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We want to hear from you!

Send your submissions for
the newsletter to
ymastergardener@gmail.com
by June 15th for the next issue.

Yellowstone Master Gardener



NEWSLETTER

Volume 12, Issue 2 • April/May/June 2023

Meet Master Gardener Karen Botnen

by Sheri Fredericksen

From a young age Karen (Fossen) Botnen has had a love of nature and gardening, passions that run deep in her family. She was born and raised in Billings, MT, and graduated from Billings Senior High School in 1991. Karen graduated from Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA, in 1995 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in advertising and a minor in art. She also studied for a semester in Florence, Italy.



Karen and her loyal cat Rocky

Touring gardens throughout the United States, Canada and Europe has been inspirational for Karen. Visiting the Butchart Gardens in British Columbia with her parents, Ed and Diane, was quite memorable – the Rose Garden was her favorite.

During college summers, Karen worked at the former Billings Nursery and Floral at their Poly Drive location. A couple of

days a week, she worked with Amy Grandpre, who was the Yellowstone County Extension Horticulture Agent. After college, Karen worked in Glacier National Park, Steamboat Springs, CO, and Bozeman, MT. She has over 25 years of graphic design and marketing experience.

In 2013, Karen married high school friend, Josh Botnen,

and relocated to San Diego, CA, where Josh resided. They moved back to Billings in 2014 for an employment opportunity and to live near their parents. A new home that only came with a lawn, a few trees and shrubs provided Karen the “blank canvas” she was excited to develop. She quickly learned that gardening in the valley is much different than gardening at her childhood home against the sandstone Rimrocks, which provide some protection

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Karen practices companion planting with over 40 varieties of fruits, vegetables, flowers and herbs.

from the elements. Clay soil, a high water table, strong wind and hail have, at times, made growing anything a challenge.

In 2015, Karen's mother encouraged her to enter a few roses in the National Garden Club Flower Show. All won ribbons. The flower show was where Karen picked up a brochure for the Yellowstone County Master Gardener Program, which she was happy to learn that Amy Grandpre was still leading. Karen completed the Level 1 course in 2016. She has continued to have entries in the annual flower show, even taking home the Arboreal, the Horticultural Excellence and the Sweepstakes awards. Karen took some of her new gardening knowledge, and applied it to the "blank canvas" by planting trees and creating gardens. She continues to replant the front rock beds, adding more daylilies to compliment the roses, as well as planting perennials for the pollinators. In 2022, Karen and Josh's property was recognized as a Certified Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

When asked what her favorite flower is, Karen didn't hesitate and said "roses", then



Twilight Zone rose

thoughtfully paused and added "and sunflowers"! She is quite fond of a rose she has called Twilight Zone and grows dwarf sunflowers. Another favorite planting is the Tannenbaum Pine in the front yard. Her father got to see the tree when it was just planted, less than one month before he passed.



Dwarf sunflower

Since 2016, Karen has been volunteering in the gardens at ZooMontana – a perfect fit for one who loves animals and flowers. This will be Karen's third year serving as president for the ZooMontana Botanical Society, which has grown to over 50 volunteers. She believes that it is a privilege to care for the gardens that enhance the visits of thousands of guests each year.

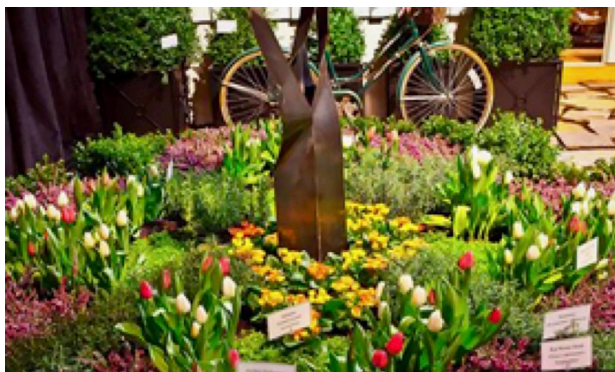
Looking to the future, Karen hopes that her gardens thrive and that she gains knowledge and wisdom from her "experiments". She also hopes that she can help others discover the joys of gardening and inspire them to plant something new!

2023 Northwest Flower & Garden Show

by Sheri Kisch

My traveling amounts to watching Rick Steves' Europe on PBS. The Northwest Flower and Garden Show came and went without me – again. Next year is going to be the year.

