



Newsletter

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www.bcmastergardeners.org

March 2006

Galanthus: Beautiful Heralds of Spring

Galanthus (snowdrops) won the race for the first flowers blooming in my garden in the New Year. They are still going strong as we approach the first true days of spring in March.

These tiny, beautiful flowers are part of a family that includes cultivars that flower in the fall, along with others that wait until mid spring. *Galanthus reginae-olgae* subsp. *reginae-olgae*, native to Greece, is about the earliest fall bloomer. The latest snowdrop to bloom is *G. ikariae*, from the Greek Island of Ikaria, which flowers in early April.

G. elwesii, a giant snowdrop from Turkey, reaches nearly 9 inches high and is a single snowdrop with a sweet scent. *G. nivalis* f. *pleniflorus* 'Flore Pleno', the double common snowdrop, has delicately drooping white bells and glossy green foliage. Others to look for are *G. fosteri* 'Magnet' and 'Atkinsii', *G. nivalis* 'Simplex', and *G. plicatus* 'Dionysus'. *G. plicatus* 'Wendy's Gold' is a sought-after cultivar that has a yellow ovary and inner markings but is not widely available here.

Drifts of white

Galanthus prefer partial shade and damp (not water-logged), rich, humus soil. Choose a spot where you can enjoy their pleasant scent, and be sure to plant them in an area that is easily seen because you will



"Snowdrops" by Saskia
www.pbase.com/saskia

want to get your money's worth—snowdrops are pricey compared with other bulbs.

Galanthus are best planted in groups of three so that they can produce a show and quickly spread to create drifts of white. Until they become established, go for more of the same cultivar rather than three of this and three of that.

In the green

Quite a few cultivars are available at nurseries in the Pacific Northwest. Temple Nursery, a specialty nursery in Trumansburg, New York, can supply a wider variety by mail. Most of the readily available cultivars are robust and can be propagated by division after flowering. If you want guaranteed success with the bulbs, you can sometimes buy them "in the green" after flowering, before the leaves have died back. This form is a little more expensive but at least you know the bulb is alive. *Galanthus*

are best transplanted when they are in the green after blooming. Divide clumps every three years and replant immediately, with the bulbs 4 inches deep and spaced 3 inches apart.

Easy identification

I bought some flowering snowdrops at the beginning of February as I didn't manage to buy bulbs in the fall. Unfortunately the pot wasn't labelled with the real cultivar name. With over 700 cultivars, identification can be a difficult task for even the best *Galanthus* specialist. The Pacific Bulb Society is a good resource for identification. Their
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Snowdrop or snowflake?

Cultivars in the *Galanthus* family are known commonly as snowdrops, but cultivars in the *Leucojum* family are commonly called snowflakes. The difference is that *Leucojum* flowers have six segments of equal size whereas *Galanthus* flowers have three smaller inner tepals sheltered by three larger outer sepals. This difference easily distinguishes the two families.

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It is spring and that means time for the Update and clinics.

The Update takes place on Saturday, March 26, and participants will be given

this year's membership phone list there. If you are unable to attend the Update, then the phone list will be mailed to you with the Master List package, which will go out to everyone on April 1. The Master List package will include clinic forms and information about clinic protocols and procedures.

The first page of the Master List provides contact information for the Area Coordinators. These are the people to contact if you have any questions or want to fill a spot at a clinic. The rest of the Master List lists all clinic opportunities, including location and contact name, dates and times, attendees, and open spots.

When you receive the Master List, please review and highlight the clinics you have signed up for and make sure the dates and times are marked on your calendar. If you need to make a change, you are responsible for finding your own replacement; be sure to then tell the Clinic Coordinator and the Area Coordinator about this change.

All clinics must have a qualified MG in attendance. This is especially important for first- and second-year students. If you have signed up for a clinic that doesn't list a qualified MG, contact the Area Coordinator before making any changes. Some qualified MGs wait until the Master List comes out before signing up for clinics and then fill in the open spots. Please check with the Area Coordinator to confirm

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Letter from the Chair

The membership fee question has provoked more discussion, argument, and emotion than I've witnessed since joining MGABC. Curiously, though, I've received virtually no communiqués directly from members on the subject.

