



A Season in the Sunshine

The California School of Garden Design is located in the sleepy town of Applegate, California, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. I was headed there to attend 10 weeks of intensive study in landscape design.

To find affordable, short-term accommodation, I contacted the Master Gardeners of Placer County by phoning their hort-line, a telephone number I found online. After introducing myself as a Master Gardener from British Columbia, the University of California-Davis MG coordinator was happy to circulate my email request to local MGs.



Home away from home

I received a couple of replies, and after talking with Leslie Esson, I almost begged her to rent me the detached granny bedroom on her certified organic farm called Serene Garden. Leslie needed occasional help on the farm for the next few months, and I was ecstatic at the chance to spend the entire fall season in another climatic zone. Serene Garden would be my home away from home for the next 10 weeks while studying design under Robert Littlepage in the nearby town of Applegate, population 400.

Leslie turned out to be an inspired Master Gardener. Although having only recently completed the training course at nearby UC-Davis, Leslie has been growing certified organic vegetables for the

past three years, selling her bounty to home and restaurant customers in the neighbouring hill towns of Truckee and Tahoe.

Garden bounty

Leslie's garden is abundant. Rows of healthy, green, strawberry plants are well mounded above the clay soil. They grow through holes cut out of heavy black plastic that serves as a weed barrier to tough and highly invasive Bermuda couch grass. The big glossy red 'Santa Maria' berry is a California specialty, ever-bearing and very productive and these I picked fresh for breakfast almost every morning. The strawberries

are susceptible to the same botrytis fungus problems we face here and slugs and snails hide under litter just like they do at home.

Melons are plentiful and varied. 'Ambrosia,' when vine ripened, was pure, well, ambrosia. Watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew, all carefully checked for optimum ripeness, had

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"A Season in the Sun" held many lessons



Serene Garden, Loomis, California



Leslie Esson, Serene Garden

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a turn filling Leslie's market baskets. Tomatoes, all sizes and shapes, sprawled and tumbled over funky frames, maybe an old high chair, and were loaded with ripening fruit in the summer. Squash, both summer and winter, were ready or just ripening in the late season sun. Halloween pumpkins, corn stalks, and sunflowers spilled out of every vase and bucket. Some evenings after dark I would find Leslie wearing her head lamp, harvesting greens, checking on the watering, picking berries, and filling orders going out the next day. Growing and selling is hard work—there are never enough hours in the daylight.

Pests at work

One day, when preparing fresh-picked corn for the dinner table, I saw my first corn silk worm and the resulting damage. Leslie showed me other threats to her crops: harlequin bugs on the kale, gopher holes, and better still, a temporary resident we named Charlie, a praying mantis living in the front-door planter. One of Leslie's lovely daughters had to rescue me from the dragon lizard that had taken refuge under the chair in my room. She gingerly threw a rag on this 20 cm long monster and delivered him into the garden, where his job is to keep the slugs and snails in check.

No walk through Leslie's garden was without a chance to see and learn new things, a chance to

discuss her ideas and plans for her garden, and occasionally a chance for me to introduce a few new organic practices. At my suggestion, Leslie got busy and incorporated alfalfa pellets to improve the available nitrogen in the soil prior to planting broccoli. I encouraged her to cut back on overhead watering to limit the powdery mildew on her squash vines and Swiss chard.

No time to rest

As I prepared to head north at the end of November I was more grateful than ever that, in Zone 8, we have a time of rest during the winter. For Leslie, she will have another season of tending a different selection of crops. Her onions, leeks, and garlic ('Sicilian Gold,' a gift from my own organic garden), broccoli, and other brassicas will produce or grow through the winter. It is always harvest time for the herbs, and the seeds that were sown in late September are providing cut greens. There is no time to rest through these winter months in a Californian vegetable garden.

My 10 weeks of study flew by and every day was filled with new experiences. Thanks to the International Master Gardeners Association, I was able to connect with good people of common interest and make friends in a new community of gardeners while away from home.

—Odessa Bromley

President's Message

It seems so long since our 2010 annual general meeting celebration in November. Your new Provincial Council team has been hard at work on a variety of initiatives.

