

The Garden Gate



October 2004

Events at a Glance:

- October 13: *Orchid Culture - Michelle Reichelt **
October 15: 2004 Graduation Potluck
October 27: *Dried Flower Crafts - Ann Warwick **
October 29: Organic Livestock (see article)
November 1: Board Meeting - all members encouraged
9:00 am at Creekside Medical



November 2: Remember to vote

November 10: *Garden Wrap-up - Valle Novak **

December 10: BCMGA Christmas Party

* Home Horticultural Series - all programs held on Wednesdays from 6:00pm to 8:00pm at the Brown House meeting room next to Bonner General Hospital



Salutations

by Jan Rumore

To do, or not to do: that is the question:

Why are we here?

What is the meaning of life?

Please mark your calendar for Monday, Nov. 1 at 9:00 am. The outgoing and incoming M.G. boards will entertain questions and ideas of moment for the coming year.

To bake, or not to bake?

What is our mission?

Who's bringing dessert?

We welcome input from all M.G.s --- active and associate--- new and seasoned.

The usual place (Creekside Bldg.)

The usual time (9:00 A.M.)

But----

A very unusual agenda!

Please join us.



Graduation 2004

Please join us in welcoming the Class of 2004 at their Graduation on Friday, October 15. This looks to be an outstanding class; they have already contributed much time and talent to our many activities and indeed have initiated new ones - the Bake Sale and the Fourth of July Parade. Meet and congratulate the new and renew friendships of the past. All members will be honored with a pair of Atlas garden gloves - sure to compliment any choice of apparel on this fine autumn night. Special recognition will be given to volunteers in various categories - you may be one of them. And you can count on the food being most excellent from the renowned chefs of the BCMGA. Come to the Brown House (behind Bonner County Hospital) at 6:00 pm, bring a dish of your choice, drinks will be provided. Wasn't the invitation perfect? Our own Rita Janisse designed them for you.

BCMGA BALLOT 2004 - Vote Now

As you all know, the big election is coming up soon. That's right, it is time to elect a new Master Gardener Board! The nominating committee has put another great slate of officers and board members for the coming year. If there are any additional nominations (and you can nominate yourself), we need to hear from you no later than Oct. 15 at the graduation dinner.

You will find a ballot attached to this newsletter if you are receiving the printed form, or it will be in a separate file for those getting the newsletter via email. Ballots must be received by the Extension Office by Monday Oct. 25. You may mail, fax, email rwilson@uidaho.edu them in or bring them in person to the Graduation Dinner or the Extension Office.



Organic Livestock Class Offered - Oct. 29

WSU is offering a class called *Organic Livestock: Principles, Practices and Prospects* and will be broadcasting it across the country. We will be picking it up via satellite here in Sandpoint.

The class is geared to those interested in certified organic livestock production, but includes a number of topics that are of broader interest such as animal health care, nutrition and feeding, and living conditions and housing. A dial-in number is provided for participants to ask questions. For a complete description on the web, see: <http://ext.wsu.edu/noas/links/> and click on the Pacific Time Zone link below the Promotional Flyer heading on the right.

The class is scheduled for Friday, October 29 from 10:00 am - 12:30 pm here at the Extension Office. The class is free and open to everyone. Contact Bob or Patti at 263-8511 for more information.



Waterlife Discovery Center

A wonderful place. A gorgeous day. Parise Whitley and Ann Wimberely coordinated planting day at the Wildlife Discovery Center. A crew of volunteers from the BCMGA, the Native Plant Society, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game played in the soil and installed plants on the banks of the pond. Check it out at the old Sandpoint Fish Hatchery approximately one mile west on Lakeshore Drive. The site will eventually be a self-guided habitat education center including underwater viewing opportunities along a stream and pond, wildlife watching platforms, and nature trails. 3.5 acres will be developed as interpretive exhibits with the remaining 6.5 acres as forested wetland trails.

Miscellaneous:

Found in Plant Clinic - An insulated lunch bag with the name "Eastpak" was left in the Plant Clinic this summer. If it is yours, please give us a call to claim it.