I conclude that many members know little about who I am or what I'm about. When I joined Master Gardeners, I did so to seek the wisdom of other gardeners, to enjoy exchange of ideas, to learn through volunteer activities, and to continue my self-education. These expectations have been met.

When I was asked to take the Chair position, I accepted with full awareness that there would be challenges. I emphasized that I was prepared to push for changes that I thought were needed while respecting the traditions and achievements of many long-time members.

Today, I still refuse to be a "caretaker" Chair. With my background in school administration, I contribute skills and knowledge from experience with other organizations. I consider that some self-evident truths about organizations hold for all. Organizations need to change continuously (or re-invent) to survive and they need to manage necessary change to be effective. Change is effective and permanent only when the members of an organization embrace it. Leaders are change "agents" when they encourage, provoke, support people, and take risks in suggesting change.

I believe that there are changes to be made that are necessary and vital to the health of our association:

- We need to establish a solid financial foundation.
- We need to expand, support, and place more value in the continuing education of members.
- For many reasons, the least of which is to encourage participation of new members, we need to recognize the hundreds of hours that some of our members contribute to the organization. (Counting their time as advice hours would be a good start.)

Perhaps the most important of all, we need to reconsider our relationship with the public. Are we, as we are largely known, passive advice-givers to those who choose to ask a question at an MG clinic? Or are we advocates on issues such as IPM, municipal bylaws, and good gardening practices? Are we active educators willing to conduct courses to encourage beginning gardeners (especially children) and people who wish to upgrade their knowledge and practice? Do we have the motivation to organize community gardens, block boulevard gardens, school programs, and horticulture therapy programs? (My thanks and blessings go to those members who are involved here.) I think the emphasis taken with clinics is too great and a "culture" shift toward other projects should take place.

I would like to clarify one thing about how an organization does business and makes decisions. Our bylaws are quite clear as to how this should happen and as such differ little from those of other organizations. The main decision-making forum is the

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Galanthus Linked to Improvement in Memory



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website (www.pacificbulbsociety.org) hosts a Mystery Page, where gardeners can post pictures of bulbs they are having trouble identifying. You might even get some cheap and interesting bulbs if you become a member.

The two worst enemies of snowdrops in my garden are slugs and squirrels. Only three out of 15 single snowdrops survived the first year. I'm hoping for better odds this year.

Snowdrops are disease resistant although the *Stagonospora curtisii* fungus (Fire or Red Leaf Spot disease) of *Hippeastrums* (amaryllis) and Narcissus can be fatal to snowdrops. To control this fungus, immerse the bulbs in water at 40°C (104°F) for 30 minutes.

Beyond the garden

Galanthus, besides being a beautiful little bulb, has been linked with memory improvements for Alzheimer disease patients. Galantamine is an unaltered extract from the Caucasian snowdrop, *Galanthus wormorii*. Its modern use originated in the Bulgarian pharmaceutical industry in the 1950s and recent studies, including a study of 653 Alzheimer patients published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2000, found that galantamine “appears to slow the neurodegenerative condition”. More recent studies have found similar effects but suggest some gastrointestinal side-effects. Your doctor can tell you more about galantamine.

Who would have thought that those little heralds of spring could be so useful as well as such welcome beauty in the garden?

—Sandra Hewson

Letter from the Chair

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General Meeting. Decisions are made when motions are put forward, debated, and voted on. Any member may put forward a motion for debate. Some members “vote with their feet” by not attending a meeting. (I realise the difficulties members face when unable to attend meetings for various reasons.) Referenda or surveys of all members about issues may be done for the purpose of communication. Decisions are made after appropriate debate, which can be informal (committee of the whole) or formal by following Roberts' Rules.

