couple of things to look at.

First, over-pruning young trees tends to keep them vegetative and greatly delay their coming into bearing. Prune your trees only enough to train them to the desired form, whether open center or modified leader, then leave them alone. Some people whack them back hard, thinking the vigorous shoots that result are good for the tree. Far from the truth. Those shoots are not productive and can actually harbor more insects than normal shoots. So do not over-prune.

Another reason for a delay in bearing could be over-fertilization, particularly with high nitrogen fertilizers which promote excess vegetative growth and delay bearing. Use only enough balanced fertilizer like 10-10-10 to produce about a foot of new growth on your non-bearing tree. In other words, let the tree struggle a bit and it will produce better fruit.

Dr. Bob's wisdom lives on.



2021 Standard Flower Show

by Amy Grandpre

The Thumb-R-Green Garden Club held a Standard Flower Show on September 3rd and 4th, 2021, in the atrium of the D.A. Davidson Building in downtown Billings.

Active Master Gardeners who participated were Bob Wicks, Elaine Allard, Joyce Hendricks, Linda Streett Todd, Linda Walters, Marion Grummett, Mary Davis, Merita Murdock, Rayanne Schuler, Ron Hendricks, and Sherry Doty. Former Master Gardeners who participated were Debbi Werholz, Rosemary Power and Ruth Towe.

The show was open to all amateur gardeners to enter and show off their gardening skills. Entries were judged by a panel of judges from around Montana.



Mary Davis' 5" floral design and alfresco table designs



Elaine Allard's Mountain Ash
"Black Hawk"



Merita Murdock's and
Marion Grummett's entries

There were five divisions at the show:

1. Horticulture: grown by participant
2. Floral Designs: ranging in size from 5"–36"
3. Education
4. Youth
5. Botanical arts



Youth table taught by Mary Davis and Joyce Hendricks

Fall and Winter Watering

by Ann McKean

As summer nears its end, gradually decrease your lawn and garden watering to encourage plants to stop growing and move towards dormancy. If plants are still producing new growth which has not hardened off before freezing temps arrive, that new growth will die. Once leaves are down and plants are fully dormant, water deeply one more time before the ground freezes so the roots are protected by moisture. This provides better insulation, low stress and more stable environment in cold weather, and a much-needed moisture to evergreens which continue to transpire all winter. Remember to offer water during prolonged dry periods with no snow cover throughout the winter every two to three weeks to prevent root damage (and reduce evergreen foliage desiccation). Do this in the middle of the day only when air and soil temperatures are above 40 degrees. Make sure to be generous with evergreens and new plants, especially new trees. Your plants will be stronger, healthier, and better able to resist diseases and pests for the next season of growth.

Important Fall Maintenance For Tools

by Sheri Kisch

After most of your gardening chores are finished, there is one more chore to complete so that you are ready in the spring: clean all your hand tools and wheelbarrows of dirt by scraping it off and wiping off the remainder. Sanding with fine grit sandpaper will remove potential splinters and rust. This would also be a good time to sharpen your tools. When everything is clean and dry, get your can of boiled linseed oil and a piece of cotton rag to rub in the oil. You can oil two or three tools at a time, letting the oil to sink in and then going back to wipe off the excess. When I'm all done wiping the wooden parts, I use up the oil on the cloth to wipe down the metal parts. Some people have a dedicated bucket filled with sand and oil that they plunge the shovel heads into afterwards. I promise that if you do this every year, you will have handles that are in better condition than when you bought them.



Fall Pruning

by Elizabeth Waddington

Most pruning is done in early spring in that period between dormancy (aka “too stinking cold to be outside for long”) and “oops now it really is spring, and the trees and bushes are leafing out”. However, some pruning can be done in the fall while you still have leaves on the branches and can see where problems have occurred during the current growing season.

Remember to wipe your pruners with rubbing alcohol between cuts (or spray with disinfectant) to avoid contamination to the next cut. Always clean and wipe down your tools before stowing away.

