

## **Bonner County Gardeners Association** **Education ~ Community Service ~ Camaraderie**

June 2015

*Please contribute to The Garden Gate. Informational articles, garden tips, announcements, and digital photos are welcome. For questions or comments please email [lauriebrown54@gmail.com](mailto:lauriebrown54@gmail.com) When emailing, please put "MG" in the subject line.*

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### President's Message

No pontificating this month about soil pH, fertilizers or anything technical. Rather I'll briefly discuss various activities of the organization and alert you to some of the other articles in this issue of the Garden Gate.

Thanks to Cindy Hayes for the hard work she put in making the Sip and Shop happen. And, to the members who showed up for the event and those who contributed items for the raffle basket. Cindy worked hard selling raffle tickets before the event. As a result the Sip and Shop netted \$452 for our treasury; \$312 from raffle sales and \$140 kickback contribution from the winery. Thanks again Cindy.

As many of you already know there will be no Garden Tour this year. It just didn't come together as it has in the past under Penny Barton's leadership. It's interesting that there have been a number of phone call or email inquiries about the tour that have come into the office or our email account. One was from six women who would have travelled from Libby to attend. Perhaps a year's hiatus will be a good thing. Time will tell. And, the Association is still looking for someone to step up and take the reins for this activity.

In a separate part of this issue you will find a series of reports on school garden activities. I believe this has been very successful this year thanks largely to the efforts of Janae Dale and Michele Murphree. And, I should mention the \$2000 grant from the Elks Lodge which enabled us to install beds and irrigation at Farmin-Stidwell. Thanks also to the teachers and our members (Deborah Gift, Elissa Wadds, Becky Reynolds, Howie Fennimore, Janae Dale, Nancy Hastings, Carl Hanson, and others).

Also in this issue is a piece that Deb Steffen wrote entitled "Chickens in the Garden - Are You Crazy?". This is a reminder that the Garden Gate is your vehicle for communicating items that interest you. Thanks Deb.

And, thanks again to Deb and Charlie for hosting a pot luck this month. A great time and a chance to see those chickens in action!

You should have all received an email from our BCgardeners account with a survey about our Home Hort series. Gail Swan and Janae Dale put together two surveys; one for members and another for our Home Hort email list. We are looking for suggestions as to how to improve and/or modify this activity. Please take a little time to complete the survey if you have not already done so.

Finally, thanks to Laurie Brown for putting together the Garden Gate each month!



# July Gardening To Do List



- Harvest sweet corn when silks are brown and punctured kernels produce a milky juice
- Prevent blossom-end rot on tomatoes by providing plants with at least an inch of water each week
- Let melons ripen on the vine--this is where they will develop their best flavor
- Start fall garden transplants from seed
- Petunias, coleus and other summer annuals might be leggy by now. Pinch them back just above a leaf to encourage bushy growth and more flowers
- Leave faded flowers on those plants that form ornamental seed heads, pods, or berries
- Provide water in a shallow pan or birdbath for your feathered and fluttering friends

## Zone 3

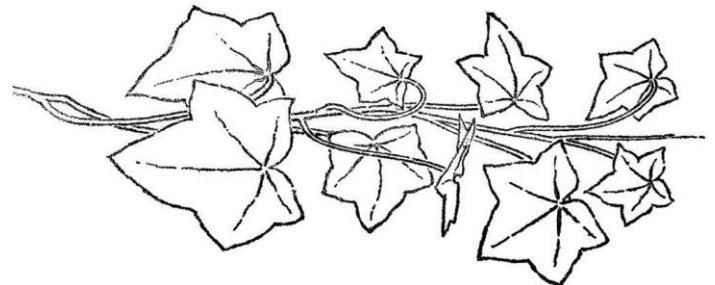
- Now's the time to start seeds of cool-season vegetables for fall growing
- Rogue out (remove) virus-infected plants from the garden and control leaf-hopping insects to prevent virus spread
- By pruning off faded blooms from annuals, you can prevent seed formation and coax additional flowers
- Mulch flowerbeds with dried grass clipping or compost to maintain moisture and reduce weeds
- Save maintenance and water by allowing perennial rye and Kentucky blue grass lawns to go dormant during the summer
- Raspberries are ripe when they pull readily from the central core
- Prune water sprouts (upright, vigorous shoots) from apple trees
- Avoid deep cultivation around shallow rooted trees and shrubs such as evergreens
- Add a water-soluble fertilizer to hanging baskets and patio pots every 2 weeks to keep plants blooming their best
- Cut flowers for drying at their prime or when just opening