The membership elects and entrusts an executive to carry out routine business such as keeping financial and other records. An executive body should be able to propose ideas, initiatives, and motions for consideration by the members. The key to all this is trust and open communication, the hallmarks of a healthy and effective organization.

These are my “musings” on the membership issue and what it tells me about our organization. They are not the opinion of the MG Council. Please contact me at jackmg@shaw.ca with your ideas for change within the MG organization.

—Jack Grant

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a clinic has been cancelled before changing your plans to attend.



Paperwork is required for all clinics. The Clinic Coordinator is responsible for reminding all participants and making sure the paperwork gets done. This consists of the pink Record of Event form and the Questions or Questions and Answers form. You can make extra copies of the forms provided in the Master List package, download them from the members' page on the Master Gardener website at www.bcmastergardeners.org, or pick up more forms from the MG mail slot at the main office at VanDusen Gardens.

First-year students are required to write down both questions and answers at a clinic and give these to the Clinic Coordinator to send in with the pink Record of Event form. Second-year and qualified MGs are only required to write down the questions. Please use a full sheet of lined paper for the question sheet and include MG names, clinic date, and venue on each page. This paperwork is *not* required for Community Projects or the Plant Information Line.

If you have any questions about clinics, please contact me or the Area Coordinators. And here's a tip that came from reviewing last year's pink Record of Event forms: For clinics that occur early in the season, remember to dress warmly and take a Thermos of coffee and a blanket to warm up cold chairs. Best tip yet: Have fun and enjoy yourself.

—Lynne Christmas
Overall Clinic Coordinator

Community Projects: New Challenges Await

Master Gardeners: Gardening season is upon us and we are all looking forward to new challenges. We want to encourage you to consider a community project as part of your commitment to the New Year.

Community projects occur at a variety of sites from schools to hospitals to prisons. Some meet every week, while others occur less frequently. Whatever your schedule, there's a project that could use your help.

Community projects serve our community by offering information on gardening, directing gardening practice on site, and educating community members about environmentally responsible gardening. Volunteer Master Gardeners receive advice hour credit for the time spent on projects, but more importantly, they become part of a community of common concern and effort. Here are the community projects for which we need volunteers this year.

Alouette Correctional Centre for Women

Located in Maple Ridge, this is a provincial correctional centre for low and medium risk women. During its first year of operation, an inventory of the site was produced in order to establish a schedule of care. Various gardens and patios were designed to enhance the site, and this work continues. Classes are held to instruct residents in plant care.

Master Gardener volunteers direct the design, planting, and care of the gardens. The information acquired from volunteers not only empowers learners but also gives them skills that may be of help after their release.

Plans for this year include maintenance of the existing gardens and expansion of the use of the greenhouse and cold frames.

This is a very large project that can use more help. Last year, seven volunteers put in 95 working hours.

Banfield Extended Care Pavilion

Banfield Pavilion is the Extended Care Unit at Vancouver General Hospital. Under the direction of a horticultural therapist, Master Gardener volunteers provide gardening assistance and instruction to residents and other volunteers. Since this is a horticultural therapy program, Master Gardeners help to individualize programs and to introduce their particular areas of interest and expertise to patients.

Burnaby Nature House

Burnaby Butterfly Garden is located next to the Nature House on Burnaby Lake. It is meant to inform visitors about butterflies, their habitat, and food source. Master Gardener volunteers give advice and information to visitors and reorganize the plant material of the garden to be more "butterfly friendly". They also assist with education for children who attend programs in the Nature House.

Burnaby Youth Custody Services

Volunteers work in both the closed and open units at Burnaby Youth Custody Services on Willingdon Avenue opposite BCIT. Master Gardeners teach residents basic gardening skills, plant identification, and an appreciation of growing flowers and vegetables. Volunteers participate each week during the residents' educational time. Produce from the gardens is used in the cooking program.

Evergreen

Evergreen is a national non-profit organization that brings communities and nature together for mutual benefit. Master Gardener volunteers provide leadership, guidance, and education at events. These occur around the Lower Mainland and are one-day programs concerned with habitat restoration on publicly owned lands. Master Gardeners run training sessions for those who participate in events and they help to run the programs. Volunteer work occurs only during public restoration events.

