



LAELS MOON GARDEN

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Thank You!

Your past purchases at Laels Moon Garden and the enthusiastic response to our first newsletter have made it possible to put out this second edition. We hope to publish spring and fall editions in future years. As a “thank you” we have included a discount coupon in this edition. As an aside, your purchases here in September 2005 had an added benefit. As promised, we contributed five percent of our gross sales to the American Red Cross for relief of the victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. (Did any of the big “box” stores do that?)

Your Thoughts are Welcome

If there are topics that you wish to see covered in any future editions, feel free to make suggestions. We want the newsletter to be useful to you. Our customers include many experienced gardeners and many who are just getting started, so you experts may find some of the articles less sophisticated than you would like. We want to provide useful information to beginners too. You are encouraged to share your copy with a gardening friend who is not already on our mailing list.

Previews of Coming Attractions

Although Bethany is moderately high-tech, Larry is basically an analog guy in a digital world, so we still have not developed our own website. We plan to develop a website for next season. You’ll be informed when it’s ready.

To save distribution time and mailing expense, we prefer to distribute newsletters by e-mail. If you want to receive newsletters by e-mail, please send us your e-mail address at laelsmoon@msn.com. To eliminate duplication please be sure to tell us your name and your regular mailing address so we can remove you from that list. If you wish to continue to receive newsletters via the US Postal Service, you need do nothing other than keep us informed of any mailing address changes.

As always, if you consider our epistles to be junk mail, please let us know and we’ll remove you from all our mailing lists immediately. Conversely, if you have friends who would like to enjoy the witty, penetrating, creative (and did I say humble) writing in future newsletters, please have them send us their name and mailing or e-mail address.

We regret that we cannot answer detailed gardening questions by mail or e-mail. (It’s too easy to spend the day in a warm office answering correspondence rather than to be out in the cold, rain, wind and mud doing things that have to be done to provide you with quality plants.)

Is this Plant Hardy?

(Note: The following discussion is relatively elementary, so if you’re one of our fellow plant geeks with permanently stained knees from working in the garden, you can skip it unless you want to read the lame jokes.)

Customers often ask about the “hardiness” of our plants. When we say they are hardy, we’re not always sure they understand what we mean. Sometimes we get the impression they think “hardiness” is a synonym for “robust” or “good-doer” but in the horticulture biz, hardiness refers to a plant’s ability to withstand harsh weather. To a certain degree, hardiness is one of life’s little mysteries (like, Does Donald Trump comb his eyebrows against the grain?)

There are two widely used systems that attempt to measure the hardiness of plants. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a system of hardiness zones based on *average* minimum winter temperatures. This is the system most commonly used. (See a USDA zone map in most nationally distributed plant catalogs or on the web at <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Hardzone/>. The Sunset Western Garden Book has a more precise zone system based on *average* winter lows, *average* summer highs, *average* rainfall, humidity and aridity, elevation, proximity to the coast or the mountains, and length of growing season. See maps in the Sunset Western Garden Book or on the web at <http://www.sunset.com/sunset/>

Both of these systems are very useful in determining which plants to choose. But they have their limits. They have to be based all or partly on *averages* so they may not apply to every year. (With one hand frozen in ice and one hand in boiling water, your temperature may be average, but you will not be comfortable. It's the same way with plants.) Put another way, Rochester is in USDA Zone 8, but in 30 years here there has been at least one Zone 6 winter and several Zone 7 winters.

The *condition* of an individual plant when cold weather strikes is a factor that is not considered in hardiness zones. If a plant goes rapidly from warm weather to sharply cold weather it is more likely to suffer damage than if the change is gradual. There's not much you can do about a sudden hard freeze except to apply mulch beforehand or put a sheet or plastic over the plant. (During these sudden cold snaps, Larry usually tries to warm the air with profanity, which is only effective for a short period.) If a plant has succulent new growth at the time of a sharp freeze it will suffer more damage than if the growth has hardened off. Hardening off can be somewhat controlled by gradually withdrawing water from the plant as the weather cools in the fall. Reducing water at this time will start the plant into winter dormancy. We've heard all the jokes about the futility of withdrawing water in a Washington fall, but if the weather is raining it is not normally going to freeze.

Wind and location in the garden also affect hardiness. Cold flows onto lower ground like water and wind can "blow dry" plants.

Now that you know all of the above complex and sophisticated information, you will understand why our first response to questions about hardiness is to mumble or give you a dumb look. That said, all of the plants we offer are wintered outside in pots (we don't even have a greenhouse) and that's the acid test for hardiness here. Also when we see plants with which we are unfamiliar, we often plant a test plant in our display garden. If they grow and winter well and are judged to be sufficiently "classy", we may offer them in future years. If they turn out to be an overpriced weed, too picky or puny, or a non-wintering disease magnet, they go on the burn pile. We have decided to let the slugs grow their own evergreen Solomon's seal for example.