Are you receiving your Garden Gate via email? We found this saves us an enormous amount in copy and postage costs. If you are having trouble receiving or your email has changed - please notify Bob at rwilson@uidaho.edu or 263-8511. And you can always get the latest on our website <http://www.sandpoint.org/bcmastergardeners/>



Winterizing Landscape Plants with Mulch

by Don Childress, Master Gardener

Mulch is any number of materials spread on the ground around plants to provide a protective layer that serves several purposes. It plays an important role in helping plants in the garden and landscape survive the harsh winters of North Idaho. It helps maintain a more uniform soil temperature and reduce freeze-thaw cycles and frost heaving that can disrupt the roots of many plants. In the summer this same mulch also moderates soil temperatures, inhibits weed growth, and conserves moisture by reducing evaporation.

Mulch should be applied whenever you plant any tree or shrub to provide as favorable soil condition as possible.

Any number of materials can serve the mulching function. I will list a few of these along with application, information and suggestions.

Perforated or woven fabrics allow air and water movement into the soil. It helps control weeds and maintains even soil temperatures. Often loose mulch is used over it for esthetics and increased temperature modulation.

Sawdust and bark are commonly used as both mulches and soil amendments. They have gotten a bad rap as soil amendments because soil microorganisms need additional nitrogen to decompose these materials. Soil nitrogen is used to provide the nitrogen thus making it unavailable for plant growth. When used as mulch, however, this problem is inconsequential. Some fresh wood products may be toxic

to sensitive or young new seedlings. This is less of a problem with mulching, but the leachate from fresh redwood, incense cedar and western red cedar is somewhat toxic and corrosive. Composting the material for a year will reduce this problem.

Plastic sheeting is commonly used for vegetable gardens to reduce weed growth, warm the soil, and reduce evaporation. The disadvantage is that it restricts water and air movement in the soil and becomes brittle and breaks up with age.

Lawn clippings can be used. However, it must be added in thin layers with new periodic applications or the material will mat and putrefy.

Straw and hay are often used as loose mulch. They decompose slowly and are a source of plant humus and some nutrition. Be sure to use straw free of disease and weed seed.

Pine needles can be used. An advantage is that they do not compact. However, they do increase soil acidity a little and can add to nitrogen deficiency if later mixed with soil.

Deciduous leaves are readily available in our area and can be used to good advantage. Maple leaves are slightly alkaline. When composted, deciduous leaves serve as a good soil amendment.

For most materials use two to four inches of mulch and don't pack it tightly against the trunks of trees and scrubs so as not to inhibit air movement which could result in an increase in crown rot or other root disorders. Mulch should be applied in the fall after the first few hard frosts and before the snowfalls. Immediately after the spring snowmelt, rake the mulch away from the root area so the soil can warm. Do not dispose of the mulch if it still has integrity because it should be reapplied during the summer to conserve moisture and prevent weed growth.

More in-depth information on mulching can be obtained from the University of Idaho College of Agriculture bulletins. These publications, and many more, can be purchased from the Bonner County Extension Office. Call 263-8511 for information.

TIPS FOR FALL CLEANUP

Source: ArcaMax Gardening

* When cutting spent flowering stems on perennials, try to cut them just below the mound of foliage, so the bare stems are hidden. When cutting back dead foliage at the end of the season, you can cut closer to the ground. However, in general, avoid cutting stems or foliage closer than 2 or 3 inches above the crown, so you are sure not to damage the growing points.

* After first frost dig and store dahlias. Dig the tuber, cut back the stem to 6 inches tall, and dry outdoors. Hang tubers upside down for 2 weeks, then store in moistened peat moss in slatted boxes in a 35F to 50F basement.

* Fertilize spring flowering bulbs such as tulips now. Use a balanced formula fertilizer such as 9-9-6 placing a handful in each planting hole or scratch it into the surface of the soil on established beds.

* Peony plants can be divided to start new beds in late summer or fall. However, you'll want to be as gentle as possible with the peony plants; they are sensitive and may take a couple of years to bloom after dividing. Unlike many perennials, peonies can go for many years without needing dividing. To divide peonies, separate a portion of the peony clump by inserting a spade shovel and making a vertical cut into the root ball. Dig up this portion, and replant in a carefully prepared bed. (Fill in the hole left next to the parent plant with rich soil.) Or you can dig up the entire peony plant and prune off a section of the root ball. Then replant both sections in prepared beds, taking care to plant the crowns no deeper than one and a half to two inches below the soil surface.