## Zone 5

- Remove annuals with stunted or unusual color; these are usually virus infected and the disease can spread to neighboring healthy plants
- To control disease on fruit trees, maintain a summer spray schedule
- Clean hummingbird feeders filled with nectar solution regularly to ward off mold and bacteria
- Consider drip irrigation and/or soaker hoses for watering in the flowerbed and vegetable garden
- Bats help control mosquitoes; attract these friendly mammals with bat houses
- Muskmelons and cantaloupes are ready for picking when the stem "slips" easily from the fruit with gentle pressure
- Harvest veggies as soon as they're ripe to encourage additional production
- Sharp mower blades prevent leaf blade damage and lawn stress
- Prevent diseases on susceptible rose varieties: apply fungicide every 7-10 days
- Lanky annuals need your help! Pinch them back now to encourage bushy growth and more flowers

## Zone 4

- Add one last planting of gladioli bulbs for flowers into fall
- Harvest veggies as soon as they're ripe to encourage further production
- Avoid the sight of a weed-infested garden: weed first before you leave on vacation



## June Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Patti Pietron, Deb Steffen, Gray Henderson, Penny Barton, Bonnie Pick, Gail Swan, Barb Pressler, Penny Goodman, Marjory Clements, Howie Fennimore, Ann Warwick, Butterfly Burke, Cindy Hays, Janae Dale, Ellie Lizotte, Sandra Gevertz

At 9:00am June 3, 2015 President Gray Henderson brought the meeting to order.

**May Meeting Minutes:** Motion made to approve by Gray Henderson. Approved.

**Treasures Report:** Penny Barton was not present. BCGA is well funded to pay bills.

**Home Horticulture:** Gail Swan reported that we had a very bad spring series attendance. She wants to send a survey to see what we can do to improve attendance. Janae Dale will create the survey. We will decide next month if we will be offering a Fall Home Horticulture Series. Also up for consideration is using the BCGA office for the classes in order to save on space rental. Ann Warwick suggested we use the BCGA office and if we have a large turnout just don't set up the tables. Gray Henderson will ask Eric about our office capacity. It was suggested that we charge only \$5.00 per class if we save on room rental by using our office space. It was also noted that allowing walk ins for classes made it very difficult to plan seating and handouts. Gail will investigate Permaculture class.

**Membership Class:** We are still deciding if we will hold a membership class. The participants of the extension Master Gardener class were invited to join BCGA and so far we have received no applications. There was lots of interest from this group last year. It was noted that many of our BCGA activities count for hours required by the extension program. It was also brought up that maybe the presenters for both groups may have a conflict of interest. BCGA may consider doing our classes at different times. Gray Henderson will discuss with Penny Barton if we should go forward with offering our classes.

**Spring Fund Raiser:** Penny Goodman reported that the Spring Fundraiser made \$1,208.00. Friday alone brought in over \$800.00. Ann Warwick said people were asking for herbs. Penny Goodman suggested we might hold this event for one day only and remain open until 6pm. Marjory Clements said we need more

variety in perennials and veggies. Gray Henderson thanked both Penny and Marge for stepping up on such short notice and doing such a great job with this event.

**Farmers Market:** Sandra Gevertz was present. She is looking for help for the booth. We were informed that we may not sell books or anything else in our booth as we do not pay a vendor fee. Gray Henderson suggested we get a list of people wanting books and we could contact them later. Janae Dale ordered 50 copies of Planting an Idaho Vegetable Garden.

**Garden Tour:** An executive decision was made by Gray Henderson to cancel this years Garden Tour. We will consider possibly holding this event at a different time of year. Janae Dale suggested we request members to keep their eyes open for gardens to include.