Pot Party!



Plants that come from growers are frequently pot bound so we try to re-pot them soon after arrival. This time of year we have a "pot party" nearly every day. Nursery pots have become very expensive (another oil related product). One of the ways we keep prices down is to recycle pots. Recycling also keeps them out of the landfills (and your garage). If you have been so injudicious as to buy plants from other nurseries, we'll take their pots too. (We have no shame.) Pots that we cannot use are given to growers, Master Gardeners, and horticulture training programs. Please only bring us one gallon (6") and larger pots. The smaller ones are not re-useable and might as well be in your garbage as ours.

Besides, there is a curse on our plants: If you haven't returned the pot after a year, your plant will wither and die.

Bamboo is Invasive, Isn't It?

Yes and no. There are two broad categories of bamboo. *Running* bamboo can spread rapidly if the roots are not contained by some sort of a barrier or above ground container. *Clumping* bamboo spreads very slowly so a root barrier is not needed. There are many beautiful cultivars (short for “cultivated varieties”) within each of these categories. We have several full-size plants of running and clumping bamboo in our display gardens and we offer many other collector varieties as well.

Whether bamboo is running or clumping, it makes a beautiful evergreen privacy screen, but the different categories need to be managed differently in some important respects. All bamboo is giant grass, so it likes the same things as a lawn—some sun, regular water, and fertilizer. Beyond that, considerations for growing the two different categories are outlined below.

Clumping bamboo is the easiest to manage because it requires no root barrier. Just plant it, fertilize and water it. It generally grows slower than running bamboo because its root system develops much more slowly, but it can get to be 15' tall in time. Our test plants spread about 2" to 6" per year. We offer *Chusquea culeo*, *Fargesia robusta* and *rufa* (sorry they have no common names!) which are hardy and like sun or part shade. We also offer *Fargesia nitida*, which requires shade during hot summer afternoons. *Chusqueas* are native to the Andes in Chile. *Fargesias* are the main food of the giant pandas at altitude in China. Although no root barriers are required for these bamboos, you may develop a llama or panda problem after you plant them. Don't say you weren't warned.



Running Bamboo may not spread very fast in the first year or two, but as the root system develops some varieties can run several feet underground before coming up. If you have the space, this may not be a problem, but in most yards it is undesirable. Running roots can be contained in several ways. Growing bamboo in a large container will control the root spread. It can sneak out (or plug) the drainage holes in a container so they should be checked once or twice a year and kept clear. The larger the container, the better. Containers that are whiskey barrel-size or larger are recommended. Heavy ceramic or cement containers are less likely to blow over in the wind when the bamboo gets tall. A buried root barrier of cement or very heavy plastic is most effective if it is at least 28 inches deep or deeper. The barrier should be continuous around the bamboo with no gaps and should stick out of the ground at least two inches so escapees over the top can be seen and cut off. We have used galvanized roofing for root barriers in the past. It worked great—until it rusted through.

We offer black, golden, golden groove, henon timber, vivax timber, and several collector varieties of running bamboo. We also offer large ceramic containers and 30" wide by 40 mil or 60 mil thick plastic for running bamboo root barrier. We have examples of installed plastic barriers in our display garden to help you learn how to install it.

Plant Your Own Eden: Part 2

As mentioned in our last edition, fine gardening is really an art form. You are the artist. Let your creative imagination make your garden beautiful throughout the year!

Many older landscapes have huge old rhododendrons or camellias that are beautiful during the three weeks they are in flower, but giant uninteresting green blobs the rest of the year. Here are a couple of ways to give them more year-around interest. One way is to prune them into a small (or not so small) tree by removing the lower limbs to expose the beautiful trunk structure that often lies beneath. On a large rhody or camellia,

this pruning can leave a top that will still have plenty of spring flowers, but will have a structure that is more interesting the rest of the year. Also, the rhody leaves near the ground are the ones most likely to be notched by obscure root weevils. Pruning the rhody higher at least makes the buggers work for it! During the next few weeks (after blooming) we will be tree-pruning a large rhody in our display garden in case you need to see an example before you get the courage to attack your own big plant. We also have a good example of a tree-pruned camellia that has been done for many years.