We all can see what was missed by going to <https://www.gardenshow.com>. The "Spring Vibes Only"



theme was most assuredly painted beautifully in every "room". If there, I would have had to hide somewhere to stay. I can almost catch a hint of lavender, tulips, daffodils, and blossoming trees.

On the website, there are tabs for speakers, seminars, rooms and the Market Place. Over 50 speakers left "Pro Tips" each day under the Seminars tab, that you can read/download if you find something of interest, like "building resilience now", "regenerative gardens", "training young trees", "ground covers", and "big dreams – small gardens". Some have

books that may be of interest also.

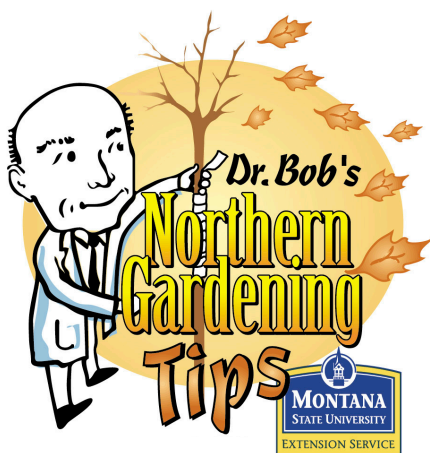
Welcome back to Spring in Montana. At least it is staying consistently cold, so the trees are not tricked into thinking it's time to push buds. I really do love it.

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

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Question to Dr. Bob

by Corry Mordeaux

Can tree roots be damaged by our winters?

We all know that the tops of trees sometimes suffer winter damage. But how about the roots? A tree's roots make up at least half of the plant but no one talks about them much.

Root damage in winter is fairly common where winter precipitation is light and the temperatures are cold. It is usually worse in light, dry soils where there is little snow cover. If the roots are damaged, the plant may begin to grow normally in the Spring. It may send out new shoots and bloom, perhaps

even set fruit, then die suddenly as soon as the weather turns hot and dry. If only part of the root system is damaged, the tree will be slow in sending out Spring shoot growth. This condition may last for several years or until the top and the bottom of the plant re-establish their balance.

What are the critical temperatures for root damage? It varies by species and root type. Fine roots of ash are killed at a soil temperature at 7°F and those of other hardy plants at 5° to 14°F. Apple roots die when exposed.

Dr. Bob's wisdom lives on.

Spotted Wing Drosophila

by Ann McKean

Drosophila suzukii, common name spotted wing drosophila or SWD, is a small fruit fly, also known as a vinegar fly, originally from southeast Asia. First found in Hawaii in 1980, it was discovered in California in 2008, Montana in 2011, and has slowly spread to most major fruit growing regions in the US. As with other small statured invasives, it has spread relatively quickly through human transport.

The insidious difference between the spotted wing drosophila and most other fruit flies is its propensity to attack underripe fruit. While other fruit flies prefer decaying fruit, SWD lays its eggs in new fruit, where the larvae develop. This not only destroys the fruit, but can, in turn, expose the plant to a higher risk of fungal infections, other pathogens and even other pests. Spotted wing drosophila is impacting commercial fruit production and is considered a serious threat. It mainly targets soft fruits including strawberries, cherries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, plums, and thin-skinned grapes.

Tiny and prolific, the spotted wing drosophila requires the best of our IPM practices to manage. The first line of defense is proper care and maintenance since healthy plants can better fight off pests and diseases. Planting early season crops puts them at reduced risk of attack, since populations build over the season. Thicker skinned fruits are slightly more resistant to attack. Covering the plants with fine netting while they are fruiting provides



Drosophila suzukii

a physical barrier from the insects. Scouting your fruit frequently and practicing good hygiene by removing rotting or overripe fruit is crucial to staying in front of serious infestation. Vinegar or sugar yeast bait trapping is the best way to find adults for inspection, and there is good information on extension websites about this. Mature males have a dark spot at the top of each wing that is best viewed with a hand lens. Your local extension agent and Schutter Lab are two great resources if you are uncertain about identification.

If *Drosophila suzukii* are confirmed, it's best to treat quickly, as populations can grow rapidly. Natural predators of the spotted wing drosophila include parasitic wasps, earwigs, spiders, minute pirate bugs, rove beetles, ants, green lacewings, and even birds.

Some of these predatory insects can be purchased commercially. Providing a healthy habitat to support beneficial insects is highly encouraged and will foster successful long-term management.

