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

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Yellowstone Master Gardener



NEWSLETTER

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Whirling Carrot-Top: Valeria Jeffries

by Bess Lovec

Give this gal a hurdle and she will either bulldoze through it or climb over it. For instance, when I interviewed Valeria Jeffries, she had just finished her first marathon. Not only did she complete it: She finished best of class in her age group (admittedly due to the help of Dr. “Joe”). She bonked due to the heat, yet recovered enough to finish. One of the perkier people I have ever met, I’ve known Val for years through the Yellowstone Art Museum, where she served as Chair of the Board. She just radiates energy, even though she’s very busy as a regional executive with Holiday stores. I felt a surge of excitement when I saw that she enrolled in the Master Gardeners’ program the year I did.

How does she do it? Gardening overlaps with most of the six roles she wishes to improve upon: leader, gardener, chef, athlete, artist, and as a spouse. Allen and she have five acres by the Yellowstone River that provide numerous opportunities for creative gardening. Allen has a salsa garden of tomatoes, cilantro, and peppers among their four raised beds. Another is of wild flowers. Plus they have a pond that Val surrounds with a variety of bulbs. “I

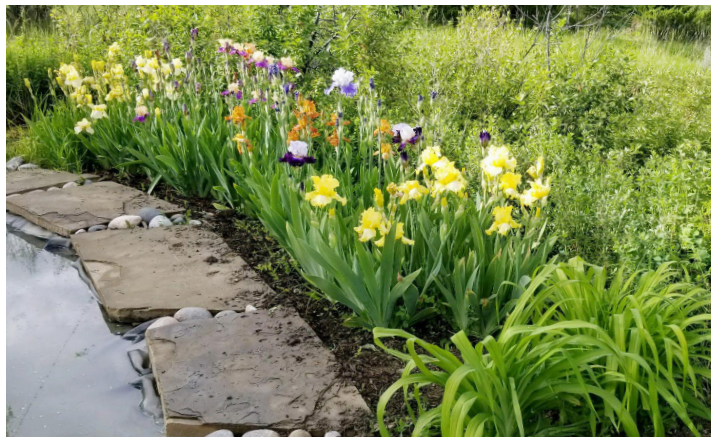


Valeria Jeffries

always enjoy plants” she shares. With her fast-paced career involving lots of travel, Val makes time to walk through nurseries to reduce stress. Unfortunately their property was hit by the recent hailstorm, but with her can-do attitude, she brushed off the property and views the changes as an opportunity for growth. Even though her car was totaled along with six windows and two roofs, her thoughts go towards the farmers struck by the devastation.

Her gardening days began in Minnesota when her mom sent her and her siblings to the garden to pick fresh vegetables. Lately Val finds joy in companionship gardens, in which gardeners share plants with other gardeners. She hosts the Master Gardeners booth at Pompey’s Pillar’s annual event

continued on page 2



Irises by Valeria’s pond

The Garden Jungle or Gardening to Save the Planet by Dave Goulson

I just finished reading what may be my favorite nature book ever and thought I'd recommend it. It's called *The Garden Jungle or Gardening to Save the Planet* by Dave Goulson. I can't say enough good things about it.

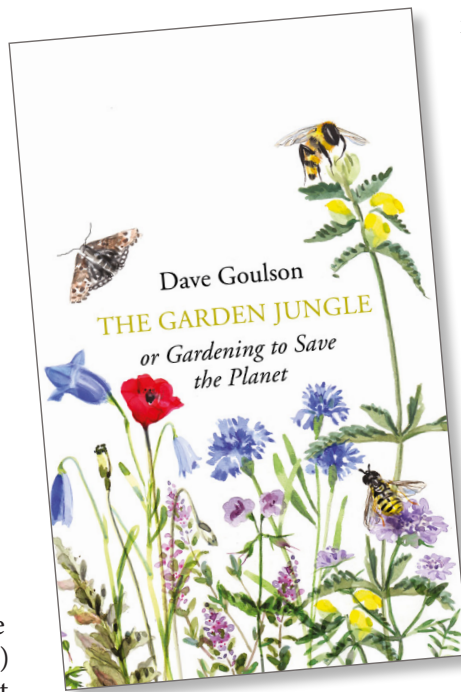
The author is a biology professor in Great Britain. This book is about plants and insects in our yards and gardens and fascinating facts about them, as well as the effects of climate change that are endangering them, and how we can manage our gardens (that's British for yard) to support them. It's a rare nonfiction book that reads as quickly and grippingly as a good novel. And the author is irreverent and really funny as well.