A second way to add year around interest to a large broad-leafed evergreen shrub is to prune a “cave” into the side of it. This “grotto” can be used to place appropriate sized statuary (say, a Buddha or St. Frances) or to plant a smaller evergreen shrub with contrasting color foliage. We offer several small shrubs that work very well in this role and have examples in our display garden. One of our granite Japanese lanterns or a colorful evergreen container planting (described elsewhere in this newsletter) would also look good in this context. Statuary, containers, and lanterns look best in the garden when placed on a slightly raised flat stone, which adds drama. You guessed it, we also offer slightly raised flat stones!

Plantings to attract birds will also add interest and fun as well. General purpose bird seed attracts many kinds of birds, but some of the most beautiful and sweetest singers require specialized feeders. We have tried several kinds of humming bird feeders. By far the most effective has been the simple glass Perky Pet style with red flower like arms. One part sugar dissolved in 4 parts warm water, then cooled is the best formula. No need to add that silly red stuff— the red colored feeder arms do the attracting. Fill the feeders with only enough sugar water for 3 days, then empty, wash and refill. The little beggars only like the mixture when it is fresh and old mixture grows nasty stuff.

Gold Finches and Pine Siskins will come to a thistle seed feeder. We offer tube thistle feeders that require the birds to hang upside down to get the seed. Watching bird acrobatics is amusing and the design keeps other birds from using the feeder. Fresh seed is needed here too. Hang the feeder under a roof or overhang to keep the seed dry or use one of the dome-shaped “squirrel bafflers” we offer. Don’t worry about the feeders planting thistles in your garden. The seed has been heated so it won’t germinate.

Cedar Waxwings prefer fresh fruit and berries. We attract them with our Montmorency cherry tree. It has beautiful white flowers and plenty of red fruit—enough for several pies and jam for us with leftovers to feed the birds. Other plants to attract the cedar waxwings, are Mountain Ash and Blueberries. A garden without birds is missing the color, movement, music and humor that make it worth cleaning and restocking the feeders.

In addition to food, birds also need shelter. Flowering quince or hawthorn trees are good choices. Their density and thorns provide great cover for small birds protecting them from predators such as cats and hawks. Some hawthorns also produce berries that serve as food. Finally a source of fresh water attracts birds (and butterflies). Place bird spas in the open away from cover for predators. Choose a bird spa with shallow water and gently sloping sides. We offer several beautiful and bird approved designs.

Do My Plants have Cooties?

We can identify many common diseases and pests you may find in your garden. But your best source of information is Master Gardener Clinics sponsored by the WSU Extension Service. They’ll want to see a sample. To find times and locations for clinics (or to become a Master Gardener yourself) contact your County Extension Agent. If the folks at the clinic can’t identify a disease or insect they can send a sample to WSU for a more definitive answer. Remember that incorrect cultural practices rather than disease or insects cause most plant problems. Master Gardeners can help you with that too, unless you’re like those of us who have always found it hard to admit that the culprit can be seen in the mirror. Master Gardener numbers:

Thurston County 360.786.5445 x7908 Lewis County 360.740.1212 Grays Harbor 360.482.2934

Ed Hume! Ciscoe Morris! and Marianne Binnetti!

(may walk past our booth)

In a shameless effort to infect more people with the fine gardening obsession, Following is a list of home and garden shows for the remainder of this year. The little logo for Laels Moon Garden  indicates we plan to have a booth at the show.

Home and Garden Show at the Fairgrounds in Elma WA. Saturday May 20 10 AM to 5 PM and Sunday May 21st 10 AM to 4 PM. Sponsored by the Master Gardeners of Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties <http://graysharbor.wsu.edu/MG/>

Pt. Defiance Garden Show in Tacoma, Friday, Saturday and Sunday June 2-4, 2006
Sponsored by the Metro Parks Foundation <http://ptdefianceflowershow.com/>
We have advance purchase adult tickets available at the nursery for \$12.00 through May 28th.

 Olympia Master Builders Home and Garden Show at St Martin's University in Lacey
Friday Sept 8, Saturday Sept 9 and Sunday Sept 10. <http://www.omb.org/index.html>

 Secret Garden Fall Festival at 18431 Elderberry in Rochester featuring antiques, collectables and garden stuff. (360) 273-9737 for information. Friday October 6, Saturday October 7 and Saturday October 8. Son Dan will have a booth featuring rock creations and our plants.