Spinosad is an organic biologic treatment that is safe for humans, and effective against SWD, but also detrimental to many natural predators, so it should be used after less harmful methods have been exhausted. Chemical insecticides should be used as a last resort to avoid resistance and the unintended consequences of destroying natural enemies and other innocent insects. Research is ongoing to find new, safe, and effective methods to control this challenging pest.

Although SWD is in Montana, its population is highest in the Flathead region, and if we are vigilant and use our best IPM practices, hopefully, fruit growers in the Yellowstone Valley can continue to manage it successfully.

The Wild Wisdom of Weeds

13 Essential Plants for Human Survival

by Katrina Blair

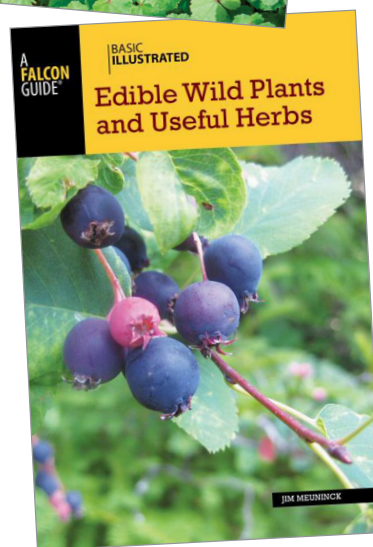
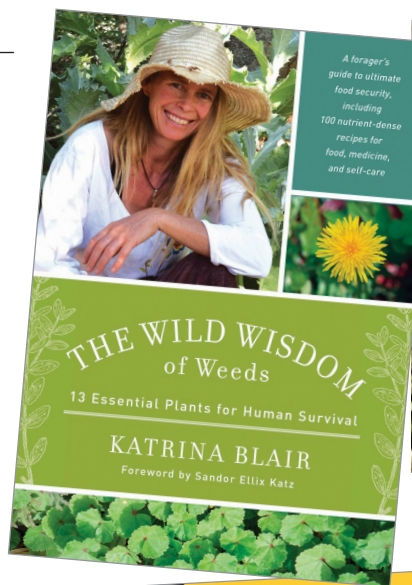
What do you think a weed is? Most people see a weed as a plant that is growing where we don't want it, in competition with our cultivated plants, hard to eliminate, and resilient even in harsh conditions. Katrina Blair has written a book to help us see at least 13 weedy plants differently: to see them as useful, as food and/or medicine, as helpful and nutritious to humans and worthy of protecting and using. She has picked these particular plants because she has observed that they grow just about everywhere humans live and are therefore universally available and abundant.

After a lengthy introduction to foraging and to preparation of all parts of these wild foods (including growing as microgreens; sprouting; using in salads, soups, juices, body care products and as medicine; fermenting; and making into winter powders), Ms. Blair then educates us in-depth about each plant. In each chapter, she tells how to identify the plant, why we would want to use it, how to sustainably harvest it, how to use it as food and medicine, the history of human use, and how to prepare several interesting recipes perfected at Turtle Lake Refuge in Durango, CO. It is remarkable how many centuries most of these plants have been consumed by humans.

Why would we want to add wild foods to our diet? There are many reasons. Wild plants are free, packed with nutrients, fresh, local, easy to grow, abundant, and available longer in the season than cultivated garden plants. Seeing these plants as useful and edible, we are more likely to protect them than eliminate them, and thus will support diversity in our

ecosystems. For example, in Durango, Ms. Blair and her cohorts have convinced the city administrators to use organic methods of maintenance in two city parks, not only preserving a source of "weeds," but also protecting pollinators and other plants.

If you decide to try foraging for some of your food, there are some guiding principles to keep in mind. First and foremost, get help from an expert so you are sure you are eating what you think you are eating. Observe the plant's entire life cycle because you may want to use it when it is first growing in the spring. Start very small and watch for negative reactions to the food. Make sure you leave enough of the plant to maintain a healthy patch, or consider growing it in your garden (I let wild purslane grow as well as dandelions and may add other of the 13 weeds to this year's garden). Know which families have poisonous members and be sure you can identify these (I had a friend eat death camas once thinking it was wild onion – he almost died!). Avoid foraging from contaminated ground such as a lawn sprayed with chemicals or land near roads with lots of traffic. I recently found another useful book to help



learn more about foraging edible wild plants called *Basic Illustrated Edible Wild Plants and Useful Herbs* by Jim Meuninck – this Falcon Guide is well-organized and illustrated, including a good section on identifying poisonous plants.