The "saving the planet" part of the title is integrated throughout the book as well as fleshed out in the last chapter. Dr. Goulson incorporates plenty of statistics on topics such as the precipitous decline in species and the large drop in the number of garden allotments in Britain compared to during World War II. He also explains how gardening can in so many ways ameliorate the effects of climate change, e.g. by helping to sequester carbon in the soil more effectively than industrial farming.

In Dr. Goulson's own words: "When it comes to doing our bit to combat climate change, we gardeners face a win-win situation. The more carbon we can store, by adding home-made compost, mulches or charcoal to our soils, the deeper, darker and healthier our soils will become, the more our worms will thrive, the better drained the soil will be, and the faster our plants will grow... Gardening can be truly green, and I think it might just contain the key to saving the planet."

Here are the topics covered in the twelve chapters of the book: Plants in Profusion, the Garden Meadow, Earwigs in my Orchard, the Toxic Cocktail, the Buzzing of Bees, Moth Mayhem, Dive into the Pond, Ants in my Plants, the Wriggling Worms, Garden Invaders, the Cycle of Life, and Gardening to Save the Planet. You can see that a wide range of topics important to gardeners is explored. And I'll never underappreciate earwigs and silverfish again after reading Chapter Three.

Dr. Goulson's area of specialty is bees and the chapter on bees is fascinating. For example, mason bees lay eggs



in tubes, complete with food and padding for each egg. They complete the home for one egg, then start again until the tube is full. But the really incredible thing is that they are capable of determining the sex of the egg and they lay females first, then fill in the last of the tube with males. This way if a wasp manages to invade the front part of the tube, there will still be female bees in the back to hatch and carry on the species. Amazing.

This is a book written about Great Britain so the recommended plants are somewhat different than what we grow here. One can take the principles from the book

and do research on applying them to our location. But it is also quite interesting to read of the challenges to the environment in a different country and compare Britain's experience with our situation here.

I just wish I could take a class from this author! Luckily he has two other books which I've obtained (*A Sting in the Tale* and *A Buzz in the Meadow*) so I can read more by him now that I've finished this one. Happy garden reading!

VALERIA JEFFRIES *continued from page 1*

and also volunteers with Chris Smith at Jim's Jungle every weekend in May. Chris and Val first met when providing advice at Lowe's.

Her praise for the MG program overflows, but her highlights include getting to know other gardeners and learning specifics about soil types, fertilizers, the essentials. She values Amy's ability to build community. Val calls herself a Master Learner rather than a Master Gardener, although, based on photographs she shared, she's both! The only area of improvement that she hopes will evolve for the MG program? Improved, updated videos.

She's flummoxed by begonias but has found success with black-eyed Susans and bulbs. Next Val plans a shade garden on her back patio and, potentially, grapevines. She feels her best accomplishment as a gardener is yet to come. Her advice for new gardeners radiates wisdom! Volunteer, keep reading, ask questions, and participate. That formula sounds ideal for success in any endeavor.

2019 Master Gardener Christmas Party

by Amy Grandpre

We really changed it up for this years Christmas Party.