“Whatever your schedule, there is a community project that could use your help.”

Healing Garden Committee

The Healing Garden Committee does research, cataloging, and development of materials relating to “healing gardens”. It also offers advice on the establishment and maintenance of healing gardens in the community. The committee is involved in several sites that are developing healing gardens and Master Gardeners offer advice on the practical aspects of creating such gardens as well the restorative benefits to be derived from them.

KidSafe Project

The KidSafe Project helps develop safe havens for at-risk inner-city elementary school students when schools are traditionally closed. School gardens act as a focus for activity and as a place to learn about gardening. KidSafe ensures that children are protected for 12 months of the year and encourages increased awareness of smart and nutritious local food. Volunteers help design and manage new gardens since KidSafe is attempting to expand the number of schools that have gardens.

Marguerite Dixon Transition House and Second Stage Units

This is a horticultural therapy program that assists staff and residents at this facility for abused women. The coordinator of the project organizes gardening activities on various days throughout the season. On some of these days, Master Gardeners direct United Way volunteers who come to work in the garden and help to complete new installations.

Native Demonstration Garden: Mahon Park City of North Vancouver

The Native Demonstration Garden is part of an extensive restoration of Mahon Park. Master Gardener volunteers provide information on native plants and coordinate community work parties. This is a project that occurs primarily during community events and working sessions.

North East Mental Health Team Gardening Group

The North East Team is one of several in the Lower Mainland. The team serves children, adults, and older adults with serious mental illness using an interdisciplinary approach. The rehab department is quite active and offers a variety of group activities, including gardening. Master Gardeners provide gardening expertise to the project.

Queen Alexandra School Gardening Program

The award-winning project at Queen Alexandra School works with K to 7 students in a 10,000 square foot garden—growing food, weeding, watering, and sometimes preparing meals. In addition gardening information is integrated into the academic curriculum. Activities occur every week and volunteers must participate on a regular basis. Last year over 400 volunteer hours were registered.

Richmond Nature Park

The project at Richmond Nature Park focuses on the restoration and installation of wildlife gardens around the interpretive centre, the Nature House. Master Gardeners advise on the selection of plants and their placement as well as supervise volunteer staff. The project occurs only on Saturday and Sunday with specific hours scheduled to accommodate the park’s event schedule.

St. James Cottage Hospice

“Cottage” is a beautiful 10-bed facility for terminally ill adults. Master Gardener volunteers work with residents when possible and with their families and friends. Volunteers create garden beds, troubleshoot pests and diseases, and advise on plant selection, location, and maintenance. Hours are flexible once volunteers are introduced to the requirements of the project.

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Another Volunteer Opportunity: Integrated Pest Management Accreditation Program

The BC Landscape and Nursery Association (BCLNA) invites Master Gardeners to participate in the process of setting up an Integrated Pest Management Accreditation Program for British Columbia. This is a joint initiative by the BCLNA, representing the industry, and provincial and municipal governments. The goal is to implement a program that will increase the level of accountability for pest management practices for landscape, lawn care, and arborist contractors. The BCLNA is extending this invitation to Master Gardeners as they see us as representing the educated public.

As well, a think tank has been set up to pursue sustainable horticulture and seeks participants from provincial and municipal governments, industry, and academia.

These are great opportunities for our group to have our voices heard. In return, the initiatives will benefit from our input. Participants will also learn a great deal in this important field.

We need a Master Gardener volunteer to sit at these meetings, which appear to be frequent. If you would like more information on these projects or others that may come up in the future, or if you would like to get involved, please call me. I will be happy to pass on the materials to you.

— Ayuko Inoue

Making a Difference with Community Projects

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Speakers on Gardening

Master Gardener volunteers give lectures and presentations to various community groups. MGs register their willingness to participate and their area of expertise and are paired with organizations that request a speaker.