The Wild Wisdom of Weeds is a long, dense read, providing a lot of information on the 13 chosen plants

as well as many different non-mainstream ideas about what we eat. The recipes look simple and easy to make, but I would mention that they are all raw and vegan, so may be of interest to a limited audience or serve more as additions to a broader diet. I do plan to get help from two knowledgeable friends this spring in identifying these plants and hope to add more of them to my diet. Even if you don't eat any or all of these "weeds," you will have fun reading and learning about them and may see them differently when they pop up in your garden or yard!

Note: The 13 weeds in the book are amaranth, chickweed, clover, dandelion, dock, grass, knotweed, lambsquarter, mallow, mustard, plantain, purslane, and thistle.

Let's Eat Dandelions!

by Ann McKean

Dandelions, the much-maligned weed, and bane of every golf course keeper, actually have many redeeming qualities. Their deep taproot loosens the soil and allows for better air and water penetration. Those roots also reach deep and pull up valuable minerals and nutrients into their leaves which, as they eventually decay, return those nutrients closer to the surface, making them available to surrounding plants. Some organic orchardists encourage dandelions to grow under their trees for that reason. An added benefit is that they provide early blossoms to lure bees to the orchard just in time for the fruit trees' opening blooms, and later in the season, the ethylene gas they naturally produce can help fruit ripen faster.

Those same nutrients are good for our bodies too; there are lots of ways to eat them, and spring is the best time to harvest when they are at their most tender and least bitter. To begin, be certain that you are picking dandelions and not a look-alike. Never harvest in an area that has been chemically treated, and never harvest near a road because they can be contaminated by the exhaust. All parts of the dandelion are edible, but the leaves and blossoms are the easiest to gather. Always wash them thoroughly.

Dandelion greens are a good source of iron and prebiotics and can be used in smoothies, salads, pesto, and stir fries. The leaves can be used as a substitute in any recipe that calls for kale, chard, collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens or beet greens. The blossoms make great jelly, summer wine, and tasty fritters. Beer can be made using all the parts of the dandelion. A nutritious coffee substitute can be made with the dried, ground roots.



Here are some loose suggestions to use less weed killer and get more dandelion greens onto your dinner table.



- Use dandelion greens as a substitute for arugula in a healthy salad. They are especially tasty with creamy goat cheese, nuts, and lemon. As an attractive bonus, scatter some of the petals on the salad.
- If you find the leaves bitter, make a quick simple stir fry of wilted dandelion leaves with olive oil, garlic, salt, and pepper. Add chili flakes and lemon for extra kick. The heat neutralizes the bitterness.
- Use the leaves in place of basil for a nutrient packed pesto.
- Batter and fry the blossom heads to make fritters.
- Sauté in place of kale for a sweet potato quinoa bowl with chickpeas, feta and pesto.
- Make a lovely red lentil dal with onion, tomato, ginger, turmeric, garlic, cumin and wilted dandelion greens.

We hope you are inspired to see this tenacious plant in a new, positive, healthy light. Let us know if you come up with more great recipe suggestions!



RECIPE submitted by Sheri Kisch

Wilted Lettuce/Spinach Salad

Cut 3 strips bacon into 1-inch pieces. Cook till crisp. Drain on paper towel.

In a 2-quart bowl add: 1/4 cup cider vinegar, 2 teaspoon sugar, 1/4 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, 1/4 teaspoon tarragon and bacon drippings. Bring to a boil in microwave. Stir well and add 1/4 cup chopped celery and 1 tablespoon chopped green onion. Add 1 medium head sliced lettuce (8 cups) or spinach. Mix well.

This recipe likely came from immigrants of Eastern Europe as similar versions are found in Poland and other countries.

Growing Season Overview

by Suri Lunde

1 What are frost dates?
A frost date is the average date of the last light freeze in spring or the first light freeze in fall. The classification

of freeze temperatures is based on their effect on plants:

- **Light freeze:** 29° to 32°F (1.7° to 0°C); tender plants are killed
- **Moderate freeze:** 25° to 28°F (3.9° to -2.2°C); widely destructive to most vegetation
- **Severe freeze:** 24°F (-4.4°C) and colder; heavy damage to most garden plants
- For Billings, the estimated last frost date in Spring is May 14th, first Fall frost is September 25th, and our growing season is 133 days. *Disclaimer: last and first frost dates are 30% probability, calculated using 1981-2010 Climate Normals*



2 Garden Preparation and Cleaning
Resist the urge to clean up your gardens until after temperatures are constantly above 50°F. Many butterflies, bees and other pollinators are currently overwintering in the dead leaves and hollowed-out stems of last year's plants. If you clean out your garden during low temperatures, you may literally be throwing away this year's beneficial insects and pollinators.