In January we had a strategic planning session to set our goals for the coming year. What were the priorities? We included the café roundtable discussion points that members contributed at the AGM. They were aligned with Council responsibilities.

Communications is the key, significant issue that emerged. We are committed to providing consistent, transparent, and timely information to our members. How can we do that differently than we have in the past?

We know that we need to make some changes. Change is a constant in today's world. But we also know that we need to implement changes based on members' needs, ensure the messaging is clear, share with each other all the good work that is happening around the province, and offer opportunities for continuous learning and improvement to meet our mandate.

We are now in our 29th year as an organization of Master Gardeners. Today we have six chapters that make up our provincial body. Members are represented by delegates from Prince George, the Okanagan, Thompson-Shuswap, Vancouver, Vancouver Island, and Victoria. It has taken some time to get here. Today's membership province wide is more than 800 members.

If good communication is critical for a provincial body, how will we do it?

A new website project is in the works. It will have a brand new look. It will be modern, it will allow chapters to post and manage their own messaging to meet local needs, and it will embrace the latest technology options.

This new website project development and implementation is being managed by Council Representative and Project Director Margaret MacIntyre. Margaret will be working with each chapter and their reps as we transition from the old website to the new. We are excited about this new beginning.

Provincial Council has been invited to attend the Vancouver Chapter Spring Seminar on Sunday, March 13. We will be showcasing plans for the future and what we have accomplished to date. Please come and meet the new executive team and preview our new communication tool.

As I start my new year of governance, other changes are happening.

Ann-Marie Metten has been the provincial newsletter editor for the past eight years. She has provided her professional expertise to produce a high-quality product. We wish her well as she pursues other opportunities, and thank her for contributing her editorial gifts as a Master Gardener. She has been capably assisted with layout and design by Wendy Jones Carere, who is also stepping down.

A new team has been working with Ann-Marie this past month to transition the newsletter. We welcome Dianne McNair and Tom Nosella to the newsletter communications team. They have some great ideas about using technology to enhance our visuals and distribution to our membership.

As I write my first message to you, spring is almost upon us and changes in the garden are also bringing new beginnings. That is what we are all about: master gardeners welcoming these new beginnings and embracing change as it unfolds.

I look forward to meeting you in March, as we embark on this new journey with your Council representatives.

—Jan Hemming

Victoria Chapter presents Mixing It Up in the Urban Garden



Photos: Mike McCormick

The Victoria Chapter hosted our first public education event on Friday, January 29, and Saturday, January 30, and we really did mix it up! Nearly 200 people participated on the first day and 70 on the second.

Topics included from chickens to bees and vegetable production before lunch; a slow food train over dessert; and then a berry and fruit finale. The mix was all there.

Event delegates were treated to a day-long event of visual imagery, live chickens that participated without hesitation on a moment's notice, a silent auction, 15 vendors, and tasteful, healthy food for snacks and lunch.

The day really did have something for everyone. A restored 1955 Chinese vegetable truck brought back memories for many locals who had had their veggies delivered to their door in the 1950s. It was all about the importance of knowing where your food comes from: Is it possible to grow and nurture it yourself? It was also about finding reliable resources for that can-do approach.

What did we learn? Marilyn Soames started the day with Millie and Charlie and some chic friends. Those were the chickens. Marilyn has chosen to concentrate on heritage birds as part of the conservancy movement. She has been gifted with the friendship of some elderly poultry men and women who have generously passed on their knowledge to her, as so much about chicken husbandry is near to being lost. Marilyn wishes to pay it forward. At the conference, she explored possible ways and means to produce your own eggs every day. And what eggs they might be! Some small Bantam egg varieties are the equivalent of two eggs. Her techniques for providing loving care for a long relationship with these wonderful creatures were memorable.

And then we learned about all those bees. Brenda Jaeger, a Vancouver Island apiary inspector, spoke eloquently about the many varieties of bees and why they are so important in sustaining the circle of life in the garden. She shared with us her knowledge of bee breeding and the world of bees, as well as knowledge of bee-friendly plants.

