

ARS Whidbey Island Chapter NEWSLETTER

Website: whidbeyrhodies.org

Meets the 4th Wednesday of each Month
Fire District 5 Headquarters Station
1164 Race Road, Coupeville, WA

April 2009

**Next Meeting: April 22, 6pm
@ Greenbank Progressive Hall**

Program: Mark Turner, *Photographing Your Garden Through New Eyes*

Mark Turner is the photographer and co-author of *Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest*, published by Timber Press in March, 2006. He traveled over 40,000 miles throughout Washington and Oregon to find and photograph the 1220 species that appear in the book. Two years seemed like a long time when he committed to do the book, but with the clarity of hindsight it seems like a short time to do so much.

Mark has been studying wildflowers since elementary school, and still has his pressed flower collection from a fourth-grade 4-H project in West Virginia. When he moved to Washington in 1990 he had to start over to learn a brand-new set of flowers.

In addition to photographing wildflowers, Mark also captures gardens for national book and magazine publishers. He is working on a new book for gardeners east of the Cascades, collaborating with a writer from Spokane. Mark is chair of the Koma Kulshan chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 22 Chapter Meeting/Potluck
@ Greenbank Progressive Hall

Apr 29-May 3 ARS Convention
Everett, WA

May 27 Chapter Meeting
Fujioka: A Visit to Scotland

August 9 Chapter Picnic

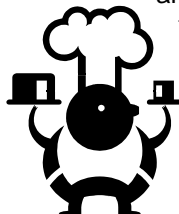
Sept 23 Chapter Meeting
Program: TBA

Oct 28 Chapter Meeting
Program: TBA

Nov 18 Annual Mtg/Election of Officers
Program: TBA

Dec 9 (Wed) Holiday Dinner
@ Christopher's in Coupeville

Potluck 6:00pm @ Greenbank Progressive Hall



The Komo Kulshan chapter will be joining us this month for our annual potluck meeting. Bring a little extra of your favorite entrée, salad or dessert to share. Plates, cups, utensils, coffee and tea will be provided.

Come a little early, 5:30ish, to help setup tables and chairs and unfurl the table cloths!

An auction is also on the agenda for the evening so bring your wallet loaded with loot! You may get that one of a kind rhodie that can only be acquired at these chapter auctions.

Great home cooking, good friends, rhodies for the garden and lessons in how to photograph them... what better way to spend an evening!

See you there!

Chapter Picnic Date

The date for our annual picnic has been set for Sunday, August 2nd (NOT the 9th). Mark your calendars for this fun time at Lounsberry Park in Oak Harbor!

Battling Root Weevils

At last month's meeting **Bill Stipe** mentioned trying a mineral currently being use on berry crops to combat root weevils. That mineral is *Cryolite* (Chemistry: Na₃AlF₆, Sodium Aluminum Fluoride). Information on it's use as a pesticide is sketchy so it is far from being recommended as a 'silver bullet'. If you want to give it a try as well, we're all ears for your results!

No occupation is as delightful to me as the culture of the earth and no culture comparable to that of the garden. I am still devoted to the garden. But though an old man, I am but a young gardener. -- Thomas Jefferson



From the Prez

Pat Sasson

Hi Everybody!

I am home safely from the Holy Land after a fabulous trip. I looked for rhodies, or anything that could pass for a rhodie, but there were none to be had. Lots of olive trees, palms and cacti, though. And camels and ostriches!

There is wonderful news from Don Smart, chair of the National Rhododendron Conference. The hope was for 230 registrations. As of two days ago there are 289! The number of meals reserved exceeds the \$12,500 target and there are a total of 436 room nights at the hotel. Word has it that the hotel is "real pleased!" What this means is that after the \$300 seed money (times 5) and the start up loan from the ARS are paid back, there will be a profit for each of the five chapters. This makes me "real pleased!" The tours are almost all filled up. 200 eager rhododendron enthusiasts will be travelling to Whidbey on Friday, May 1st, to tour Meerkerk, Bill and Frank's gardens. I thank you all who are volunteering and those who are attending. There is still time to register at the initial fee of \$40 as we agreed not to increase the fee for late registrants. The plant sale will be open to the public so do try to come over to Everett for that.