4 Planning for a Longer Crop-Growing Season

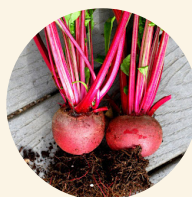
Planning is absolutely vital for a successful garden. It records (e.g. types, varieties, quantity, performance and output of plants, temperature, weather, etc.) and lets you see possible mistakes before you plant. It also documents where you planted each variety to allow crop rotation to keep pests down. Below is a guide to vegetable planting for a longer growing season.

Hardy/Cool Season Vegetables can survive freezes if hardened off properly. They can be planted as much as three weeks before the last frost date (around April 24th): Beets • Cabbage Carrot • Chives Horseradish • Kale • Lettuce •



Onion • Parsnip • Peas • Rhubarb
Spinach • Swiss Chard • Turnip

Half-hardy Vegetables can handle light frosts and can be planted two weeks before the last frost date. By the end of April, you could plant: Broccoli • Brussels Sprouts • Celery Cauliflower • Chinese Cabbage Kohlrabi • Parsley • Potato • Radish



Warm Season Vegetables are the ones that cannot survive frosts or freezing temperatures. You could put these in before May 15th, but be ready to protect them if a frost is coming: Sweet Corn • Cucumber Eggplant • Muskmelon • Okra Peppers • Pumpkin • Summer Squash • Tomato • Watermelon Green Beans • Winter Squash

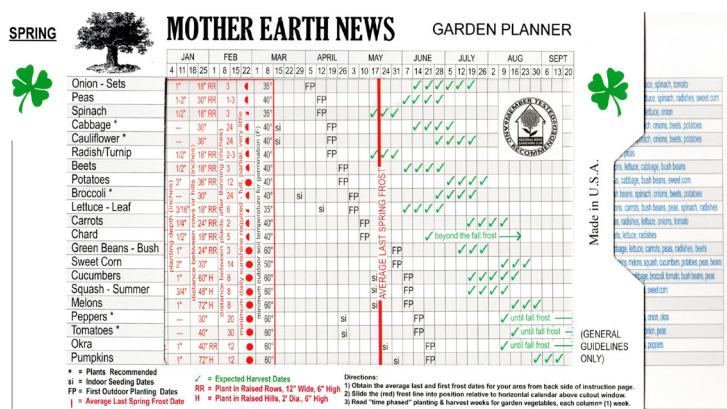


Image: Elizabeth Waddington

3 Garden Planner Chart
This chart (see sample above) presents gardening events in a “time-phased” format so that it’s possible to see the entire planting, growing, and harvesting period at a glance. It shows proper indoor and outdoor planting times relative to spring and fall frost dates for 22 common garden vegetables. Because frost dates vary from region to region, the chart slides, making it useful in most parts of the Northern Hemisphere where frost is a critical gardening factor. The front of the chart shows the spring season, and the other side acts as a guide for fall gardeners. Frost dates are included in the directions.

source: Mother Earth News, Pocket Garden Planner, \$5 plus shipping from www.store.motherearthnews.com

5

Extending the Growing Season

Some ideas to add more days to both ends of the growing season.

Planting Practices

Indoor seedlings: Sow seeds indoors up to eight weeks before last frost date. Harden off plants as the weather allows. If desired, transplant when conditions permit.



Plant Hardy/Cool-Season Crops and Special Varieties: Crops like kale and garlic are tough enough to survive through winter with good mulch cover. They can quickly grow again as soon as it warms up. Additionally, varieties labeled 'early' like Early Girl Tomato, or 'extra cold-hardy' like Arcadia broccoli can be planted earlier than other varieties.



Successive Plantings: Plant crops at intervals a few weeks apart to extend harvest over many weeks, instead of one crop all at once. This method is best for faster maturing vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, radish, and green beans.

Replant in Pots: Herbs like chives, basil, thyme and rosemary can be dug up and replanted into pots to be kept indoors for winter. Alternatively, you can plant cuttings of the herbs. Small pots can be placed on window sills; bigger pots might need indoor grow lights.



Mulch: Hay, straw, grass clippings and leaf mold can help soil warm up sooner and retain moisture. It is also a way to protect bare soil from winter erosion.



Location and Structures

Stone Wall: Put in a garden that is bordered by a south-facing stone wall. The stone acts as a heat sink by absorbing heat from the sun all day and radiating the warmth at night, thus protecting plants near it from freezing temperatures.