For starters a major location change. Instead of the traditional Moss Mansion affair, which we were outgrowing, the switch was made to host the event at the MetraPark 4-H Building. I'm sure many of us missed the novelty of celebrating at the Moss but it was great to have a nice big kitchen work area for Sharon Wetsch and helpers Duane, Tyler and Jessica, to cook the turkey, ham and prime rib. Great to have lots of room for dinner tables, games and left/right gift exchange, and really great for parking.

Then the rest of the meal was put in potluck mode, and I must say, there were many delightful dishes that completely disappeared by the end of the meal. Thanks to all our cooks.

The tables were beautifully decorated with cheery candy dishes, twinkling strings of lights, singing ornaments and a poinsettia for each family. Thank you Brian Godfrey, Tracey King, Cindy Roesler for your lovely work, and Sharon Wetsch for the poinsettias.

There were numerous prize drawings beautifully gift wrapped by Chris Smith. And thanks also to Chris for providing the Christmas tree - it added so much to the festivities.

We had fun with an extra-long left/right gift exchange, regarding Santa losing his gift bag.



And the icing on the cake: Roy Wahl brought the Big Sky Chorus quartet to serenade the party into the Christmas season.

Also appreciate all the helping hands for cleanup, especially dish scrubber Irene Lemieux - you rock!

Another big blessing was the weather. We've had so many Christmas parties with blizzards and ice and this night was just perfect for getting out and safely enjoying the evening.

I'm thinking we will utilize this area again next year.

With that, and since I realize this will be published after the holidays, I hope you all had many special blessings as you celebrated with family and loved ones.

On to 2020!



Aronia melanocarpa

by Ann McKean

Aronia melanocarpa, common name black chokeberry (not chokecherry), can be a great addition to your Montana landscape. Typically growing 3' to 6' tall and wide and hardy to zone 3, this attractive deciduous shrub is native to sunny or partly sunny moist locations in the eastern and midwestern United States, but is extremely adaptable and tolerates clay, dry and alkaline soil, salt, and shade. This makes it an excellent choice for rain gardens as well as shrub borders. While its tendency to sucker makes it a good candidate for more natural plantings, our challenging growing conditions keep it in check with very little maintenance required.

Plants begin the growing season in spring with clusters of white star-shaped blossoms which are appreciated by pollinators. Leaves are glossy green in summer and vivid orange, red and burgundy in autumn. The self-fruitful chokeberry earns its name with plump, dark astringent pea sized fruits which are actually a pome and similar to apples. Primarily relied on by birds for late winter calories, the fruit makes a tasty jam or jelly, and is extremely high in anti-oxidants. When fully ripe, the fruit has as much sugar as grapes, and freezing reduces the astringency, which may explain why birds save it for later in the winter.

Besides jam and jelly, this superfood is commercially grown for baked goods, juice, tea, wine, barbecue sauce, sorbet, and even food coloring. While its high level of tannins makes it astringent, it has more antioxidants than any other temperate fruit, and it is a great addition to an orchard or forest garden. 'Viking' is one of the cultivars grown in commercial fruit production in the United States, Europe and Russia, and in ideal conditions can grow as large and live as long as a lilac. A member of the Rosaceae family, Aronia could potentially suffer from any of the ailments to which that family is subject, but is usually trouble free.



While older cultivars such as 'Autumn Magic', 'Iroquois Beauty' (both 3'-4' tall) and 'Viking' (3'-8' tall), have been used in ornamental landscapes, there are several excellent newer cultivars which expand the planting possibilities for this easy shrub beyond the rain garden, wildlife garden or back of the border. 'Low Scape Mound' is a tidy 2'x2' and fits neatly into any landscape planting plan singly or in a group. The newest cultivar, 'Hedge Hog', reaches only 8" to 14" tall but spreads up to 36", making it a dense erosion resistant ground cover with strong three season interest and wildlife benefit.

The various cultivars of *Aronia melanocarpa* are attractive, beneficial easygoing additions that will fit into almost any garden or landscape. Why not add one to your garden this year!