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A variety of speakers informed and entertained

Brenda is currently involved in a bee-breeding program that aims to produce a bee that will be more resistant to mites, which are devastating the industry.

Talking about vegetables, just before lunch we heard from Carol Miles, a former New Yorker who loves the West Coast. She is an associate professor and associate scientist in the vegetable horticulture program at Washington State University. Carol has her PhD in vegetable crops from Cornell University and has been teaching and learning about vegetable production for 25 years, with a strong interest in alternative crops and organic production. Her knowledge and experience from a scientific perspective were well received. The Master Gardener demonstration garden at WSU in Mount Vernon is well worth a visit if you are in the Skagit Valley.

The lunch break offered three varieties of chili, plus fresh salad and buns from our own hospitality team, six volunteers who prepared all the food for the conference. An additional team of servers made sure everyone was well served. Our hospitality team treats us well at our regular general meetings, and their conference effort was even better. They are a special group.

Silent auction bids, vendor information, and lots of personal buying at vendor tables rounded out the rest of the lunch break.

Dessert was served during our keynote speaker address. Don Genova holds a bachelor degree in environmental studies from the University of Waterloo, a certificate in Radio Broadcasting from Humber College, and in 2007 he completed a master's degree in food culture at the University of Gastronomic Sciences near Parma, Italy.

It all started for Don at a 5,000-watt radio station in Terrace, BC, in 1983. Since then he has been a journalist in print, radio, television, and the internet, all over Canada. Don also teaches courses in freelance travel writing at the University

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Registration team in the foyer at the Mary Winspear Centre



Don Genova, keynote speaker



*Marilyn Soames, accompanied by her chickens
At the podium: Event Co-Chair, Elaine Scott*

Talk included tip for favourite delicacy

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of British Columbia and a course in Food Culture at the University of Victoria. In 1997 he started to specialize in covering the food and travel scene in Canada and abroad. Don led us through the A to Z of a gastronomic slow food train excursion. His personal sharing of events and experiences with many well-known food personalities added to the ambience of the day.

Tom Baumann, a full-time professor at the University of the Fraser Valley agriculture technology department wrote his master's thesis on "Strawberry season extension in British Columbia" and added some levity at the end of a very long day. Tom knows his berries and fruits. He described his favourite delicacy: a big juicy strawberry injected with his secret alcohol ingredient and dipped in chocolate. Our mouths were watering.

The second day of the conference offered self-guided mini workshops and tours to five venues.

There was a cider tasting, a succulent plant demo, food production warehouse tour, a greenhouse demo, and more chickens.

In addition to the general public, a number of Master Gardeners attended. Conference delegates represented all areas of the province, including one from Alberta. From the speakers' handouts to the various resource guides, to sponsorship by West Coast Seeds and Lee Valley, the mix was all there. We are grateful for everyone's support.

We hope the success of our first venture in the public arena will allow us to look at other opportunities. The "Mixing It Up in the Urban Garden" theme seemed to be on target and timely. We will evaluate what our next options will be. Stay tuned.

**—Jan Hemming
Victoria Chapter Chair**



Restored 1955 Chinese vegetable truck

Vancouver Island

The Vancouver Island Chapter is looking forward to a very busy Spring 2011.

MG Basic Training

We hope we will have found a new Basic Training program facilitator by the end of February, and we are working hand in hand with Vancouver Island University (VIU) to do so. VIMGA had two members on the interview panel and felt very much a part of this collaborative process. Janet Germann, our tireless advocate at VIU, retired in February, and we anticipate working with a new coordinator for the program, housed as it is in VIU's Continuing Studies department. Our goal is to continue to run the program in alternate years, with the next class being offered out of Nanaimo in September 2011. Our mandatory Information Night runs on May 31 in Nanaimo.

Spring Education Day on the Island

Our Spring Education Day will be held in Nanaimo at the Oliver Woods Community Centre in Nanaimo on Sunday, March 20. We are delighted that our new Continuing Education Committee is developing this day, themed "Training the Trainer."