South-facing Slope: Put your garden on a southern exposure slope because it receives more of the winter sun rays.



Raised Beds: They trap heat which allows the plants to survive longer.

High Tunnels/Hoop House: This is a type of greenhouse made with metal hoops and plastic covering with headspace for a person to walk freely inside. The plastic helps absorb heat from the day and retain it at night. Crops are planted inside and remain in the tunnel for the whole season.



Low Tunnels: A small version of the high tunnels but closer to the ground, they are made of metal or PVC pipes with plastic wrapping or floating row cover clipped to hold the fabric in place. Several layers of fabric might be needed to increase protection when temperatures dip really low.



Cold Frames: These are essentially cabinets (some are movable) that act as miniature greenhouses to protect tender plants from frost.



Hotbeds: Basically a heated cold frame, the soil gets reliable heat from compost and manure, or from electricity by installing heating cables with thermostat underneath the soil.

Floating Row and Frost Covers: Typically made of burlap, spun polyester and similar materials, they trap heat, let rain, light and air in, and protect plants from pests and animals. Although quick to install and easy to use, sometimes these tunnels help spread diseases and already-trapped pests to other plants.



Cloches: If you have a few plants to protect, plastic milk jugs and clear plastic bottles or transparent storage totes (drill holes for ventilation) can be used as cloches. Not practical for large plantings, cloches have to be removed for risk of plants overheating.



Greenhouses: Even in winter, a greenhouse will provide continuous crop production. However, a greenhouse takes up a lot of space, requires all-year maintenance, and can be expensive to build.



There are many possibilities of extending your growing season; so go ahead and experiment!

Free Vegetable Seeds for Our Locale

by Elizabeth Waddington

The Billings Community Seed Library (BCSL) has many free varieties of vegetables traditionally grown in the Billings area and some that would be challenging for our climate. Box stores tend to order by lot, not by locale, and we are grateful for their donations.

Be sure you read the package carefully to see if the details about planting and harvesting will match your garden setup. Some like okra and watermelon would be difficult in Billings due to the length of our growing season (approximate frost dates are May 15th and September 15th, if the weather is not too wacky). Visit <https://www.plantmaps.com/59102> for a map of

temperatures in Zones 4b and 5a, which vary by areas in Billings.

To extend the season, consider the humble milk carton solution or a floating row cover. The first is basically free with a small amount of work, and the latter is a time saver if you have a whole row that needs protection from a cold spell. They are available at garden centers, local nurseries and seed companies such as Burpees and Territorial, or Amazon.

Do remember that actual soil temperature plays a critical role in germination and seedling survival and ability to thrive.



Almost As Good Dead As Alive

by Bess Lovec

Artemisia stelleriana, colloquially known as “Silver Brocade,” is one of those rare ornamental plants which looks good even when dormant. Other common names for it: ghost plant or wormwood. A hardy perennial ground cover, its color of pale gray-green goes well with contemporary hues, such as white, black, and pinks to dark reds. Its color can be especially soothing when the heat is pumping during summer.

A low mounding ground cover, Artemisia stelleriana is not a spreader. Once established, it needs little water and fertilizer. This plant is for Zone 3, needs well-drained soil, requires full sun (minimum of 6 hours per day), and is

very drought tolerant.

Both the North Carolina State University Extension Plant ID and the Montana State University Plant ID websites identify Artemisia

stelleriana as dusty miller, the popular compact annual sold in big box stores around Billings. However, our newsletter editorial staff helped me realize that dusty miller, Senecio cineraria, is not an artemisia, although they share some characteristics, such as the lovely gray green shade. Obviously plant identification and naming remain challenging for gardeners, professional and otherwise. I find a perverse comfort in this confusion because the plant world perpetually mystifies me. Naming always carries power and weight, though. “A rose by any other name...” Juliet pines in *The Tragedy of Romeo & Juliet* by the Bard. We know how that scenario evolved.



Artemisia stelleriana “Silver Brocade”

Starting Seeds Indoors

by Corry Mordeaux

Ah! Spring is almost here. The seed catalogs are pouring in. Holy smokes, the seed packages say it is time to start our seeds indoors. My eggplant seed package indicates I need to start the seedlings 8 to 10 weeks before transplanting. So, by the end of March, I should have the seeds in trays and sprouting.