What To Prune

Dead limbs on trees: This is especially important in areas prone to heavy snow or ice. If you know it's dead, cut it down before bad weather arrives.

Shrub roses: It's best to tackle rose pruning in winter or early spring when plants are dormant. If you have large or overgrown shrub rose bushes and you're in an area prone to heavy snows that could break canes, pruning to remove 2 to 4 inches of canes can help protect the plant. If shrub roses have overtaken walkways,

remove the problem canes. Wait to prune until after several hard freezes, or you risk triggering new growth.

Perennials with disease issues: This list includes bearded iris, hollyhocks and any plants with a powdery mildew problem, like peony, bee balm and garden phlox. Cut stems back to 2 to 4 inches and destroy (don't compost) the pruned material.

Suckers: Some plants send up shoots at and/or around the base of the original plant. Cut them as close to the base as possible. Examples include sumac, kerria, saucer magnolia, witch hazel and the colored twig dogwoods.

Natural holiday décor: Feel free to prune a few branches from evergreens, berried twigs and even rose stems with hips to use as outdoor holiday decorations. Plan your pruning cuts carefully, remembering that you're influencing future growth.

What Not To Prune

- Spring flowering shrubs and trees (azalea, lilac, dogwood, viburnum, oakleaf hydrangea)
- Ornamental grasses
- Marginally hardy perennials (plants you're not quite sure are coming back until you see new growth in spring)
- Climbing roses



- Perennials that provide winter interest (tall sedum, baptisia, Siberian iris)
- Perennials with seed heads that feed birds (coneflower, black-eyed Susan, anise hyssop, tall liatris)

Breaking The Rules

You can always break the pruning rules if you don't mind the consequences, such as not having flowers for one year or risking more severe winter kill on stems. A spreading shrub-like forsythia that's overreaching its space is a good target for pruning whenever you find the time. You can take down a summer bloomer like butterfly bush (buddleia) in early winter, but you might risk losing the plant entirely to winterkill if winter is exceptionally hard. Better to prune stems back to 24 inches, and shorten further in spring once new growth appears.

Not confident with your pruning skills? Check with our County Extension Agent, Amy Grandpre at 406.256.2821 • Email: agrandpre@co.yellowstone.mt.gov

WANTED

Heritage or Legacy Plant Stories

This newsletter committee thinks other fellow Master Gardeners would love to hear stories about your heritage or legacy plants: plants you had cherished through moves, trials, and even generations. Send in your stories and photos of plants that you have nurtured through thick and thin or that came from someone or some place special. We will dedicate the January 2022 issue to your legacy plant stories.

Deadline for submission is December 15th, 2021
Email to: ymastergardener@gmail.com

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

P.O. Box 35021 • Billings, MT 59107

<https://mtmastergardener.org/>

<http://www.ycmgamt.com/>

Dara Palmer, Montana Master Gardener Coordinator
dara.palmer@montana.edu

Amy Grandpre

Yellowstone County Urban Horticulture Assistant
agrandpre@co.yellowstone.mt.gov

Abi Saeed, Associate Professor/Extension Specialist, Plant Sciences & Plant Pathology
abiya.saeed@montana.edu



Groundcovers

by Ann McKean

The most prevalent groundcover most of us have in our yards is turf grass. Turf is great if you need a groundcover that can take high foot traffic, but many of us only walk on our lawns to push the lawnmower. Turf is the most labor-intensive and resource-greedy groundcover, requiring frequent mowing, faithful irrigation and fertilizer. Many homeowners want their lawn to be 'perfect' and apply toxic weedkillers as well. So instead of turf, let's consider some beautiful low maintenance alternatives.