**Yard and Plant Sale:** Janae Dale is chairman. Janae has sent out reminders to the membership asking for quality items for this event. Ann Warwick says she has lots of pots for members wishing to pot up plants for this event. Janae wants the focus on the sale of plants. She asks members to think of fall crops such as broccoli.

**School Garden Program:** Janae Dale says that the mid may planting and school year end in June made for a tight squeeze. She says that all the gardens are doing very well and are off to a great start. New members Deborah Gift and Carl Burkett have been very active and their help much appreciated in this program. The Strawberry Festival on June 22 and the Garlic Festival on August 3 are at Northside.

**Potlucks:** Deborah Steffen will host a potluck at her home on Sunday June 14 at 1pm.

**Advanced Education Program:** No report.

**Fair:** Cindy Hays is chairman. The first meeting is scheduled for 9:30 Wednesday June 9.

**Healing Garden:** No report.

**Sip and Shop:** Cindy Hayes is chairman. Cindy says she sold \$200.00 in tickets at the last Home Hort class and the Spring Fundraiser. BCGA will receive 10% of all profits made from 4pm to 9pm on Tuesday, June 9. Cindy will write a reminder to members and Gray Henderson will send it out.

**Road Cleanup:** Cindy Hayes had 9 volunteers. The group did one side of the highway. They collected 20 bags of litter. This Fall she hopes to be able to do both sides of the highway. We are committed to do the cleanup 2 times a year for 2 years. Cindy is aiming for October and April as the next scheduled month for cleanup.

**New Business:** Gray Henderson received a letter from the Bonner Mall regarding a Farmers Market venue in their parking lot. Anyone interested in selling at the market can get the forms from Gray. Gray will monitor this event for possible future BCGA participation.

**Membership Applications:** BCGA received 3 applications for new membership.

**Potluck Invitations:** Gray Henderson will put together special potluck invitations for new members to make sure they know these events are happening and emphasize that ALL members are welcome.

Meeting adjourned at 10:45.

## Reports from the School Gardens Summer 2015

### Jennifer Smith at Washington Elementary –

Our school garden is doing awesome, thanks to the wonderful help of Gray Henderson (a.k.a "our dirt guy"). Gray was gracious enough to volunteer his time to be a guest teacher to our third graders this spring. He came in twice to speak to the classes about soil and lead groups of students through the process of soil testing. Later he came back and reported what the tests showed and led groups of students through the process of using the results to amend our garden soil. Once the soil was amended, students were able to plant our crops and really take ownership of the process.

The model that we started implementing this spring is year-long project for 3rd/4th graders. Every third grader participates in the spring garden activities (planning, planting, etc.). Standards-based lessons are incorporated into our curriculum accordingly. The following fall, as 4th graders, the same students will continue with the garden through its harvest (stand-

ards-based lessons again being incorporated within the classroom). We decided to use this model because it incorporates the maximum number of students (50 per year), and allows the students to participate in the complete garden cycle. It also reinforces the idea that this is a school learning garden because we use it for lessons in math, reading, science, and health.

As far as summer - our work is fairly minimal. Raised beds with an automatic watering system keep our plants almost maintenance free until harvest in the fall (we were sure to plant mostly fall harvest crops).

### Becky Bigley at the Charter School Middle School –

This was the first year that I have had responsibility for the school garden. It has, as far as I know, always been utilized as a student-choice elective. This year's class was extremely tiny--after one student had to drop for health reasons, we ended up with just 5 students. Initially, we had some trouble with the pH of our beds, and Gray led the students through an excellent set of lectures and hands-on demonstrations to get the soil back into balance. At this point my wheels started turning as to how I will be able to better utilize the garden space in my other classes, as well as create more science electives that will build up an interest in the garden program.

I encouraged the students to look through the seed catalogs and some online catalogs to find vegetables they were interesting in trying out. They decided they didn't want to wait until fall for harvest, so in addition to the pumpkins, beans, and potatoes, they planted a variety of kales, lettuces, radishes, and even some peas for some instant gratification. We often take nature walks with our classes, and I lead most of my classes past the garden and encouraged students to sample the greens. Many students were very excited to taste pea plants, they didn't realize you could eat the tender plants. They enjoyed the early greens, and radishes became a very exciting snack that extended far beyond the garden class. I also allowed the students to take home starts of various plants from seeds I had brought from home.