It sure is easier to buy plants from a greenhouse but a bunch more expensive. So we start our own seeds to save money. However, there is more to it! We do it because it is fun and educational. It gives an early start to Spring and Summer planting. It breaks the boredom of Winter.

The seed package usually tells which plant to start indoors (such as tomatoes and peppers) but there are many more vegetables and flowers that can be started indoors. On the other hand, some plants just will not do well if started indoors and then transplanted. And yet some may fool you, such as corn, which can be transplanted easily.

Where to start. First, we need a warm and sunny place. A south-facing window or a greenhouse or heat mats. Temperature for sprouting should be 65° to 70°F.

Next, we need seed trays. I like to use self-watering trays with a cover and an indicator showing the water level. The trays



will not break down for three to four years if carefully handled and washed after each season. These trays will keep the soil moist for five to seven days depending on the outside heat.

We fill the trays with, not potting soil, but soil starting mix. The mix is not really “sterile” but it is fungus-free. Using potting soil or any soil may give your seedling a problem. You could find your seedlings laying flat cut off at the soil level (damping off). Load up the trays with the mix, put in the seeds and dampen with water. The seed package usually indicates how deep to plant the seeds. The depth is normally as deep as the seed is wide. We put at least two seed in each square. Later it will break your heart to hack off one of the pair!

As the seedlings grow, we make sure the soil mix stays moist but not soaking wet. Remove the cover when the seeds sprout. When the seedlings have two true leaves, it is time to transplant into pots. The trays have finger-size hole in the bottom of each square making it easy to poke out the seedling mix and all. I put the seedlings in plastic or fiber pots filled with potting soil until time to transplant outside.

It is another story for transplanting out in your garden.

Billings Master Gardener Wins Best of Montana Landscape Award

Kudos to Ann McKean, Master Gardener and manager at Canyon Creek Nursery for recently winning a state-wide landscaping industry competition for ‘Best Softscape Planting Design’. Organized by Montana Nursery & Landscape Association, the award was presented at the Montana Green Expo, the association’s annual convention and trade show, last January in Missoula. The designs were judged with five criteria in mind: overall design, materials usage, visual texture and color, uniqueness, and use of hard materials.

Congratulations, Ann!



BILLINGS COMMUNITY SEED LIBRARY

Gardeners Dreaming of Summer Gardens

by Elizabeth Waddington

On a wintery March morning over 100 Billings gardeners, fledging and seasoned, came out for the seed exchange program at the Billings Public Library. While the actual “exchanging of seeds” is in its infancy (we have only had a few saved seeds donated to the program) we hope the event will gain attention for next March! If you are new to the idea, be sure to attend a fall seed saving program sponsored by Billings Community Seed Library (BCSL).

Folks cruised by boxes of sorted and dated seed packets, folded a newspaper seed starter pot, browsed resources from the Public Library, picked up MontGuides from the extension office, and headed out loaded with soil/pots/seed starter kits (courtesy of our donors). Many attendees were first time gardeners and received instructions on seed starting and transplant timing. There was also an activity for the kids matching seeds to seed packets and then listening to seeds in tins to decide which seed made “that noise”. Conclusion... bigger seeds make louder noise!

We have been able to share our seed bounty with the garden program at Skyview High School and will be sending some to nearby Extension programs for their Master Gardener events.

We would like to thank our donors to the Seed Library for helping make



it successful: Ace Hardware • Billings Nursery • Gainan's Garden Center Home Depot • Roots Garden Center West End Walmart ... and Gardeners like you!

Upcoming events

April 15th • 10 am–12 noon
St Andrews Community Garden (24th St. W) • Our Billings Communities Gardens Presented by representatives from Songbird, Amend, St Andrews and Hope Community Gardens. Free starts to be given away.

May 20th • 10 am–12 noon • Billings Public Library Community Room
Companion Planting and Garden Layout Presenters Patti Doble and Heidi Schueler.

June 24th • Time TBA • St Andrews Parking Lot • Pollinator Fest

July 8th • Billings Public Library Community Room • 10 am–12 noon • Preserving Foods Presenters Sara Fleur and Elizabeth Waddington (you can bring your pressure canner gauge to be checked).

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

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Summaries of Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association Quarterly Meetings



18TH JANUARY, 2023 MEETING

Classes (1): There was discussion whether to have a series of three classes on tree planting, care and preparation for winter. It was suggested asking new people about classes they might be interested in, and a discussion on what was done in past years and resource people that might be available. Steve Restad, Paul Scapari, and Sherry Doty are willing to form a committee to organize a series of three classes in March, June and September, and getting more associates involved. \$500 is authorized for class expenses, and Joann Glasser made an amendment to the motion that more money can be spent if authorized by the board.