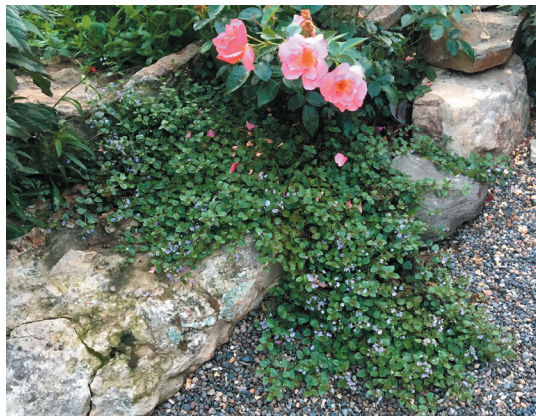
Many alternative groundcovers can tolerate foot traffic, including creeping thyme, veronica, clover, and ajuga, and some will grow where traditional turf will not, for example, creeping jenny in dry shade under a tree. Some others that thrive in shade are lamium, vinca, heuchera, galium, lysimachia, and geranium. Many are extremely drought tolerant, such as hymenoxys, antennaria, sedum and artemisia. Many non-turf groundcovers bloom throughout the growing season with beautiful and often fragrant flowers, including anemone, phlox, veronica, thyme and convallaria.

Groundcover plants can also serve to add contrast in color, height and texture within a perennial bed. Clumping grasses can be planted in groups as non-traffic groundcover to beautiful effect. Low-growing shrubs can serve as groundcovers too.

Not all groundcovers are evergreen and many do not tolerate wet feet. These respond very well to a mulch of pea gravel instead of wood chips and thus remain functional and attractive even in winter. Others can tolerate more moisture, including the Carex family of sedges.



Blue fescue makes a beautiful contrast with its soft texture and blue color



Veronica 'Waterperry Blue'

Here is a list of some of the plants that can serve as groundcovers in our climate. *Thymus praecox* (creeping thyme), *Phlox subulata* (creeping phlox), *Armeria* (thrift), *Antennaria dioica* (pussytoes), *Hymenoxys* (perky sue), *Artemisia* Silver Brocade, sedum, *Veronica* 'Waterperry Blue' (speedwell), *Veronica* Tidal Pool, *Trifolium* (clover), *Cerastium* (snow-in-summer), *Aurinaria saxatilis* (basket of gold), *Oenothera* (evening primrose), *Callirhoe* (wine cup), *Iberis* (candytuft), *Stachys byzantia* (lamb's ears), *Stachys officinalis* (betony), *Nepeta* 'Kitten Around' (catmint), *Potentilla neumanniana* (alpine cinquefoil), *Fragaria* (strawberry – you only mow it once a year), *Ajuga reptans* (bugleweed), *Lamium*

maculatum (deadnettle), *Vinca minor*, *Galium odoratum* (sweet woodruff), *Viola odorata*, *Viola labradorica*, *Anemone sylvestris*, *Geranium* 'Karmina' (beautiful fall color), *Geranium* 'Biokovo', *Convallaria majalis* (lily of the valley), *Heuchera*, *Lysimachia* (creeping jenny – be careful what you wish for), *Agrepodium* (snow on the mountain – be really careful what you wish for), *Mentha spicata* (spearmint – it's awesome, but you'll never get rid of it), *Festuca* (blue fescue), *Carex glauca* (blue sedge), *Sporobolus heterolepis* (prairie dropseed). Some groundcover shrubs include *Microbiotta decussata* (russian cypress), *Juniperus horizontalis*, *Prunus besseyi* 'Pawnee Buttes' (sandcherry), *Aronia melanocarpa* 'Ground Hug', *Potentilla tridentata* 'Nuuk', *Salix nakamuraana* (creeping alpine willow).

Finally, if you must have turf grass, consider the native buffalo grass. While still requiring some irrigation, mowing and fertilizer to look its best, the newest cultivars of buffalo grass are even more drought tolerant and weed resistant, and require much less input than traditional sod.

Yellowstone County Master Gardener Newsletter MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Yellowstone County Master Gardener newsletter is to "educate and inform," not to advocate or persuade. The Newsletter Editorial Board takes no position endorsing or opposing, approving or disapproving, any of the assertions or arguments in the contributed information. Information submitted to the newsletter is for your interest only.