VanDusen Botanical Garden Plant Information Line

Master Gardener volunteers research and answer questions phoned or emailed by members of the community. Volunteers work from the VanDusen Main Office. This clinic operates twice a week.

Yaletown House Intermediate Care Facility

Yaletown House is located in the heart of Vancouver's Yaletown district. Under the direction of a horticultural therapist, Master Gardener volunteers provide gardening assistance and instruction to residents.

How Community Projects Work

Each project has a coordinator who sets up the schedule of activities and keeps track of volunteer hours. She or he

contacts volunteers with the specific details of the project and provides an orientation to the goals and needs of the program. As with clinics, a commitment to a project must be honoured, since programs depend on Master Gardeners.

How to Sign Up

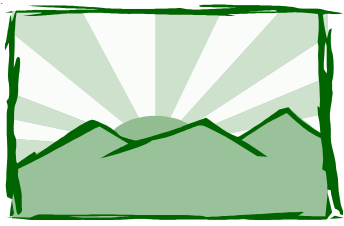
As in past years a sign-up book will be available at the main desk at VanDusen Garden during the month of March. If you want more information or if you want to sign up for a project by phone or email, please contact:

- Alice Kilian, akilian@shaw.ca or (604) 929-3524, or
- Andrea Lebowitz, lebowitz@sfu.ca or (604) 980-6990.

The Final Word

Community projects are an important way in which Master Gardeners extend their knowledge and enthusiasm about gardening into the community. In addition, they provide volunteers with an ongoing relationship with a place and a group in order to enhance their own as well as others' commitment to the natural world. Community projects are a "win/win" opportunity that we hope you will take.

—Alice Kilian and Andrea Lebowitz



Vancouver Island Report

In 2005, the Vancouver Island Master Gardener Association (VIMGA) had 38 certified Master Gardeners, eight second-year grads, and 25 first-year members. We welcomed new members from both the Duncan and Nanaimo Malaspina University-College classes. We volunteered 2,111 advice hours in our communities. We responded to approximately 1,600 questions, mainly about pests and diseases, and trees and shrubs.

Mentorship Program

The VIMGA is looking into starting a mentorship program similar to those at VanDusen and Lincoln County Extension Agent at Oregon State University in Newport, Oregon. It is felt that a mentorship program would benefit several aspects of the program by:

- strengthening lines of communication with student MGs so that they more quickly feel a part of the sprawling Vancouver Island family,
- assisting the coordinator in the many tasks involved in running the program,
- strengthening the understanding that the MG program is first and foremost a volunteer, public service organization, and
- developing another route for current MGs to help their peers.

As in the VanDusen mentorship program, mentors would work with students in the basic training course. But because the Vancouver Island MG Program is offered through Malaspina University-College, its development has been somewhat different than that of the VanDusen model.

Continuing Education Committee

Having found that the development of a formal Advanced Program is beyond our scope and perhaps needs at the moment, we are hoping to meet the needs of our students for new courses through one or two workshops a year. June Pierson of the VanDusen

Advanced Program has helped greatly with an exchange of information as we develop these workshops.

Reduction of Pesticides Committee

Peter Dunn reported on the work done by the members of the Reduction of Pesticides Committee: “We still recommend the IPM as a decision making process that uses a combination of techniques to suppress pests. Currently there is a slow trend to organic attitudes, with a sustainable and reduced use of pesticides.”

Our Plans for the Year

The planners have been setting up clinics for the year and have found the timing for them to be March to May. Perhaps the earliest clinic on Vancouver Island this year was Seedy Saturday in Qualicum Beach on February 4. This is the fourth year Master Gardeners have been at this event. Speakers included Betty Murray on Water-wise Gardening, Christine North on Soil Preparation, and Sheila Williams on Dry Gardening. Another Seedy Saturday will take place in Courtenay on March 4. The next general meeting will be held on Sunday, March 19, and the annual general meeting will be held on Sunday, October 15.