Classes (2): Joann Glasser is willing to give a Vermcomposting class this spring.

Classes (3): Heidi Schueler brought up that since she is an extension agent, any classes she teaches need to be free and open to anyone. If the YCMGA puts on classes, we can charge a fee to recoup some expenses if we choose. We can also give YCMGA member classes free if we wish as a benefit of being part of the organization.

Plant Sale: A public fundraiser plant sale in the Spring was discussed. Association members would receive a discount on plants. Cindy Roesler suggested it be called a project so as not to appear to be competing with the local garden centers. Joann Glasser suggested selling heirloom tomatoes plants, and Cindy had some pepper seeds that are not usually available locally.

To start seeds early, the greenhouse at the fairgrounds would need some shoring up. Joann reported that it would need plastic replaced, wiggle wire and channel for the sides, some sort of tank heater, some lumber to tack wiggle wire and a vent to provide for air flow. A tentative date of March 18th was set for greenhouse repair for people to come and do the work. If there was good response, it should only take about four hours. Tentative planting date is set for March 25th, 2023.

General Information/Updates: Heidi Schueler brought some answers to questions she has been getting plus some information for us to be aware of.

- There are no longer any Master Gardener renewal fees for levels. We just need to do volunteer work and log the hours as required.

- Somebody on the board should get emails for the association and YCMGA fees.
- Heidi questioned whether we have a mission statement and if we are working towards it. Paul found our mission statement in Article 2, Section 2 of the Association's bylaws.
- As an association, we cannot just appreciate funds, we need to be actively using the funds.
- Heidi does not have resources to fund 'Master Gardener On The Town'. If we want this to continue, we will need to fund it.
- MSU will not let us pay volunteers for extra hours; but they can help with expenses, gift cards, shirts, tools, hats, etc.
- Update on Master Gardener classes: Heidi will be teaching a Level 1 Master Gardener class. It will be a hybrid class with online lectures and in-person lab at the Extension office. At this time, she can only take 10 participants and the class is full. It will start the first Tuesday in March from 6–8 pm. Master Gardeners can take the online portion if they register. This trial class is a completely new course and is implemented only in Billings and Missoula this Spring.

15TH MARCH, 2023 MEETING

Classes: Heidi Schueler shared that the Master Gardener classes are going well. Last week the class did soil testing and the turnout was great. There are nine active enrollees. They meet every Tuesday from 6–8 pm. Next week they will talk about Botany. Heidi also shared there may be a garden that she helped design going up at the Metra.

Grant: Paul Scapari said a grant of \$1,000 was sent in and approved from ConocoPhillips, although the money has not been received yet.

Tree Class: Sherry Doty reported the tree class will be held in September 2023 and tentatively James Prchal will be the speaker. Audience and location are yet to be determined.

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Yellowstone Master Gardener

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Greenhouse: On Saturday, March 18th, 2023, at 9 am, there will be a spring clean-up of the greenhouse at the Metra Demo Garden.

Plant Sale: Planting for the May plant sale will be held at the Metra Demo Garden on Saturday, March 25th, 2023, from 9 am–noon. There will be plenty of heirloom tomatoes and a variety of peppers to plant. The Plant Sale will be held at the Metra Demo Garden Saturday, May 13th from 9 am–noon, and on Saturday, May 20th from 9 am–noon (if needed). A poster with pricing will be made and posted at the Metra entrances. Heidi will check on what it would take to create and get posters printed. Steve said we will use a virtual vote to approve the poster price, etc.

**Continuing Education (CE)/
Volunteer Hours:** There were

some discussions on how to count Continuing Education (CE) hours in the future. Heidi said they are still deciding on how to incorporate CE hours.

Senior Status for Master Gardeners:

Tom Kress brought up that there was talk about giving those Master Gardeners who have accumulated many hours and have been in the program for a long time the possibility of being given senior status. Heidi said that she is in communication with Sarah Eilers about this and that some Master Gardeners would be given Emeritus status and would not have to log in their Master Gardener hours each year. Heidi will email everyone when she has more information.

Seedling Planting Box: Mike Walz showed everyone how to make a

seedling plant box by using a piece of recycled paper.

Resignation: Sherry Doty is resigning from her position on the Board as of May 2023.

Yellowstone Master Gardener Newsletter MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Yellowstone 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.