What Grew In Peru

by Bess Lovec

In January of 2019, I decided to join a student trip to Peru, sponsored by MSU Billings. I had to jump through countless hoops (transcripts, interview, essay, shots, money, medical release by my physician, and more), but ultimately, my efforts proved worthwhile! We spent most of our time that May on tributaries of the Amazon River, plus many days in Iquitos, the largest city accessible only via plane or boat.

Imagine that you are in a greenhouse looking at houseplants. Then you plant 25 varieties in 12 square feet. They intertwine uncontrollably, spilling over edges. That is what the Amazonian rainforest looks like. From sloths swinging and monkeys violently screeching to complex varieties of plants, the Amazon Basin teems with life. The most amazing, however, were the insects. Their sizes alone really shocked all of us... spiders the size of my hand. Once a swarm of flying beetles entered the open-air platform where our tents were set. Their arrival was like a dark curtain swooshing across the space. We all had sprayed our clothes, bags, and tents with permethrin before leaving the U.S., plus we applied insect repellent to our skin twice daily, yet each of us could count over 100 insect bites on our bodies at any given time. The trip was not for the faint of heart.

We had a great time and like most trips abroad, attendees became very close-knit due to extreme events. We experienced a magnitude 8.0 earthquake at three in the morning, which woke us but fortunately caused little damage to our immediate area. I spent one 24-hour period surviving



Huge caterpillar!



Huge spider!



Plastic pollution in the river

digestive issues with the help of our attending physician. I tipped the staff of the hotel extra the next day. Our schedule and directions had to adjust due to an unusually dry, hot summer. Scientists along the way convinced us that the conditions were sadly no longer considered unusual but the new normal. The most disturbing image which lingers in my mind was the plastic debris in the river and along the shores. Apparently even the most remote places on our planet have not escaped the tendrils of plastic.

The trip concluded in Cusco to tour Machu Picchu, which met all expectations and beyond, although Cusco has adjusted to the tourist trade. It could have been any major European city. I had a chance to recover from the challenges of the Amazon with a plethora of creature comforts!

I am so glad I went. It broadened my perspectives more than I can identify here. My faith in 20-somethings was renewed, and most people everywhere are wonderful. I hope we can preserve the Lungs of the World long enough for our great-great-grandchildren to enjoy our beautiful planet. Mother Nature will take the reins, but we do have input into what happens.

Useful Online Links



MASTER GARDENER

Yard and Garden MontGuides <https://store.msuextension.org/Departments/MontGuides-by-Category/AG/Yard-and-Garden.aspx>

Submission of Samples http://diagnostics.montana.edu/physical_sample_submission.html

Montana State Master Gardener Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/MTMastergardener>

Yellowstone Master Gardener Newsletter Blog

www.yellowstonemastergardenernewsletter.wordpress.com

Ask An Expert <https://www.msuextension.org/>

Yellowstone MG Newsletter Submissions ymastergardener@gmail.com

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ycmga>

Website <http://www.ycmgamt.com/>

For information on the Association, Master Gardener projects and volunteer activities, calendar of upcoming events, minutes of past Board meetings, etc.

Amazon purchases: By using the portal below, and then typing in Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association, 0.5% of purchases made through this portal will be donated to the Association. You can even have an app link to connect you instantly to the sign-in page. Please use this link when making Amazon purchases! <https://smile.amazon.com/>



Meet Our New Master Gardeners

by Sheri Kisch & Elizabeth Waddington

A major adjustment to the Master Gardener program in 2020 was moving to solely online classes, which deprived new students the mentoring that comes from an in-person class facilitated by Level 2 and 3 Master Gardeners. Until this summer, there were few opportunities for social gatherings and group gardening activities for them to get acquainted with others. Kudos to the classes of 2020 and 2021 who persevered and are Level 1 Master Gardeners. If you are one of our newcomers, please allow us to share some information about you in the coming issues.

As we welcome our newest online learners into our group, the newsletter committee will try to include several mini interviews each issue so they become familiar faces as we gear back up to whatever the new normal will be.