As many of our members have expressed interest in making their clinic experiences more relevant and interesting, the organizers are running with the idea of presenting five mini-workshops, each given by one of our own members. Attendees will go away well equipped with the concepts and materials needed to repeat these little workshops at clinics to educate the public. We are hoping that gradually these mini-workshops will become more frequent, and a draw for us at nurseries and other locations.

Graduating master gardeners

March 20 is also the day on which we celebrate our 18 qualified Master Gardeners from the 2008 class. These members deserve a special group hug and congratulations for completing our first-ever Plant ID project as part of their qualification.

Clinic sign-up well under way

As usual, at this time of year the Master Planner and District Planners have been hard at work organizing volunteer opportunities for 2011. Clinic sign-ups are happening at four locations — Courtenay, Parksville-Qualicum, Nanaimo, and Duncan — and always go smoothly because of the hard work of the organizers. Clinic previews sent by email help members plan their schedules in advance.

Vancouver Island welcomes new president

We close with an enthusiastic welcome to our new president, Karen Bennett, who has served ably for two years as secretary.

—Pam Harrison



Okanagan Master Gardeners

Okanagan Master Gardeners had a very busy and productive Fall season. Lorrie Henderson, our most efficient Basic Training Coordinator, along with her mentors, ran a very successful Basic Training program. Of the 24 students registered, all but one completed and passed the course. The graduates are looking forward to starting their clinic training this Spring.

In October, we held our Fall session along with our AGM, electing a new executive committee. Our guest speaker was Cathy Fuller, who gave an excellent presentation on how to garden in the Okanagan without using harmful chemicals. For residents of Kelowna, this was very informative as we now have a bylaw banning the use of these chemicals. Following the presentation, we awarded 12 certificates to our newly qualified Master Gardeners.

Date for next Basic Training course

We still need to fill the two Basic Training positions in order to train more Master Gardeners. When we do, we hope to begin the next program on Saturday, January 28, to run until Saturday, April 24, 2012.

Open House

On Sunday, January 23, we held an open house to welcome the new Master Gardeners in Training. It was a fun time, with door prizes and a garden book and magazine exchange, as well as time for the new students to meet some of our qualified Master Gardeners. Our Events Planner, Wilma Schellenberger, also took the opportunity to pass out a questionnaire to see what people would like for speakers and field trips.

The next day, the Executive met and planned some of our events for the coming year. As a result, our Spring and Fall session dates have been set, as follows.

General Meeting

Tuesday, March 1, 7:00 p.m., at the Water Street Seniors Centre. (Note: Location and time are not definite and we will update you as soon as we know for sure.)

Susanna Acheampong from the BC Department of Agriculture and Lands will speak on a new very serious pest that is infecting soft fruits in the Okanagan: the Spotted Wing Drosophila. This is a new fruit or vinegar fly that all home gardeners need to be made aware of. Acheampong will also bring us information on another new pest that is being found in the apple orchards and is killing the apple trees. If at all possible, all Master Gardeners in the Interior should attend this workshop. Acheampong is an excellent presenter.

Seedy Saturday

Saturday, March 12, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Okanagan College on KLO Road. The seed swap will include a focus on organic and local seeds, plants, and garden-related materials. There will be speakers, music, and refreshments.

Spring Session and Clinic Sign-up Day

Saturday, April 9, at the Mars Hill Building, 1370 KLO Road, Kelowna.

Suzanne Anderton will present on "How to Write for Magazines and Newspapers." Caroline Hill will present on "Square Foot Gardening," in a partially hands-on presentation as there is a Square Foot Garden Community-type garden at this location.

Fall Session and AGM

Saturday, October 22, to be held in the South Okanagan. Our proposed location is at the Linden Gardens, but this has not been set for sure.

—Caroline Hill
Okanagan Chair



Cedar Cottage Seed Saving Collective

Without seeds, we cannot grow food. Increasingly, the world seed supply is being controlled and concentrated into fewer hands, many of which are corporations with an interest in genetic modification and the patenting of seeds. The reality of more extreme weather conditions also points to the importance of having a readily accessible and diverse supply of fruit and vegetable varieties to feed ourselves.