Dates for 2007 – Mark your Calendar

Tacoma Home and Garden Show—Tacoma Dome January 31 through February 4, 2007
Sponsored by the O'Laughlin Trade Shows <http://www.oloughlintradeshows.com/ots-shows.html>

Northwest Flower and Garden Show—Seattle Convention Center February 14-18, 2007
Sponsored by Salmon Bay Events <http://www.gardenshow.com/nw/index.html>

Portland Home and Garden Show at the Portland Expo Center February 21-25, 2007
Sponsored by the O'Laughlin Trade Shows <http://www.oloughlintradeshows.com/ots-shows.html>

Yard, Garden and Patio Show at the Portland Convention Center February 23-25, 2007
Sponsored by the Oregon Association of Nurseries <http://www.oan.org/index.cfm>

 Home and Garden Show at Southwest Washington Fairgrounds in Centralia, March 23-25, 2007
Sponsored by Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce <http://www.chamberway.com/index.asp>

 Nisqually Valley Home and Garden Show at Yelm Middle School, March 31 and April 1, 2007.
Sponsored by Yelm Chamber of Commerce www.nisquallyhomeshow.com

 Garden and Gift Show at St. Martin's College in Olympia. 2007 dates to be announced, usually late April or early May. Sponsored by Jr. League of Olympia <http://www.jlolympia.org/>

Good to Have Friends

Thanks to all of you who sent a friend to the nursery. It is so nice to hear someone tell us that, "My friend sent me and told me I had to visit your nursery because you have such good plants!" Its nice to know we are making someone happy.



Like Visiting Nurseries?

Pick up a copy of the Specialty Nursery Guide at our nursery or visit www.specialtynurseries.org website. It contains listings for about 90 nurseries in western Washington, what they stock and how to find them, including maps Don't leave home without it.

Try to Contain Yourself

Many folks think of container gardening as a summer only thing that is over when their floriferous annuals bite it because of cold fall weather. But it doesn't have to be that way. You can have colorful container plantings all year around by using plants with evergreen (or evergold, or everburgundy, or everpeach, etc.) foliage. Container gardens are portable, allow invasive plants to be controlled or tender plants to be moved into shelter when needed. We have some samples already planted at the nursery to show you how. We also have lots of colorful foliage plants and many colorful frost proof containers to let you create your own.



Start with a frost proof container in your choice of color that is wider at the top than at the bottom. Frost proof ceramic containers have thick walls and are double fired so the clay does not absorb water. You can also use plastic containers that are less expensive, but lack the class and color choices of ceramic. Terracotta pots are not suitable, they absorb water and flake away when they freeze. Be sure the container has adequate drainage, if not drill some holes so the plants won't be waterlogged.

Avoid pots with narrow tops, they don't let the soil expand upward if it freezes. On that note, here's a trick that has worked for us for several years. Line the *inside* of your container with bubble pack. This provides some insulation, but more importantly it provides a small space for the soil to expand when it freezes. Freezing soil can crack even a frost proof pot. Bubble pack has a flat and a bubble side. Put the bubble side toward the pot, this traps more air. There is no need to line the bottom of the pot with bubble pack. Pressure on the bottom will move the soil upward where it is free to expand in a wide-mouth pot. Another way to handle the expansion problem is to plant in a plastic nursery pot and put that inside of a ceramic container so the nursery pot is hidden. We have lots of various sized plastic pots at the nursery to fit almost any ceramic pot. Some are free for the asking, others are priced based upon our cost.

Use a quality potting soil that retains moisture uniformly and drains well. The potting mix should be uniform all the way to the bottom. Gravel in the bottom of the pot is not a good idea. University research has shown that such gravel actually *impedes* drainage. Fill the container as you plant it, but leave the final potting soil level about an inch below the top of the pot so you can water it without running it over. In spring and mid-summer add a slow release fertilizer.

Once the pot is ready, select your evergreen plants to color coordinate with your container and its surroundings. Choose plants with similar light and water needs for the same container. Then it's the Chinese menu approach. Choose one from Column A and 3 from column B and as many as you want from Column C until the container is full.

Column A—Plant something tall and striking in the center of the pot to draw the eye upwards. Phormium “Platt's Black” with dark bronze broad grass like leaves, Carex buchananii (a reddish tan grass), Choisya “Sundance” bright chartreuse yellow glossy foliage, Choisya “Aztec Pearl” Green glossy foliage, white flowers in spring, Corokia cotoneaster with its black contorted limbs, small green and silver leaves or Corylus avellana contorta (contorted filbert) with its gnarly branches, winter catkins and summer distorted leaves are all good choices for the center. Dwarf Conifers or some varieties of Euphorbia would also work.

Column B—plant at least three different spreading or “fluffy” evergreen plants around the tall center plant. Good plants for this would be: Euonymus “Emerald Gaiety” with bright green and white foliage, Euonymus “Emerald and Gold” with bright green and gold foliage, any of several varieties of Heuchera: “Lime Rickey” has bright lime green foliage, “Peach Melba” has bright peach foliage, “Snow Angel” has green foliage speckled white with coral flowers in spring, and “Obsidian” has almost black foliage. Ornamental grasses such as Festuca ‘Elijah Blue’ or Carex ‘Evergold’ are other possibilities.