Note: *Aronia melanocarpa* should not be confused with *Prunus virginiana* which is chokecherry. 'Canada Red' is the ubiquitous chokecherry tree cultivar found in ornamental plantings, and *Prunus virginiana melanocarpa* is the native black chokecherry traditionally used for yummy chokecherry syrup. Both of these plants grow much taller than chokeberries and have a toxic pit.

Source:

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/2009/mar/110401.htm>

<https://extension.umaine.edu/agriculture/aronia/plant-description-and-habitat/>

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/>

Master Gardeners Certificates and Rewards 2019

by Amy Grandpre

Below is a list of Master Gardeners who have gotten their Certification or Hour reward.

Level 1 Shirt & Certificate

Linda Todd
Paul Scarpari
MaryAnne Wanca-Thibault
Kyle/Deborah Neary
Maggie McBride
Roberta Fuller
Deb Yates
Lisa Guy
Keith Buxbaum
Lori Buxbaum
Kayla Grams
Claudia Janecek

Level 2 Shirt & Certificate

Elizabeth Waddington
Suri Lunde
Joanne Bylsma

Level 3 Shirt & Certificate

Sheri Frederickson
Cheryl Fowell

200 Volunteer Hours (Yellowstone County Pin)

Donna Canino
Julie Osslund
Karen Botnen
Maia Dickerson

\$25 for 400 Volunteer Hours

Brian Godfrey
Gail Tesinsky

\$50 for 600 Volunteer Hours

Brian Godfrey
Joyce Hendricks
Marion Grummett
Sue Carter

Mantle Clock for 1400 Volunteer Hours

Merita Murdock – donated
reward value to Master
Gardener Account to use
for MetraPark Square
Foot Garden Signage
(thanks Merita)

\$200 for 2000 Volunteer Hours

Sharon Wetsch (thanks
Sharon for all you do)

Level Up To Three!

by Elizabeth Waddington

Every other summer, you have a chance to level up from two to three by spending an August weekend in Bozeman with fellow Master Gardeners. While the dates have not been set for 2020, according to Dara Palmer, the Montana Master Gardener Coordinator, the basics will include Integrated Pest Management sessions, Real Colors training, and tours/demonstrations.

From the state website: The Level 3 Master Gardener course is an intensive training offered on the campus of Montana State University-Bozeman. There will be approximately 30 hours of class time and a minimum 40 hour volunteer commitment. The Level 3 Master Gardener course will emphasize a hands-on curriculum focusing on volunteer management training, plant diagnosis and insect identification. To be eligible for Level 3 Master Gardener, students must be a certified Level 2 Master Gardener



and be nominated by their county or reservation Extension agent or Master Gardener Coordinator. Space for this class is limited to 24, please be aware there may be a waiting list.

To entice you to consider this extra training, several folks who have recently been through the training shared their “top 5 reasons”. Here are a few of them:

- Access to the insect collection at MSU, once in a lifetime opportunity.
- Real colors, Personality test – understand yourself and others.
- Another level of information from individual presentations.
- Gallatin Valley Farmers Market visit.
- Hands on practical training.

- Exposure to gardeners from other parts of the state and their problems and solutions.
- Learn to research topics.
- Learn more to contribute more to the community and Master Gardener program.
- Working knowledge of Schutter Diagnostic lab.
- Network with like-minded individuals.
- Awesome food.
- And, drumroll please... a **Cool Purple Shirt**.

A huge benefit is “expanding your knowledge base” to the point that others (especially outside the master gardener group) feel comfortable approaching you for input into their gardening practices or directing them to information that they may not know is readily available.

More details and dates to come but don't delay, when you hear it is open, register right away!

The Winter Wildlife Garden

by Ann McKean

Here in Montana most of us withdraw from the garden for the winter and dream impatiently about the return of summer, but there is a whole season of beauty and benefit that you can tap into by adding some wildlife friendly plants to provide late season food and cover. However, before you even plant a thing, think about changing your gardening habits.