Three weeks remain until the Conference. Time for Spring to arrive on Whidbey and bring blooms to our rhodies? Discussion at our Board meeting this week centered on those rhododendrons which are normally in bloom this time of year and those lost in the winter freeze. Sad, but I have great hope. What do you have in bloom?

I am looking forward to seeing you all at the Potluck April 22nd!

Lace Bugs Revisited

A reminder to be on the lookout for Rhododendron and Azalea Lace Bug symptoms and signs while you are out in the garden. These pests are devastating plants in Oregon and



have been found in the Bellevue area as well. The insect infestation has been bad enough to kill azaleas or make them so ugly that people are pulling them out.

The lace bug causes stippling on the upper

surface of the leaves, and deposits crusty or tar-like excrement on the lower surface. Adult insects are whitish-tan and approximately 1/8" long with lacy-looking wings. Nymphs grow to about 1/8" and are spiny. Infestations are more severe on plants in the sun. Damage is usually apparent by early to mid-July. While almost never fatal, repeated infestations of lace bugs may result in yellowed, sickly plants.

Lace bug Symptoms (Physical damage caused by pest):

- Leaves look speckled from the top with **little yellow spots**

Lace bug Signs (Direct evidence of pest):

- Small flat insects on the underside of leaves
- **Tar-like spots** of goeey excrement (excess sugars) also on the underside of leaves.
- Eggs are nearly microscopic and laid in clusters along the vein. They look like little **black disks with a fuzzy edge**.

Management Options:

Non-chemical

- Hand removal of adults and nymphs on a regular basis will limit the amount of visible damage.
- Some spiders and insects such as assassin bugs and minute pirate bugs may help control the population naturally.

Chemical – Apply in spring when nymphs appear

- Read and follow insecticide labels for appropriate chemical treatment of lace bug infestation. Avoid using Sevin (carbaryl) if there is any possibility of spray drifting onto nearby blooming plants. These products are toxic to bees.

Reference: <http://pep.wsu.edu/hortsense/>

Meerkerk Notes

Weekdays in Spring and Fall: Botany Adventure Guides

Help our island school children discover the magic and mysteries of the plant world! We provide you with all the training, materials and support you need. You choose to guide tours based on what's best for your schedule. 2009 spring training for guides is April 20-22. For more information on the Botany Adventure program, see the [Youth Programs](#) page or contact Deborah Smith at deborah@meerkerkgardens.org or 360-222-3382. Thursdays:

Hands-on-Horticulture

Work with our professional horticulture staff and other garden enthusiasts, the [Whidbey Island American Rhododendron Society](#), [Island County Master Gardeners](#) and the Greenbank Garden Club on projects throughout the Gardens. We meet in the volunteer cottage for hot coffee and tea at 8:45. Then we're into the Gardens to prune, plant, pot, and beautify. Parking is available just beyond the nursery. Follow the Volunteer Arrow Sign at the Main Entry to the Green Volunteer Cottage below.

Every Thursday in Spring: Grateful Deadheaders

Join the Meerkerk Gardens' Grateful Deadheaders every Thursday morning in April & May, 9am to Noon and receive a handmade tie-dyed T-shirt! Bring your favorite pruners and gloves and team up with us for fun in the Gardens as we deadhead the rhododendrons and beautify the world. (Deadheading rhododendrons is removing the spent blossoms to give energy to new growth and next year's flowers).



2nd Saturday: Work Party

Join us in the Gardens to plan and prepare for each new season. Park in the volunteer's parking lot and meet in the volunteer cottage for hot coffee and tea at 8:45. Embark on projects throughout the Gardens at 9 then return to the cottage at noon for a potluck lunch.



The Good Guy Bugs

Pat Muntz

Reprinted in part from Master Gardener Magazine, Winter 2009

Editor's note: Last month you learned a little about beneficial predator insects. This month you'll learn how to get them in your garden...

Attracting good bugs to your garden

Encouraging predatory beneficial insects to take up residence in your garden involves creating a balance between the beneficial insects and the detrimental bugs and providing the right food, shelter, and breeding environments.

One of the first things many gardeners have to do is change their mind set. Many of us see insects on our plants or find damage and immediately think we have to get rid of the offenders. In the bad old days, that meant grabbing the spray and nuking everything in sight.