The students that will be in the high school next year were sad at having to leave the program. I am currently brainstorming ways to utilize the garden program to extend into a possible high school mentoring program, as well as possibilities to make healthy food available for our students. We do not have a regular lunch program at our school and I feel very strongly that there must be a way to build a sus-

tainable path to healthy food for the students through the garden.

The garden will require some tending over the summer; I am happy to do so. The new soaker hoses are working well, and Ray, our custodian, tinkered with the sprinklers so that they hit the beds also.

So that is the story of our garden this year, a trial and sowing brainstorming seeds for a larger program. Thank you so much for everything you did for our kids! They can't wait to eat those purple potatoes!

Deborah Gift, BCGA Gardener at Northside Elementary

I'm new to BCGA. When the volunteer opportunity came up to work with the Northside School Garden, I knew that it was something that I wanted to do.

Gail Burkett has been working with Northside for six years. This April she welcomed me, and any students and parents who wanted to come play in the garden on Monday's after school. There are many students who have been coming since the program started. There are also students who's siblings had been a part of the program in previous years. We have several moms who are involved too. Gail has done a beautiful job of making parents feel welcomed and needed at each class. I think having parental involvement is a big part of the success of the program.

This year the kids planted a 13 Bean Soup Garden. It has everything they'll need to make soup in the fall. Besides the 13 beans, there are peppers, onions, potatoes, garlic, several varieties of herbs and carrots. There are also blueberries, strawberries, asparagus, and rhubarb. Thanks to Gray Henderson, who has been there each week as well, we discovered that the garden is very alkali. Gray has helped with some amendments, things are growing better than they have in previous years, according to Gail.

One of the older students, Gracie, has been keeping a record of what goes on each week. Her descriptions of things growing, their vitality and the true love of being in the garden is so evident in her writing. The kids, even the very youngest, are learning proper terms, reasons that things grow or don't; they problem solve. When things to be done are put in front of them, they puzzle it out and then help each other get it done. It was great to see them with Gray designing and then building the trellises for the beans. They painted signs to go on the garden, decided how they

wanted to plant (some being very methodical, some being very casual about how they arrange their seeds). One of the most endearing days was when many of the kids ran around with rhubarb leaf "hats" and "umbrellas". It made me laugh! There's learning time, snack time, and play time and in that collective time the kids really learn how to work with each other and learn how to garden. They have been engineers, meteorologists, journalists, and math masters.

It's been hard to get kids to come in consistently over the summers. We'll be having a Strawberry Festival on June 22, for any of the kids that want to come and pick and enjoy the strawberries and then a Garlic Festival on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the meantime, we'll be weeding and checking in on a few Monday mornings. For July the garden will be left to be its best wild self. There is a drip system in place and one of the moms has that all under control.

When the kids come back in the Fall, it will be time to harvest, eat, and package beans into soup kits to be sold at the Winter market. The kids are really excited about that.

I'm enjoying helping with this project, getting to know Gail and Gray. It's a great way for me to learn a little more about gardening in North Idaho, too.

Elissa Wadds, BCGA gardener at Farmin-Stidwell -

This is the first year for a school garden at Farmin-Stidwell Elementary School, and the 5 raised beds were constructed and installed by the Elks Club last month along with a much-appreciated automatic watering system. We are working with Nicole Dash's experiential learning class, a mix of grades 1-6, and a total of 19 students. Before the garden beds were constructed we met with the class multiple times to choose the best location and plan the garden. We did a seed starting class where everyone got their hands dirty and started 3-4 plants each. We also took a field trip to the community garden and planted a community food bank plot. (Afterwards the boys disappeared with all the shovels and excavated a huge hole in the manure pile). I'd like to arrange a return field trip in the fall so they can harvest what they planted and take it to the food bank as a donation.