First, switch your garden cleanup season to spring instead of autumn. Nature doesn't do fall cleanup so why do we?! Besides returning some lost nutrients back to the soil and adding winter interest with structure and texture, the plants you don't cut down and the leaves you don't rake up provide critical winter shelter for birds, small mammals and even hibernating insects. They also help protect the crowns and roots of your plants. If you have a specific concern about disease and need to rake under or cut down certain plants in the fall, try creating a winter brush pile in another area to preserve hollow stems and create a place to hibernate and hide. Remember to wait to compost or toss what's left until critters have had a chance to wake up.

Second, try not to use pesticides. Reducing or eliminating pesticide use not only spares the caterpillars birds need to raise their young, but also preserves the beneficial predatory insects which help keep things in balance. If you practice good cultural maintenance with proper plant selection, spacing, pruning, watering and judicious feeding, nature will usually be able to keep pest populations below the threshold of chemical intervention. As Master Gardeners, we must lead the way to a paradigm shift about how we view our gardens and the wildlife they support.

There are many plants we can include in a winter garden to benefit wildlife and add beauty. Native plants are always a good choice because they have evolved with the insects, animals and conditions in our region. Some of these plants offer vital late season nectar and pollen,

including rabbitbrush, asters, coneflowers, goldenrod and perennial sunflowers. Many also provide nutrient and calorie packed seeds through the winter. There are also a host of native and non-native shrubs and trees which offer a bounty of nuts, berries and sometimes even twigs to nibble. Chokeberries and chokecherries, snowberries, sumacs, viburnum, red-twig dogwood, roses, mountain ash, crabapples, oaks and cone bearing evergreens are a few examples. I've even watched in amazement as wild turkeys deftly strip grass seeds from their stalks. All of these plants also add rich texture, structure and subtle color to our winter landscapes.

As you plan next season's garden additions and head out to the nurseries this spring, think about how fortunate we are to enjoy such a wide variety of wildlife so close to home, and remember to include some plants for your winter garden to support those treasures. You, your garden and your community will be enriched.

Source:
<https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2012/DecJan/Gardening/Winter-Table-for-Wildlife>



Enjoy Squash From Your Garden All Winter Long

Winter squashes should be allowed to mature fully on the vine. If the rind cannot be dented with your thumbnail, it is ready for harvest. Complete the harvest before the first hard frost. Stems and vines will be hard and dry at harvest time. Cut squash from the vine leaving 2 to 3 inches of stem above the fruit; this will allow the squash to store longer.



tender enough to easily pierce through with a fork. To steam your squash, place your chunks in a steamer basket above the boiling water and cook until tender.

For those in a time pinch, or working with limited appliances, you can also microwave many types of squash – depending on its size – by slicing it in half down the center, removing the seeds, and microwaving on high for seven minutes per pound.

Cooking Basics

To roast most winter squash, carefully cut the squash in half through the stem, and scrape out the seeds inside. Then rub a small amount of oil or butter along the inner flesh of the squash and top with some salt and pepper. Place the squash face down on a baking sheet and roast in a 400-degree oven for between 30-45 minutes depending on the size of your squash. You'll know it's done when the skin has become brown and slightly blistered and the flesh has softened and can be pierced with a fork with no resistance. You also have the option of cutting the squash into pieces before roasting, which will take longer in prep time but will allow the squash to roast at a faster rate.

To boil your squash, you'll want to first carefully cut off the skin and slice the squash into smaller chunks. Place in a saucepan, cover with water, and bring to a boil. While the timing will vary depending on the toughness of the squash you choose, check periodically if your squash is

Once you've cooked your squash via one of these simple methods, then you can easily incorporate it into recipes ranging from showstopping savory mains to festive desserts.