Amanda Ullman

Amanda, a lifelong resident of Billings, had been intrigued by the Master Gardener program for several years but wrangling a family of four kids under 12 puts it out of reach.



However, the COVID-induced online format made it possible to participate in 2021. Her gardening interest began when her mother grew a garden which Amanda redid while in college and then moved to container gardening while renting. Amanda and her husband purchased a house a few years ago and finally had the time to dig up an in-ground garden at the beginning of COVID. She is excited to learn more about soil composition so that she can amend the sandy soil and create a vegetable garden. Amanda gets her kids to help harvest (and wishes they like to actually

eat what they pick) and her three-year-old refers to the garden as a “jungle” to explore. Two successes this year were converting the shaded space next to a privacy fence into a perennial border for the vegetables and growing potatoes which delighted all who helped dig them up. Her favorite plants are bulb flowers – a promise for the next spring. One special gardening story was about a showbox seed collection from her grandmother. Say hello to new Master Gardener, Amanda, when you see her out and about.

Joseph Meick

Joseph, who has gardened everywhere he lived, has experience with the challenges of Bozeman during his college years, California, and the past 22 years in Billings. His interest in gardening came from Nebraska where his mother grew a large garden and preserved everything, and his father was a custom combiner. He is a former 4-H kid and remembers judging vegetables and winning ribbons.



He heard about the Master Gardener program in the Billings Gazette. He uses raised beds and drip irrigation and enjoys being able to pick and eat fresh vegetables every day. Joseph likes socializing and working with other gardeners. He hopes that retirement brings opportunities for travel and photography, when he is not tending raspberries and basil plants (he makes pesto which he freezes to be used year-round). Joseph's favorite gardening tool is a butcher

knife used for digging, weeding and slicing whatever. Welcome to Master Gardeners, Joseph!

Inger Tognetti

Meet Inger, a former 4-H kid whose mother canned and preserved what her dad loved to grow in a small plot. She migrated to the U.S. when she was two years old and has lived in Portland, OR, as well as a variety of towns around Montana, where she gardened. She has been in Billings for 22 years.



Inger has always loved gardening and thought the Master Gardener program was a great way to occupy her time during the COVID lockdown. Her neighbor who is a Master Gardener also introduced her to the St. Andrew's gardening program. In addition to some typical crops of corn, carrots, peas and kohlrabi, Inger also likes to grow Brussel sprouts, strawberries and raspberries. She is now trying her green thumb with orchids. Presently, she is renting a garden plot at St. Andrew's Community Garden.

She is proud of the sensory garden she established, patterned after the sensory garden at ZooMontana, at the new Victor Elementary School where she taught. She also likes to read, crochet and cook. For now, traveling has been downsized to trying to visit every state park in Montana. Inger loves socializing with other gardeners and is on the beautification committee in her subdivision. Her favorite gardening advice: grow as organic as you can and grow what you like. We hope you have success with your orchids and keep pruning those neighborhood trees, Inger!



Gina Woods: Dallas Plant Person Extraordinaire

by Ann Guthals

Dallas Master Gardener Gina Woods married a Mexican rancher and lived in Mexico on a remote ranch for 23 years. The ranch raised cattle and sheep, but Gina started a then-unique side business by building shade houses and raising long-stemmed cut orchids of the *Dendrobium* genus, which she marketed in Texas and Mexico. At the height of her orchid business in Mexico, she was selling 1,000 stems a week. Gina also raised bromeliads and created a second business of selling arrangements for homes and businesses in Tampico and event planning such as weddings. She also had a retail store in Tampico.

In 2009, the drug cartels became active in the area of Tampico with frequent kidnappings and extortion of businesses to supply protection. In early 2010, Gina had to flee Mexico; she lost her businesses and her beloved plant collection. She returned to Dallas to live.