Seed varieties adapted to local conditions are best suited to help us successfully grow more food locally. Seeds do have a limited lifespan, however, so it is crucial that we preserve them now for future generations — we risk losing these varieties if we do not.

Saving seeds is a life-preserving act that farmers and urban home gardeners alike can

do to ensure a healthy and prosperous harvest. Seed banks can play a vital role in helping communities work toward local food security. The Cedar Cottage Seed Saving Collective has recently formed in an attempt to address these issues.

Please join us! To encourage the success of our collective, we ask that prospective members possess an understanding of organic gardening and seed-saving methods. Opportunities to enhance your education will be provided as our collective moves forward.

ccseedssavingcollective@gmail.com
ccseedssavers.wordpress.com.



Okanagan Chapter Executive Committee

Program Coordinator
Vice Coordinator
MGABC Council Representative
Secretary
Treasurer
Basic Training Coordinator
Basic Training Assistant
Clinic Planner
Clinic Planner Assistant(s)
Membership Chair
Events/PR Chair

Caroline Hill
Debbie Harborne
Ginny Dournovo
Anne Marie Bell
Linda Sears

Carol Saunders
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Message from the Vancouver Chair

The Vancouver Chapter 2011 year is well under way. The Basic Training Program (BTP) kicked off a new series of classes on January 11 with a full complement of students. We look forward to having them join us in our volunteer work after they complete their exam at the end of March. The last class of the final elective for the 2009 Advanced Training Program (ATP) is scheduled in April, and work is under way planning the 2011 Advanced Training Program to start in the fall.

I had the pleasure of attending the BTP as a workshop mentor this year and last, as well as attending and completing the ATP. I continue to be impressed with the quality of the instruction, the enthusiasm of the participants, and the dedication of the Master Gardeners who make these programs happen.

Seedy Saturday at VanDusen Botanical Garden, an event organized and run by the Vancouver MGs, was held on Saturday, February 26. At 10 a.m., the public began arriving. They picked their way through the expanding construction site to the Floral Hall, wandered through educational exhibits, listened to excellent lecturers, talked with like-minded people, bought seeds, and visited the Gardens — a treat at anytime of the year. It was a wonderful event, and if you haven't attended in the past, you should certainly consider coming out next year.

The Spring Seminar takes place on Sunday, March 13, when we hope Master Gardeners and friends will fill Michael J. Fox Theatre in Burnaby, spending a full day buying plants, seeds, and soil, listening to five excellent speakers, and again conversing with like-minded people. It will be another wonderful day.

The Continuing Education Committee has put together a full slate of informative speakers for the monthly General Meetings and are finalizing plans for seven workshops covering topics such as vegetable gardening, small-space gardening, garden pests, shrubs, diseases, and bees, plus soils and composting. The Special Events Committee is

planning a number of events, including a South Surrey Tour, a Tree Tour, a Summer Garden Party, and a Christmas Party.

The Clinic Coordinators have arranged a number of clinics across the Metro Vancouver area and introduced a new method to allow MGs to sign-up online for volunteer duty. The Community Projects Coordinators continue to support all of the projects described in the December Newsletter as well as to evaluate and expand the Program. The Plant Information Line, which responds to gardening questions by telephone and email, continues to be a popular way for a number of our MGs to volunteer their expertise.

We also need to concentrate on completing the Transition from "being the provincial organization" to "being a chapter within the provincial organization." Work is under way on a number of administrative and planning activities. Our treasurer successfully introduced Quarterly Consolidated Financial Reporting for the joint Chapter and Basic Training operations, and has finalized a 2011 Budget, which protects the monies saved from last year while setting aside new monies to invest in an improved website. We have started a Strategic Planning exercise which will initially focus on addressing the issues that impede our progress. This includes an initiative to improve our Communications with both the Chapter membership and the public. We have begun work on rewriting our Chapter Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures. Later strategic planning efforts will focus on the Long-Term Vision of where we want to go.

