

THE REAL DIRT

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MASTER GARDENER
FOUNDATION OF LEWIS COUNTY



THIS ISSUE

THROUGH A
GARDEN GATE

THYME TO
DISCOVER
HEIRLOOMS

THE VALUE OF
DEMONSTRATION
GARDENS

PROGRAM
PRIORITIES

Spring Into Action: Upcoming Events with Master Gardeners

Spring is packed with excitement for gardening enthusiasts in Lewis County! **Learn to up-pot** seedlings and young plants with us on **April 5** at the Borst Greenhouse Shed. Hands-on tips to ensure healthy growth!

Join us on **April 12** for **Gardening For Everyone**, a full-day event at Centralia College featuring engaging workshops on topics like pollinators, roses, mason bees, and more.

Then, mark your calendars for **May 12-13** for our Annual **Spring Plant Sale** at the Southwest Washington Fairgrounds. It's your chance to shop a wide variety of vegetable starts, perennials, native plants, and the region's largest selection of tomato starts—plus get expert gardening advice from our Master Gardeners. Don't miss these incredible opportunities to grow your gardening skills and connect with the community!

Through a Garden Gate

Christchurch Botanic Gardens

EL EVERETT-BECHTOLD

Nestled in the heart of Christchurch and embraced on three sides by the Avon River, the Christchurch Botanic Gardens stretch over 75 acres, offering visitors a serene escape filled with towering trees, vibrant flowers, and historical charm. Established in 1863 with the planting of an English oak to commemorate a royal marriage, these gardens have become a testament to the city's dedication to horticulture and community.



The journey through the gardens begins at the iconic Peacock Fountain, an ornate Edwardian cast-iron feature installed in 1911 through the bequest of Honorable John Peacock. Despite years of mixed reviews and even a temporary removal, the fountain now stands as a delightful and whimsical centerpiece, adorned with herons, reeds, and dolphin-like figures.



One of the garden's defining features is its collection of remarkable trees. From the ancient giant sequoia planted by Prince Alfred in 1869 to unique specimens like the Alpine ash and Monterey cypress, the diversity of tree species inspires wonder. Their twisted trunks and sprawling branches create a living art gallery, with each tree telling its own story. The Monterey cypress, growing over 130 feet tall, is particularly notable for its connection to the Leyland cypress, a hybrid known to cause mischief in suburban gardens.



A walk through the gardens also reveals its rich history and carefully curated spaces. Cunningham House, the largest and oldest display house in the gardens, dates back to 1923 and offers a lush indoor experience. The rose gardens, first established in 1909, have evolved over time but still captivate with a stunning display of climbing and hybrid tea roses.



The Botanic Gardens are constantly adapting to changing climates and gardening trends. The addition of a crevice garden in 2023—designed by American crevice expert Kenton Seth—demonstrates their commitment to sustainability and innovation. Despite being a new project, the garden's drought-tolerant plants thrived during Christchurch's hot, dry summer, offering a glimpse into the future of resilient landscaping.

Beyond plants, the gardens are enriched by art and history. Visitors can enjoy sculptures and installations, including a Chinese wood dragon celebrating 2024's Year of the Dragon. The Curator's House, originally built in 1872, now serves as a restaurant surrounded by a productive working garden, connecting the past with the present.



Open to all and free to explore, the Christchurch Botanic Gardens provide a sanctuary where nature, history, and art converge. Whether you're captivated by the grandeur of its trees, the beauty of its blooms, or the stories embedded in its pathways, this garden promises an experience that leaves a lasting impression.



Thyme to Discover Heirlooms

Prunella vulgaris - Self Heal

JEANNETTE LAWSON

Common Names: Self-Heal, Woundwart, Heart-of-the-Earth, Heal-All, Brownwort, Blue Curls



Prunella vulgaris is a low-growing perennial and a proud member of the Lamiaceae (mint) family. Like all plants in this family, it features a distinct square stem. It produces terminal spikes of purple flowers that bloom from June to October, adding beauty to gardens and wild spaces alike.

Often considered a weed in lawns and moist, shady spots, this plant is rich in history and offers immense value. Not only does it serve as a vital resource for native pollinators, but it also has a legacy of medicinal use that spans cultures and centuries.

Ecological Importance

Thanks to its bitter flavor, herbivores typically avoid eating Prunella vulgaris. Its rhizomatous roots and spreading habit make it excellent for erosion control. However, its ability to spread rapidly means it has the potential to become invasive over time.

Historical and Medicinal Uses

Prunella vulgaris has a rich history of medicinal applications. It was traditionally used to heal wounds, stop bleeding, soothe sore throats, and treat heart disease and mouth sores. Tribes in the Pacific Northwest, such as the Quileute and Coast Salish, applied its juice to boils, while the Delaware and Iroquois used it to reduce fevers. The Nuxalk made a weak tea from the plant for heart health.



Modern Findings

Studies reveal that Prunella vulgaris possesses antibiotic properties, lowers blood pressure, and contains ursolic acid—a compound believed to increase urination and fight tumors. Despite its long-standing use as a medicinal herb, it's important to note that the plant can concentrate lead and other pollutants. For safety, avoid gathering it from roadsides or other contaminated areas. (Source: USDA-NRCS)

Growing Knowledge, Inspiring Community

The Value of Demonstration Gardens

LEAH HUGHES

Lewis County is home to four Master Gardener demonstration gardens—Borst Garden & Greenhouse, Providence Place, Salkum, and the Fairgrounds—each providing hands-on learning opportunities and showcasing sustainable gardening techniques. These gardens are vital spaces for education and engagement.

