

THE REAL DIRT

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MASTER GARDENER
FOUNDATION OF LEWIS COUNTY



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Thank You for a Wonderful Year!

As 2025 comes to a close, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you who tuned in, read along, and joined in on this journey of gardens, recipes, travels, and sustainability. Your curiosity and enthusiasm make this newsletter thrive. In this issue, you can find:

- **Demo Garden Year In Review:** Lessons and successes from our own plots.
- **Leave the Leaves:** Why skipping the rake helps soil and wildlife.
- **Fava Beans:** Nutty, versatile, and easy to grow.
- **Marrakech Gardens:** Two historic spaces restored into peaceful oases.

Thank you for being part of our community in 2025. We look forward to bringing you more stories, tips, and inspiration in 2026—see you in the garden!

**Wishing all of you a Happy Holiday Season, and see you
in the new year!**

SALKUM DEMO GARDEN

2025 in Review

SHERRY PEARSON & SHARON TIPPING

This year's workshops included Food Forest, Year-Round Gardening, and Concrete Leaf Making presentations.



Following the major irrigation system installation in 2024, our focus in 2025 was on maintenance—rearranging a few plantings and filling the beds with fresh, colorful additions. The new irrigation system has made garden work much easier and allowed us to use our time more efficiently.

Special thanks to Britney Kerman, who beautifully maintained the Garden Gate entrance throughout the summer, and to Kathy Henry, who is creating a new Food Forest Guild. Kathy's workshops on Food Forest gardening drew strong interest and enthusiasm.

We are also deeply grateful to Anne Smeester's husband, Greg, who graciously re-roofed our Salkum Garden Shed on a scorching hot day in August. Thanks to Greg and Anne, the shed now has a beautiful new roof that will serve us well for years to come.

We were delighted to receive many compliments on the garden this season. It's wonderful to know that visitors are enjoying the space and appreciating the effort that goes into it.



PROVIDENCE DEMO GARDEN

2025 in Review

MARY JEAN MARSH & LAVETA ARNOLD



Another successful year! Our team grew to 9 members with Lin joining as a trainee and now a full-fledged Master Gardener. Current members are Ted, Noel, Jerry, Heidi, Linda, El, MJ, and LaVeta. We are grateful to work with such an amazing group.

Our big project was spreading 7 yards of fresh bark across the garden. Providence Place remains the largest Demonstration Garden at 16,190 square feet, wrapping around the building and presenting the challenge of a slope. Terracing may be added in the future.

We removed two failing trees and a shrub, thanks to Jerry's trailer and Ted's logging skills, and replaced a rotted clematis trellis with one built by the MG Crafts committee. The rose garden thrived after soil refresh and spring pruning, with spectacular blooms.

New plantings included a star Magnolia in the White Garden and a fig tree relocated to the front for room to grow.

Three workshops were offered: Caring for Blueberries, Pacific Northwest Butterflies, and Growing and Caring for Hydrangeas. Former MG Gail, visiting from Florida, helped us map and tag all Hydrangeas.

Providence Place, a HUD facility for low-income seniors, celebrated its 30th anniversary this year. Master Gardeners were honored for 27 years of contributions. We advise and support the Providence Place residents who garden in the stock tanks we helped to install, as well as the timbered raised beds. This year there was an enthusiastic and active group of resident gardeners, who enjoyed a great harvest from their efforts. We also had a sparrow family nested and fledged a family in our bird house in the resident area.

We'll finish the year by decorating the entrance for the holidays on December 1st, now a tradition. Looking forward to more progress in 2026!

LEAVE THE LEAVES

Simple Steps Toward Soil and Sustainability

LEAH HUGHES



In the Pacific Northwest, autumn and early winter bring steady rains and a carpet of fallen leaves across our yards. Instead of bagging them up, consider letting nature take its course. Leaves are more than seasonal clutter, they're a resource that can enrich your soil, protect plants, and support local wildlife through the wet months ahead.

Why skip the rake this fall?