Gina took the Dallas Master Gardener class in 2011 and attended the Philadelphia Flower Show. She wanted to learn more about North American plants other than the orchids and bromeliads she was so knowledgeable about. Eventually she joined with another Master Gardener and created Yardspell, a landscaping and yard maintenance business in Dallas that she continues to run. Yardspell emphasizes native and water-wise plants. Gina developed another Dallas business called Tropical Essence, which creates and maintains arrangements in homes and businesses.



Gina remains an active Master Gardener. The Master Gardener program in Dallas has only one level – the class is about three months long. Active Master Gardeners are required to do 30 hours of volunteering a year as well as attend 6 hours of continuing education classes. The program is under the auspices of Texas A&M University. There are about 450 Master Gardeners in Dallas, a city of about 2.6 million people. Volunteer opportunities

include school gardens, garden club speaking, an arboretum, butterfly and pollinator gardens created and maintained by Master Gardeners, a test garden, a speaker's bureau, work on a monthly newsletter, and administrative help for the Master Gardener program. There are also monthly meetings.

Gardening in Texas is a matter of dealing with extremes, especially temperatures that range from 110° down to -10°. Gina's approach is good bed preparation, mulching, and choosing the right plants. Her own yard is planted in mostly perennial natives and she utilizes roof run-off for water. She has a large compost pile, a greenhouse, and raised beds for vegetable gardening. As her daughter said one time, if it's about plants, my mom's the one to go to!

Many thanks to Gina for filling us in on her interesting life and her involvement in the Dallas Master Gardener Program: Gina happens to be my sister-in-law!

Hardy Hibiscus: Perennial Head Turner

by Suri Lunde

Hardy hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos*), not to be confused with tropical hibiscus, is a herbaceous perennial plant that goes by the common names of rose mallow, swamp mallow, marsh hibiscus and dinnerplate hibiscus.

Depending on the variety, it can grow between 3 to 8 ft tall, and make excellent back-of-a-bed plant. When planted in groups,



the stunning flowers which can be 5 to 10 inches in diameter, will make a backyard look like a tropical paradise. Although each bold flower only lasts a day or two, hardy hibiscus is a prolific rebloomer from mid-summer through early autumn.

Cultivars come in various colors such as white, pink, hot pink, red, dark red and bi-colored, often with

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Yellowstone Master Gardener

Yellowstone County Extension Office

301 N. 27th Street, Suite 330

P.O. Box 35021

Billings, MT 59107-5021

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a contrasting eye. Its deeply-lobed foliage ranges from medium green to dark green with purple undertones, coppery red and even variegated, and can provide textural interest or contrast in a plant bed.

Hardy hibiscus prefers full sun in fertile and moist garden soil (even wet areas along streams or ponds) but it will tolerate a wide range of soil types if kept well-watered. To avoid leaf fungus and other foliar diseases, water during the early morning hours rather than late in the evening, maintain good air circulation around the plant and remove diseased leaves. Its new growth is slow to emerge from dormancy in spring but shoots up rapidly once it takes off. Hardy hibiscus is a low maintenance plant: apply plant food in spring and early summer to ensure health and flower production, apply mulch for an extra layer of insulation to overwinter, deadheading of spent blooms is not necessary unless to prevent seedpods from forming.

Despite its vulnerability to Japanese beetles and sawflies, hardy hibiscus is a worthy plant to have in any garden.

Fun facts about hardy hibiscus:

- Hummingbirds appreciate the nectar from the colossal flowers and many moths and caterpillars consume this plant for their nectar and larval needs.

- It has been used medicinally in the form of tea to treat digestive and urinary tract inflammations.

- Generally, all perennial species of hibiscus are edible. The flowers and the young leaves have a mild flavor. The shoots, roots, and leaves contain a gooey liquid which is useful for thickening soups, and also in meringue.



NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Suri Lunde • Ann Guthals • Ann McKean • Bess Lovec
Corinna Sinclair • Elizabeth Waddington • Sheri Kisch

CONTRIBUTORS

Amy Grandpre • Corry Mordeaux • Leslie Idstrom