Today, this means learning to live with a few detrimental insects to keep the beneficial insects around the garden. In agriculture this is often referred to as the economic threshold and represents the point at which the populations of detrimental pests begin to make more of an impact on the crop than the farmer is able to accept.

For the home gardener, this means determining what level of damage he or she is willing to tolerate before their enjoyment of the garden is reduced to an unacceptable level. This threshold will be different for each gardener.

If the environment is favorable, the populations of beneficial predators and detrimental insects will ebb and flow. The detrimental insect populations will grow, and a few weeks later the predator populations will expand to take advantage of the abundant food source. The detrimental insect population then shrinks and the cycle begins again.

Creating an insectary for beneficial insects

Beneficial insects are no different than other wildlife in the garden. To survive, they need a relatively undisturbed place in the garden with adequate food sources, access to water, shelter from the elements and their predators, and places to lay eggs. While they eat other bugs, many predator insects also need pollen for protein and nectar provided by flowering plants for the carbohydrates. A group of such plants is called an insectary.

Insectaries are usually groupings of preferred plants such as blooming annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees where the insects can live undisturbed and venture to other parts of the garden to feed and mate. Research has shown that the most effective way to create the proper environment is to plant preferred plants in either blocks around the garden or in hedgerows along a property line or a lightly used part of the yard. These groupings or hedgerows then need to be maintained with the insects in mind.

Living with a few weeds may also help draw beneficial insects because some weeds are a highly favored source of pollen and nectar.

Dandelions are a good source of food bugs early in the spring before some detrimental insects fully emerge.

Plants in the insectary need to be of varying heights and densities to give insects a flexible habitat. Some insects live near the top of plants while others like ground beetles live near the soil and need the protection of dense cover. Still

others, like lacewings, lay their eggs in shady, protected areas in dense foliage.

The best flowers to plant for beneficial insects are those with small flowers in large clusters. Because many of the beneficial insects are small, a small flower is easier to enter to get pollen and nectar. Small insects can actually drown trying to get into large flowers. Flower clusters that are flat or composed of single petals also make good landing places and places to search out a mate.

There needs to be something blooming in the insectary from early spring to late in the fall. Because the beneficial insects are out as long as the detrimental insects are active, they need access to food sources throughout the season. Research has also shown that providing a variety of flowering plants not only sustains adult beneficial insects but also allows longer survival periods and higher breeding rates.

While there are dozens of plants that beneficial insects like, three families of plants in particular are popular with the beneficial insects. However, it is important not to plant noxious weeds or other invasive species. Be sure to check your states noxious weed lists before planting your insectary.

The Apiaceae or carrot family (formerly the Umbelliferae) is comprised of more than 3,000 species of plants, many of which are familiar to us. The family includes common culinary favorites, such as carrots, parsley, coriander, dill, fennel (invasive in western Washington), parsnips, cumin, and garden plants such as sea holly, lovage, angelica, and wild carrot. The Apiaceae is characterized by flat-topped flowers held up on hollow stems. The flowers are a mass of smaller individual florets where beneficial insects find it easier to get nectar and pollen and are an easy place to land.

The Brassicaceae or mustard family (also known as the Cruciferae) is another large group of plants beneficial insects find attractive because of their small, but abundant flowers. Culinary members of the family include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, turnip, rapeseed (canola), horseradish, and Chinese cabbage. Herbaceous members of the family include bittercress, alyssums, tumble mustards and arabis. Vegetable gardeners wanting to encourage beneficial insect should let a few broccoli plants flower to attract them.

The third family is the Asteraceae which includes asters, sunflowers, and daisies. Gardeners prize members of this family for their color and bloom periods that start in mid-summer and go well into fall; perfect for keeping beneficial insects around late in the season. The flowers are a composite flower made up of rays of ray-shaped petals around a center of tiny disk flowers.

If all of your plantings work, you should be able to attract native populations of beneficial insects to your garden. Beneficial predator insects are a great ally in the garden, especially when they are on the job 24/7. Adapting our gardens and our perspective is a small change to make to encourage them to establish themselves.

Please submit articles of interest for Apr Newsletter by **5/15/09**

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