- **Natural fertilizer:** As leaves break down, they release nutrients back into the soil, enriching your garden beds and lawn.
- **Wildlife habitat:** Leaf litter provides shelter for pollinators, butterflies, and beneficial insects that help your garden thrive.
- **Moisture retention:** A leafy layer acts like mulch, keeping soil moist and protecting plant roots from winter cold.
- **Healthier ecosystems:** Leaves left in place reduce waste sent to landfills and help prevent stormwater pollution.

Tips and Tricks:

- **Mulch in place:** Lots of leaves? Run a mower over leaves to shred them. Smaller pieces decompose faster and won't smother grass.
- **Create leaf piles:** Use leaves to insulate garden beds or add them to compost bins for rich organic matter.
- **Protect perennials:** Spread leaves around shrubs and perennials to guard against frost.

Bonus: Less raking means more time to enjoy the season—whether that's a walk in the misty woods, a warm drink while listening to the rain, or simply appreciating the natural rhythms of a Northwest autumn. By leaving the leaves, you're supporting soil health, wildlife, and sustainability—all while saving yourself some work.



THYME TO DISCOVER HEIRLOOMS

Fava Beans / Broad Beans (*Vicia faba* L.)

JEANNETTE LAWSON

Fava beans, also called English bell bean, broad bean, faba bean, fava, field-bean, horse bean, horsebean tick-bean, or Windsor bean, are members of the vetch genus in the Fabaceae family. These nutty, earthy beans mature early in gardens from late March through May if planted in the fall. Versatile in the kitchen, they can be shelled and used in your favorite recipe, but did you know they can be eaten shell and all?



Chef Nate Appleman has a favorite but unorthodox recipe: he quickly grills whole fava beans, tosses them with a crushed red pepper dressing, and serves them hot. The tender pods develop a lovely charred flavor on the grill, and they can be enjoyed whole or eaten in the traditional way by popping the beans out of their pods and outer skins. These light-flavored beans can also be used to make delicious hummus. Chef Tim Love likes to blend them with a good pesto and use them as a ravioli filling.

Fava beans are easy to grow and can be sown in the fall for an early harvest or in the spring for a later harvest. Direct sow into well-drained soil, spacing rows about 8 inches apart with beans at the same distance and about two inches deep. This crop is also a great nitrogen fixer for your soil. Interesting research at the Sainsbury Laboratory, Cambridge University, led by Dr. Nadia Radzman, has found that fava beans contain a compound called L-DOPA, a precursor to dopamine—the molecule in our brain that produces happiness. She notes that consuming fava beans may help improve mental health, and the compound is being researched as a potential aid for depression. In addition, fava beans are high in protein and easy for our system to assimilate.



If you would like to know more about the research on fava beans, you can visit Broad N Mind at <https://www.broadnmind.com/>