Here's an easy side dish to prepare:

CHEESY BUTTERCUP SQUASH

- 1 butternut squash, sliced and cooked (see above)
- 2 tbsp butter
- ½ cup shredded triple cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup grated parmesan
- 2-4 tbsp lowfat milk

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Scoop the squash out of the shell and into a bowl. Add the butter, cheeses, and enough milk to smoothly mash the squash (add even more milk if your squash is dry). Serve immediately.

Master Gardeners Fall Picnic

by Amy Grandpre

The last picnic of the year (September 24th, 2019) was a lovely event. And even though it was very windy, we cozied up next to one of the Metra barns, making it most pleasant.



Extra special thanks to Brian Godfrey for his most diligent planning to keep our picnic gear all together and ready for fast access: his "Master Gardener Chuckwagon" is a most innovative idea and one I'm sure will get abundant use.

Special thanks as well to Tom and Barb Kress, who brought a most beautiful platter of "Kress grown" tomatoes and onions for dressing the burgers (as well as many garden goodies to share), and to my honey, Tim, for flipping burgers and brats. And while I'm at it, thanks to all you cooks who put together food offerings for the picnic. We sure do put out a good spread for our potlucks – perfectly yummy.



Summary of Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association Quarterly Meeting (12 November 2019)



- **Conoco Grant:** Brian Godfrey, President, stated Conoco is sending a \$1,000 grant for the Metra Garden Project.
- **Association Membership Drive 2020:** Bylaw was revised in order to help increase membership.
 - *Article IV. Section 2. Interns. Internship status and YCMGA membership shall be extended to current participants of the Master Gardener Course in Yellowstone County. Interns may be accepted into full Associate status upon completion of the Master Gardener Course and payment of annual YCMGA dues.*
 - *Article IV. Section 3. Dues. Dues for the Associates of this Association shall be \$15 per calendar year, payable annually. The cost for annual dues may be changed by the Board of Directors.*

The change now states that a person does not need to complete their certification as a Master Gardener along with completing their Master gardener hours for the year in order to be an Association member. Master Gardener students can join the Association before taking the test and completing their hours.

- **Membership Cards:** Membership cards were to be distributed to members by Brian during the Christmas party and Chris Smith (Treasurer) will be given a list of those who signed up and were given a card at the party.
- **Montana Master Gardener Celebration 2020; Saturday, September 19th, 2020:**
 - Items like keychains, lanyards, water bottles and hats with YCMGA and MSU Extension logo to sell at the Farmer's market or use as giveaways at the celebration.
 - Nametags of participants will be attached to the lanyards and each lanyard will have a pocket in back where tickets for classes, tours, etc. can be placed.
 - Merita Murdock's tree book will be included with registration packets. It was suggested that Merita take attendees on the tree tour after registration.

- 4H building is a possible location. Lunch will be a taco bar. A vendor row, a talk by Dr. David Gilby and a succulent planting class were suggested for afternoon activities. In addition to a fused glass art and seed packets, Brian asked if everyone could find donations for the celebration. Saturday evening dinner will be a Master Gardener BBQ.
- Speakers will be contacted in March and volunteers will be recruited in June/July.
- **Moss Mansion YCMGA Christmas Tree:** Sharon Wetsch decorated this year's YCMGA Christmas tree at Moss Mansion. The theme was 'The Netherlands' and it was displayed in the Moss Mansion master bedroom.
- **Christmas Party 2019:** On Tom Kress' suggestion, the Christmas party would be at the 4H building, Saturday, December 7th at 4 pm. Tom also suggested a potluck this year with the YCMGA providing the meat, including meat for non-beef eaters.

The Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association meets four times a year. Look out for their emails on meeting dates.

Another Way To Read The Newsletter 

Enjoy the Yellowstone County Master Gardener quarterly newsletter online! Share with friends and access recent editions in the archives. Find local interviews, interesting articles, tasty recipes, upcoming activities and opportunities, plant features, and more.

www.YellowstoneMasterGardenerNewsletter.wordpress.com

Wishing Everyone A Happy New Year 2020!

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 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.