Finally Column C—add some plants that cascade or droop over the edge of the container to soften the look. Examples include: Helianthemum—many varieties with green or bluish foliage and pink, yellow, red, or orange flowers in spring, Liriope evergreen grassy leaves with blue or white flowers in summer, Ophiopogon nigra (black mondo grass) contrasts nicely against brightly colored pots, Arabis variegata with its variegated leaves and white flowers in spring or thymes for evergreen foliage and fragrance.

Water your container well and often. Remember containers dry out faster. Locate it on a deck, patio or near a walkway where it gets the light and rain. Enjoy it every day year around. If you must, you can plant some annuals in there each spring. Although they have lots of flowers, we don't sell annuals. ("Is this a perennial that comes back year after year?" asked the customer. "No. It's an annual that dies and *you* come back." said the nurseryman.) We'd prefer that our customers came back for some other reason than that their purchases died.

Update on Test Plants

This was a good winter for testing plants for hardiness (we had a few days of 12 degrees) and ability to tolerate a wide variety of conditions that seemed to change daily. Many plants did better than expected and just need a little tidying up. Some of our container-grown hebes, will need a haircut and TLC, although the in-ground ones did fine. One new (to us) plant we especially liked this year was pernettya, an evergreen shrub related to gaultheria (salal and wintergreen). It is covered with berries and has a nice tight growth habit. We've read that it can be a bit invasive, but we have not seen any evidence of that. And in some tough growing conditions, a vigorous plant like this is needed. Another one, that did well, was the Polygala Kaminski, an evergreen groundcover with bright pea like flowers in spring. Our Musa bajoo (hardy bananas) took a hit and will be trimmed back to the ground to await new root growth. Our Davidia (Dove tree) and Aralia elata 'Variegata' wintered well without any damage. The Embothrium (Chilean fire tree) shows a bit of cold damage on the leaves but it is now pushing new growth and is blooming.



**Bethany tours the garden
deciding which plants to
smite to the compost pile**

Useful Web Sites

There is a wealth of gardening information available on the Internet. You can spend days searching them out (as we have) or here are a few we find particularly useful.

<http://gardening.wsu.edu/> - Gardening in Western Washington, Presented by WSU extension service

<http://pubs.wsu.edu/cgi-bin/pubs/index.html> - WSU extension publications, click on "plants" in left margin.

<http://pep.wsu.edu/hortsense/> - Home gardener fact sheets for managing plant problems

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/enews/> - Sign up for a monthly e-mail newsletter

<http://eesc.oregonstate.edu/agcomwebfile/edmat/default.html> - OSU extension publications

<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/1plants.htm#volume%201>—Landscape plants images, ID and info

<http://www.greatplantpicks.org/> - Listing of plants specifically chosen for NW gardens by "the experts"

<http://www.camellias-ac.com/> Camellia Society web site

[Http://www.hgtv.com/hgtv/pac_cntn_988/test/0..HGTV_22056_44966.00.html](http://www.hgtv.com/hgtv/pac_cntn_988/test/0..HGTV_22056_44966.00.html) - H&G TV's Gardening by the yard

<http://www.timberpress.com/index.cfm> - Publisher of books about gardening and more

<http://www.king5.com/homeandgarden/ciscoe/> - see what Ciscoe is up to

There You Have It

Now go out and enjoy your own or someone else's garden, and get those weeds pulled!

Laels Moon Garden Spring Newsletter #2 - May 2006

LAELS MOON GARDEN BUCK\$	
<p>Save \$5.00 on a purchase of \$25.00 or more of regular price items with this coupon</p>	
<p>Offer Expires June 10, 2006</p>	<p>Only One Per Customer Good at Nursery Only</p>
<p>17813 Moon Rd SW, Rochester WA 98579 (360) 273-9567</p>	
<p>Over 800 Varieties of Large and Small Trees, Ornamental Shrubs and Perennials - We Deliver! LOOK For our sign, 2 miles West of Rochester On Highway 12 - Worth the Short Drive! From Olympia, Take I-5 South to Exit 88 From Centralia take I-5 North to Exit 88B Go 6 miles West on Hwy 12 to Moon Rd, Turn Right Open Thursday through Sunday 10 AM to 6 PM March through October Winter: Most Weekends 10 AM to 5 PM, Call first. Other times by Appointment.</p>	