



## Vol. 1, Issue 2: April-June 2020

**WE HOPE YOU ARE WELL AND STAYING HEALTHY.** This is a different, difficult and troubling time. The pandemic crisis will end. Until then, each of us has been called to do what we must to be safe, stay healthy and to keep others healthy as well.

We've been asked to socially distance from one another to stop the spread of the virus, just as we sometimes segregate prized plants to prevent the advance of some botanical disease. As a result, many of our normal spring activities have been postponed. The Q & A Plant Clinic is shuttered, and most of our interactions with each other and the gardening public have ground to a halt. Some classes, demonstration garden work parties, gatherings, planning sessions, public outreach activities, and the annual plant sale have been cancelled or put on hold.

It is all too easy to find disappointment with these cancellations and closures. Sometimes it is hard to see other possible activities when we've become accustomed to comfortable rhythms and routines. Rather than dwell on what we cannot do, we have to realize that change always brings opportunities. Despite our frustrations, fears, and virus news fatigue, we simply have to lift our eyes beyond these disappointments, to see the new possibilities all around us.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STAY HEALTHY IN BODY AND SPIRIT....**

Some of you are probably doing a few of these things, but if not you might want to try them.

- Plant more flowers. Gardeners are the world's greatest optimists. Who else would have the faith to plant seeds that will become flowers or produce a food crop months from now? We see the world not as it is now but as what it can become with a handful of seeds, a little sunshine, some moisture, nurturing soil, and a dab of faith. If you can't get to a garden store or nursery to buy already growing starts, order some seeds. This is your chance to try something new like those flowers you always wanted to grow but have never gotten around to planting. Later, when they bloom, you'll appreciate that you took the time and effort to raise them.
- Give a bouquet to a nearby friend or a neighbor. Many of you have flowering plants in your home gardens. Why not make a small flower bouquet, put it water and place it on

the person's doorstep. Ring the doorbell and step back. Sharing your flowers like this will make at least two people happier.

- Plant more vegetables for a change. Just as many people planted victory gardens during World War II, you may want to plant a vegetable garden this year. If you mostly grow flowers, consider growing more vegetables like root crops, lettuces, cabbages, potatoes, beans, corn or squash. Some can be eaten fresh, and others can be set aside for fall or winter use. Growing more vegetables than you can use lets you pass your extra crop over the backyard fence to a neighbor that needs fresh produce. Or, you can always drop off extra produce at a food bank. You'll have a sense of accomplishment from eating vegetables you've raised and sharing your surplus with others who need it.
- Do some solo gardening for your community. Many of you live in communities that have areas planted with shrubs and flowers at their entrances, around the communal mailboxes, or cul de sac roundabouts. These spaces always seem to need a little trimming, weeding and cultivation. Your neighbors will appreciate your efforts.
- Don't forget to smell the flowers. Give yourself a break. All around us trees are sporting new leaves, rhododendrons, azaleas and early spring flowers are blooming, and other plants are sending up shoots that will soon be heavy with flowers and foliage. These are all signs of nature's promise of spring, the annual renewal of life, a quiet reminder that we are all part of some greater process. If you can, take a morning walk or an early evening stroll around your neighborhood. And don't forget to stop and smell the flowers.
- Learn something new about plants. With your extra time dig out that garden book you've always meant to read. Or, you may want to buy a book or two on-line to get some new gardening ideas. You can always find gardening websites on the Internet that offer tips and techniques for improving home flower beds, vegetable gardens, or the proper care of trees or flowering bushes. Some sites offer gardening forums where you can exchange ideas with other gardeners.
- Start that compost. Most of us have a compost, but for those of you that don't, now is a great opportunity to build a compost bin to turn lawn clippings, garden waste, and old leaves into useful material. Compost material does not add much nitrogen or other trace minerals to garden soil, but scattering compost on your vegetable gardens or flower beds adds useful soil loosening, carbon based material that helps retain moisture and allows oxygen to penetrate the soil. You and your plants will appreciate the results of using good compost.
- Share your flower achievements and exchange your gardening questions via the Internet. Maintaining physical distance from one another does not mean we have to cut our social ties with other gardeners. Part of the fun of being a Master Gardener or Recycler Composter is our contacts with like-minded people. We constantly learn from one another, and this does not have to stop just because we cannot directly visit. Use your cellphones or the internet to communicate with other gardeners. Send each other pictures

to show off your flowers or the big vegetables you've grown. If you are puzzled by a gardening problem, ask others to help you solve it.

- Call a friend and pay it forward. Many of us have developed close friendships with gardening buddies. Don't wonder how they are doing. If you haven't talked for a while, give them a call. Check on them; promise to get together again when the current crisis is over. Agree to talk again in a week or ten days. Most important, ask them to pay it forward. Ask each person you contact to call one or two other people. Set off a chain reaction of good will.
- Create your own paradise. The term "paradise" seems to have come from some long forgotten ancient culture that once thrived along the Indus River in what is now Pakistan. "Paradise" was that culture's word for a lush, safe, walled garden. With master gardening activities curtailed you likely have more time to work on perfecting your home gardens. You probably have a mental list of additions or improvements you want to make to turn your garden into the "paradise" you've always planned to have. Now, you have that opportunity to work toward making that ideal space.
- Take good care of yourself. Get plenty of exercise and plenty of rest. Eat regular and nutritious meals. As a recent newsletter from Far Reaches Farm advised, "Shelter in place in the garden. Leave the news inside and just be with the plants, de-stressing while nurturing life and creating beauty." The feel of warm sunshine on your shoulders and smell of moist, rich soil will lift your spirits. Begin each day with a plan to do something good for yourself and something good for at least one other person. Minimize your worries; adopt a positive mental outlook. Make yourself a schedule for each day's activities, and follow it as best you can. At least once a day find something to laugh at. Lastly, if you are working outside, remember to smile and say "Hi" to people passing by. When you brighten someone else's day, you warm your own outlook.

#### **WHAT IS AND IS NOT ON THE CALENDAR.**

- Most Master Gardener and Master Recycler/Composter activities are cancelled through early May.
- To keep informed of what has been postponed or cancelled or what has been rescheduled check this website: <https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/garden>
- Check the *Friday Flash* for up-to-date information.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COVID 19 VIRUS, CHECK THESE WEBSITES:**

- Thurston County Public Health... <https://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health>
- Washington State Health Department... <https://www.doh.wa.gov/>
- United States Centers for Disease Control... <https://www.cdc.gov/>

#### **REMINDERS FOR STAYING SAFE.**

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Practice social distancing and try to stay at home until authorities say it is safe to go out.
- Frequently use soap and hot water for 20 seconds to wash your hands to kill viruses.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- If you must go to the store, wear a face mask over your nose and mouth, and wear rubber gloves.
- Avoid touching your face, especially your nose, mouth and eyes which are the primary gateways for Covid19 infections.
- Cover a sneeze or cough with a tissue; then throw the tissue away. Next, wash your hands to avoid possibly spreading a virus.
- Carefully clean frequently touched surfaces and objects using disinfecting wipes. If wipes are not available use a mild water and chlorine solution. Pay special attention to cleaning doorknobs, light switches (use a lightly moistened wipe), TV remotes, kitchen counters, faucet handles, toilet handles, and any other surfaces likely to become contaminated with viruses.

**COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS.** We want **Roots n Shoots** to work for Foundation members. Send your suggestions for improving the newsletter to the editor at [newsletter@mgftc.org](mailto:newsletter@mgftc.org)

**REMEMBER: STAY HEALTHY, BE SAFE AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES, YOUR FAMILIES AND YOUR FRIENDS.**