THROUGH A GARDEN GATE

Two Marrakech Gardens: Rescued, Restored, and Rejuvenated

EL EVERETT BECHTOLD

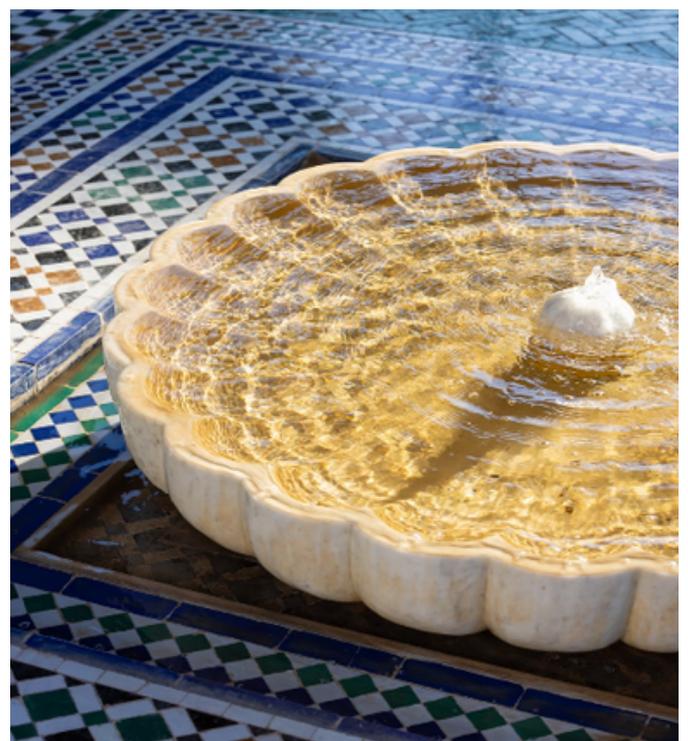
Le Jardin Secret in Marrakech has a long and turbulent history. Its origins date back to the second half of the 16th century. Over centuries it has undergone many transformations. By the mid-19th century, it was one of the largest riads in the medina and belonged to the Chancellor of Sultan Moulay 'Abd-al-Hāfiz, the last sultan of Morocco before the French protectorate. When the sultan was exiled, the chancellor moved into the palace and lived there until his death in 1934.



After the riad's last resident, the garden fell into disrepair until it was purchased by an Italian investor in 2008. A planned hotel project collapsed during the market crash of the late 2000s, paving the way for

restoration. In 2013, British garden designer Tom Stuart-Smith was commissioned, and the garden reopened in 2016.

During restoration, workers uncovered the khattara, an underground irrigation system dating back to the 11th century. This ingenious network of tunnels, pipes, tanks, and canals intercepted water from the Atlas Mountains and distributed it throughout the medina. The riad's private water supply was a rare privilege and a sign of wealth, and today the restored system is visible inside the garden.



THROUGH A GARDEN GATE

The site is divided into two parts: an exotic garden and an Islamic garden. Visitors first enter the exotic garden, anchored by magnificent *Ceiba speciosa* (silk floss trees) with striking bark and flamboyant pink flowers, *Jacaranda mimosifolia* (fern trees), and resilient date palms that predate the restoration. Though filled with plants unavailable to the original gardeners, the design follows a traditional fourfold layout, giving each plant space to shine.



The Islamic garden is a classic riad form: rectangular, enclosed, with pavilions at either end. Its design reflects Quranic descriptions of Paradise, with four rivers of wine, water, milk, and honey inspiring a quadripartite layout centered on a fountain. Despite its youth, the garden feels established, though the fashionable grass seems a modern intrusion. Some may question the choice of a British designer over

local expertise, yet the result is undeniably enchanting—a green oasis amid the bustle of Marrakech.



The second site, Jardin Majorelle, is a vibrant two-acre garden created by artist Jacques Majorelle between the 1920s and 1950s. Financial troubles led to its decline, but in the 1980s Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Bergé purchased and restored it. Majorelle became famous for his bold cobalt “Marjorelle Blue,” used extensively in the garden and its buildings.



THROUGH A GARDEN GATE



Today, despite heavy crowds (tickets are online-only and visitors follow a one-way path), Jardin Majorelle remains an oasis of shade, water, and dazzling color. Exotic plants are chosen for their striking forms and textures: spiny cacti alongside lush tropical foliage, greens offset by citrus pots, Moorish fretwork, and vivid walls. It is a garden of contrasts — arid and luxuriant, structured yet exuberant—offering a sensory feast in the heart of Marrakech.



UPCOMING EVENTS

LEWIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER EVENTS



Thank you!

Thank You for Joining Us in 2025!

We're grateful to all of you who attended our classes this past year. Your participation and enthusiasm made 2025 a wonderful season of learning and growth.

As we look ahead, we're excited to share that new classes are on the horizon. Be sure to check back in 2026 to see our upcoming offerings—we can't wait to welcome you again!

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



Curious about what it takes to become a Master Gardener? Check out the new training program at <https://greenschool.extension.wsu.edu>



Check out our **Facebook Page** and **Facebook Group** for a closer look at what we're up to!