A Master Gardener demonstration garden is more than just a beautifully cultivated space—it's a living classroom and a cornerstone of community connection. These gardens offer a unique opportunity for Master Gardeners to put their education into action while experimenting with new ideas in real time.



By showcasing best practices in soil health, plant selection, integrated pest management, and more, demonstration gardens serve as an invaluable teaching tool. Visitors can see firsthand how these principles create thriving gardens, turning abstract concepts into tangible results.

Beyond education, a demonstration garden strengthens community ties by offering a welcoming space where gardeners of all skill levels can gather, learn, and grow together. Workshops, plant identification tours, and hands-on demonstrations provide practical takeaways for the community while fostering a deeper appreciation for horticulture.



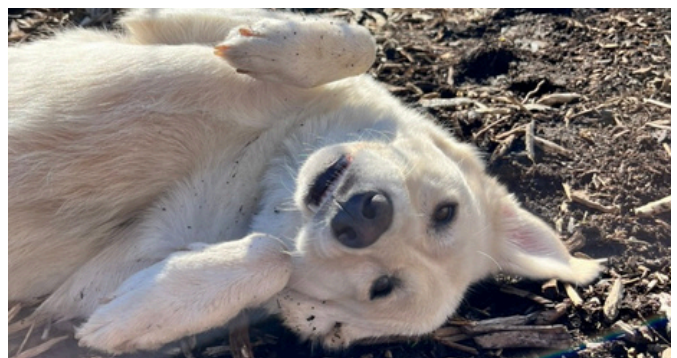
Recently, the Borst demonstration garden team came together to help prepare the demo garden for a the first class of the season. Volunteers rolled up their sleeves for a thorough cleanup of the garden, ensuring beds and pathways were ready for new visitors. A fig tree and kiwi vine were swiftly pruned, and cuttings were taken to propagate plants for next year's plant sale, showcasing our garden's sustainable practices in action.



These activities not only prepare the garden for future learning opportunities but also embody the community spirit that makes a Master Gardener demonstration garden so special. We even had a new trainee show up to help out. It's great to see new trainees and experienced Master Gardeners coming together to tackle projects and share ideas.

We hope to see you at an upcoming class at one of the demo gardens so you can experience these amazing places for yourself!

Of course, no day at the garden is complete without some four-legged company—our garden mascot, Rue, kept spirits high as the team worked together to make the garden shine.



WSU Extension Master Gardener Program Priorities

Growing Community Resilience



The WSU Extension Master Gardener program exists to help enhance community well-being and sustainability through **research-based education and outreach initiatives**. There are 9 program priorities our training classes and community engagement activities strive to focus on.

- **Climate Change:** Helping communities adapt their gardens and landscapes to changing weather patterns for greater resilience.
- **Clean Water:** Promoting strategies like integrated pest management to reduce polluted runoff and protect local waterways.
- **Water Conservation:** Educating on efficient irrigation methods and drought-tolerant gardening practices to conserve valuable water resources.
- **Soil Health:** Advocating for soil management practices that enhance fertility, sequester carbon, and support sustainable agriculture.
- **Pollinators:** Creating safe havens for native pollinators like bees and butterflies by fostering pollinator-friendly landscapes.
- **Local Food:** Supporting local agriculture and encouraging sustainable food-growing practices to strengthen food security and wellness.
- **Plant Biodiversity:** Highlighting the importance of managing invasive species, preserving native plants, and restoring ecosystems for long-term environmental health.
- **Nearby Nature:** Promoting access to green spaces to improve mental and physical health while fostering community connections.
- **Wildfire Preparedness:** Offering guidance on fire-wise landscaping techniques to minimize risks in wildfire-prone areas.

Through these priorities, WSU Extension empowers individuals and communities to address critical challenges, build resilient landscapes, and embrace sustainable practices for a brighter future. Stay tuned for a deeper dive on each of these priorities in future newsletters!

2025 Upcoming Events

LEWIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER EVENTS
FEB - JUNE

Date & Time	Class	City	Location
April 5 10AM	Up-potting Plants	Centralia	Borst Greenhouse Shed
April 12 9AM - 3PM	Gardening for Everyone	Centralia	Centralia College - Washington Hall
May 17-18 9AM - 4PM	Annual Spring Plant Sale	Chehalis	SWW Fairgrounds - Blue Pavillion
June 7 10AM	Year Round Vegetable Gardening	Salkum	Salkum Timberland Library
June 14 10AM	Designing a Garden for All Seasons	Centralia	Borst Demo Garden
June 21 10AM	Concrete Leaf Making	Salkum	Salkum Timberland Library
June 28 10AM	PNW Butterflies	Chehalis	Providence Place Demo Garden
July 19 10AM	Growing & Caring for Hydrangeas	Chehalis	Providence Place Demo Garden
August 30 10AM	Creating a Food Forest	Salkum	Salkum Timberland Library
October 11 10AM	Growing in a Greenhouse/Poly tunnel	Chehalis	Borst Kitchen #1

Check out the [Lewis County Master Gardener website](#) for more information about our events!