A few weeks ago the kids participated in the raised bed garden installation, hauling soil and helping the Elks Club members. The next week, Gray was there to conduct a soil test with the students and teach



them how to amend the soil. Then we all helped the kids plant the garden beds with our fall garden - mostly potatoes, carrots, cabbage, kale, and pumpkins with a few extras like strawberries, flowers & tomatoes tucked in where there was room. School closed for the summer break last week, and Becky & I plan to check on the beds at least once a month and do a weeding session a couple of times throughout the summer. When school starts up again, we'll resume working with the kids to weed the plots, harvest the veggies & maybe plant a few fall greens, too. Most of the food will be used in the school cafeteria, so everyone will get a taste of what they grew.

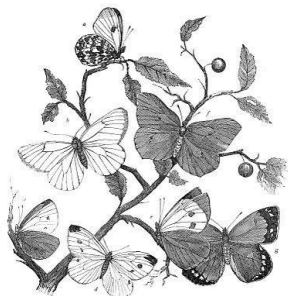
Thinking ahead about new ideas for the class....I'd like to incorporate seed saving. Maybe we can harvest seed at the community garden, prep the packets, and make a deposit at the seed library at the end of the season. Also, next year the beds will be ready in early Spring, & we can start greens & radishes early so they'll have a Spring garden too.

All in all, it has been a fun & rewarding project!

#### Natica Litven at Kootenai

The fourth graders at Kootenai School became responsible for the school garden this year. The project began in class with visits from members of the BCGA and the sharing of ideas to get started.

Students came up with a list of possible crops to grow and a layout design for our raised beds. They then started pumpkins, celery, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli and cauliflower in class. We planted 7 varieties of seed potatoes first, after thoroughly cleaning out all of the raised beds. Then we planted some of our starts plus carrots, lettuce, kale, beans and peas. We were given tomato plants from Clark Fork HS and we planted those too! We also are managing a full, and thriving, strawberry bed, blueberry plants, onions/shallots, and some herbs. There is a group of 5 students that has shown interest in assisting in the garden this summer. Their work will start soon.



## Chickens in the Garden – Are you Crazy?

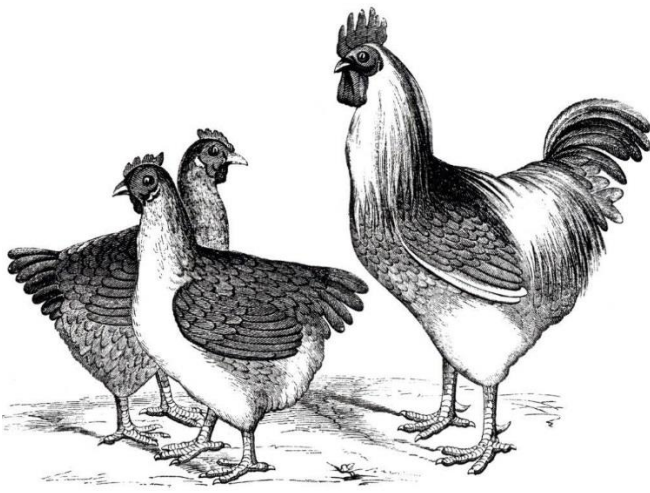
*When, Where, and How it Can or Cannot be Done.  
By Deborah Steffen*

My mother had an influence on me with gardening. First as a teenager, there was the aversion and hatred of gardening after being relegated to weeding more than any other tasks. There were threats of being grounded, and needless to say, I wanted nothing to do with gardening until my early 30s. I had a dear friend from work who had the most gorgeous flower gardens surrounding her bungalow. We lived in San Diego at the time, so the weather was very forgiving. This was before all the severe water shortages that California is experiencing now. She inspired me, and then I was back to my mom from time to time for advice. My father dug up their front yard and planted a huge vegetable.

When we moved to a farm in Oregon, we got some llamas and chickens. My mother told they would be fine in the garden as the Queen of England has them in her gardens to clean up and control bugs. Well guess what, she also has many guards! I tried them in the garden and they were great at eating bugs as well as all my vegetable starts, seeds, and tearing up everything in sight. So I banished them from the garden by building extensions to the height of the garden fence. That worked for the vegetable garden, yet from time to time the llamas would push through the fence for their choice treats, and of course let the chickens in. We reinforced the fences and finally had the crops to ourselves!