As I begin my term as Chair, I am pleased to be working with a strong Executive Committee and an invaluable network of Working Committees and volunteers. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank all of them for their help. I'd also like to thank all Vancouver Chapter MGs for their support and ideas. We have an exciting year ahead, and an opportunity to make an important difference.

**—Leslie Ingram
Chair, Vancouver Master Gardeners**

Vancouver Chapter Report

By the time you read this, the new Council has had a couple months of work to get their feet wet, at least a little, and they are now making plans for the future.

The Basic Training course started January 11 with a full house. We have 54 very energetic and responsive people. Please check for student tags at the monthly meetings and other events and introduce yourself. A couple of the students are already inquiring about what activities they can get involved in. Brian Didier is busy helping Ken McDonald with the audiovisual equipment. Dianne McNair and Tom Nosella are ghosting the newsletter production process and will assume editing and layout responsibilities, beginning with the June issue.

Four workshops are coming up. Watch for registration information about six weeks before each workshop starts; then register online at karelo.com.

March 19	Zero Mile Vegetable Gardening	MG Linda Beer
April 8	Small Space and Container Gardening	MG Odessa Bromley
May 27	Common Garden Pests	Linda Gilkeson
June 25	Plant ID – Shrubs	Randal Mindell

Please also note dates and times of upcoming meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend, including students and any Chapter member who happens to be in town.

March	Sunday, March 13 Spring Seminar Michael J. Fox Theatre, Burnaby (Wednesday, March 2 meeting is cancelled in lieu)
April	Wednesday, April 6, 7:30 pm
May	Tuesday, May 10, 9:30 a.m.
June	Monday, June 13, 7:30 p.m.

As you attend these events, please welcome the new students and offer your thanks to those who have stepped up to take committee and council positions to keep the association moving forward.

—Lynne Christmas

Vancouver Master Gardeners – Committees and Key Positions

Basic Training Program Chairs	Doreen Godwin, Nigel Bunning, plus mentors
Advanced Training Program Chairs	June Pierson, Liz Cook, plus mentors
Audiovisual	Ken McDonald
Awards Committee Coordinator	Jill Wright
Bylaws, Handbook, and P&P Coordinators	Heather Nielsen, David Toole
Coffee Committee Coordinator	Sue Damm
Community Projects	Joyce Fitz-Gibbon
Community Projects	Cheri Trewin
Healing Gardens Committee Chair	Judy Zipursky
Membership Committee Chair	Pat Taylor
Membership Liaison	Elizabeth Taylor
Newcomers' Committee Coordinator	Doreen Godwin
Newsletter Editor	Ann-Marie Metten
Newsletter Layout	Wendy Jones
Newsletter Liaison	Lynne Christmas
Nominating Committee Chair	(to be decided in early 2011)
Overall Clinic Coordinator	Elizabeth Taylor
Plant Information Line Coordinator	Sheila Watkins
Plant Sales at Monthly Meetings	Joan Bentley, Loretta Barr
Seedy Saturday Coordinator	Lynne Christmas
Speakers' Group Chair	Barbara Bowers
Spring Seminar Coordinator	Lynne Christmas
Telephone Committee Coordinators	Colleen Martin, Linda Wright
Welcoming Table Committee Coordinator	Lois Leslie
Chapter Rep on MGABC Council	Rebecca Black
VanDusen Volunteer Chairs' Meeting Reps	Joyce Fitz-Gibbon, Joan Bentley
VanDusen Board of Governors Rep	Joint 1st Vice-Chairs
Rep on VBGA Education Council	Frank O'Neill



Advanced Training Program

Please visit our information table at the spring seminar where brochures and application forms will be available. To have a brochure or application form mailed to you, please email Christine Deagle or call June Pierson.

Newsletter of the Master Gardeners Association of British Columbia in association with VanDusen Botanical Garden **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 contact information changes to Pat Taylor, membership chair.

All other newsletter correspondence can be sent to the editor, Dianne McNair, at dmcnair@shaw.ca. Newsletter layout by Tom Nosella.

The MG Newsletter is published in March, June, September, and December. Deadline for submissions to the next newsletter is April 30, 2011.

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