Thank You

We are a young group with a lot of new members and fresh energy. This means a lot of work for our more experienced members. We especially thank our certified Master Gardeners. Thank you also to Angela Einarson for the tremendous amount of time and effort she has contributed as the Master Planner of VIMGA for the last two years. Angela took her training at Malaspina in 2003. Linda Derkach has agreed to be our new Master Planner. Thank you to Bob McTaggart who has taken on the position of Vice-President.

See you at the Update on March 26.

—Gael Ackroyd and Eleanor Voysey



Newsletter

of the
Master Gardeners' Association of
British Columbia
Affiliated with VanDusen
Botanical Gardens Association

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Master Gardeners' Association of British Columbia is to provide information about gardening to the community and to educate people about environmentally responsible gardening practices.

Please send all **name, telephone, and address changes** to Kathy Shynkaryk, membership chair, at kshynkaryk@shaw.ca.

All other **newsletter correspondence** can be sent to ametten@telus.net.

Deadline for submissions to the June 2006 newsletter is April 15, 2006.

www.bcmastergardeners.org
gardener@bcmastergardeners.org



MG Calendar

Sunday, March 26, 9:15 a.m.

Update 2006

Going Native:

Gardening with Native Plants

Michael J. Fox Theatre

Burnaby South High School

5455 Rumble Street, Burnaby

No general meeting in March

Tuesday, April 11, 7:30 p.m.

General meeting

Marie Jefferies, PAg

Invasive Alien Species:

Identification and Reporting

Friday, April 21, noon

Garden visit

Visit to Glenn Paterson's Roof Retreat

Space limited. To register, please contact

Barbara Bowers.

Tuesday, May 9, 9.30 a.m.

General meeting

Bruce Hemstock

The Green Roof at the New Vancouver Convention Centre

Tuesday, June 13, 7.30 p.m.

Nori and Sandra Pope

The Nature of Perception: Hadspen

Garden in Somerset, England

Norman Rothstein Theatre

950 West 41st Avenue, Vancouver

Tickets \$15. Proceeds to VanDusen

Capital Campaign. Tickets available at

the Garden Shop at VanDusen Botanical

Garden, Shop in the Garden at UBC

Botanical Garden, or mail a cheque

payable to MGABC and a self-

addressed, stamped envelope to:

MGABC Tickets

c/o VanDusen Botanical Garden

5251 Oak Street, Vancouver, BC

V6M 4H1

Master Gardeners' Association of British Columbia

Now that the newsletter is available on our website, it seems that the phone numbers usually listed with the contact list are too easily captured for telephone solicitation. Consequently, we've chosen to protect the privacy of our members and ask that you refer to your current MG membership list, where you'll find full contact information, including phone numbers and email addresses.

Chair Jack Grant	Advanced Training June Pierson	Database Manager Pat Taylor	Plant Sale	Update Seminar Lorraine Waring
Chair Elect Lynne Christmas	Basic Training (BT) Doreen Godwin	Finance Karen Shuster	Coordinators Joan Bentley Loretta Barr	Website Committee Karen Shuster
1st Vice Chair Barbara Bowers	Bylaws Sheila Watkins	Fundraising Brian Campbell	Publicity —available—	Web Master Deb Dorey
2nd Vice Chair Jenny Newman	Clinic Coordinator Lynne Christmas	Membership Kathy Shynkaryk Jim K. Taylor	Selection (BT) Doreen Godwin	Welcome Table Sharon Hanna
Secretary Katie McIntosh	Coffee	Newsletter Editor Ann-Marie Metten	Speakers Group Linda Shulman	VIMGA
Treasurer Karen Shuster	Coordinators Shirley Mason Terry Richardson	Nominations Liz Haan	Telephone/Email Colleen Martin Linda Wright	(Vancouver Island)
Members-at-Large Norma Dechene Ayuko Inoue Susan Lazar Barry Roberts	Community	Plant Information Line Zoe Wise	Transition/New	Chair Rodney Murray
	Projects Alice Kilian Andrea Lebowitz		Students —available—	Secretary Linda Cooper
				SMGA (Summerland)
				Program Coordinator Linda Sears