Then I needed to tackle the problem of the chickens and llamas getting in the other gardens and digging. They would dig up flowers, eat them, dig dirt around shrubs until the roots were exposed, and have cock fights through it all. We had many roosters. And then as the hens had chicks and there were more. So you would see me out there in the morning chasing them with the hose as they squawked, running every which direction but the direction I wanted them to go.

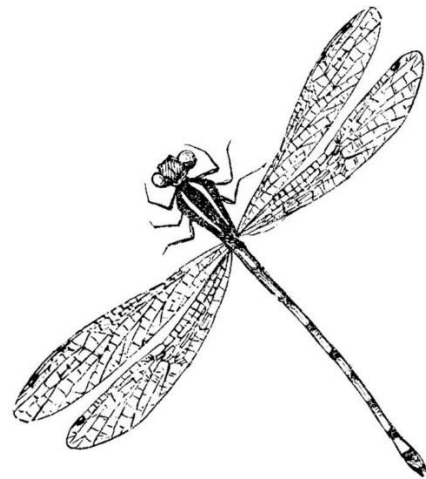
So, when we had the crazy notion to have chickens again after moving to Idaho, I made some modifications. I ordered only females and I actually got all females from mypetchicken.com. Larger chicks are evidently easy to sex, but of course I wanted some bantam silkies, and could only find that one hatchery able to sex bantams. They said they have the only man in the country who knows how to sex the little



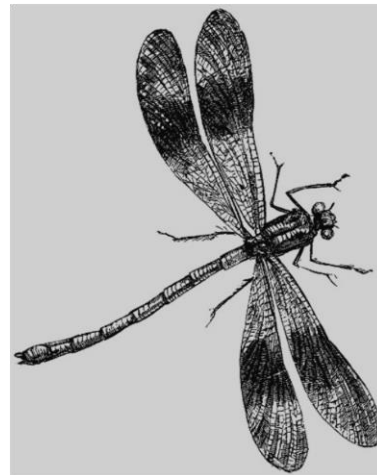
*Adult dragonflies are voracious predators of mosquitoes, gnats, flies, swarming ants, and swarming termites- and any other bug they can fit in their mouths. They can eat their weight in insects in less than an hour's time. Welcome them to your garden with lots of flowers (those attract other insects in their diet), a bog or water garden or even an open-top rain barrel for breeding, and plants around the water for hiding places.*

bantams. So we did it. We went for the chicken fiasco again.

They were so cute that we let them into the vegetable garden at the end of the season. They loved chasing the grasshoppers and did a good job of cleanup. I did have to supervise them during these cleanup sessions, and all I could envision was the Queen's guards chasing them around in full uniform. I actually was able to run them back to their area after cleanup too. Now, they have a gorgeous area all fenced in with the fruit trees we planted, thinking that would be nice shade for them. As they got bigger they started to fly over the fence, the wise gals. I chased them over and over. Finally they stopped doing it, not sure why.



The chickens in the orchards also turned into a challenge as they wanted to dig big holes right near the roots and take dust baths, or just dig for gold. I fenced the trees with low fences, and surrounded them with the rubber mulch tree rings. That was the only thing that kept them out and protected the roots. Fencing and plant cages were the only things we could think of to protect the trees. It seems to be working. In the fall when I planted garlic in the vegetable garden, I just covered the top of the raised bed with chicken wire.



If I had it to do again, I would only get four hens, or maybe none at all. I mean who wants to have to hire a chicken sitter so you can go on vacation? But the fresh eggs are worth it when I see the brown, pinkish, and blue eggs. You may not be able to have them in the garden but you can learn to coexist.

*"I have known that panic of Planter's Paralysis, that wretched realization that, when you sit down after a day spent using muscles in places left unmentioned in Gray's Anatomy, you will never, ever rise again."*

Please feel free to share any of your stories in our upcoming Garden Gate. Send them to [bcgardeners@gmail.com](mailto:bcgardeners@gmail.com).

*Martha Smith, Beds I Have Known, 1990*

