



LAELS MOON GARDEN

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Thank You!

It seems like only yesterday that we were two recovering state employees who had the cockamamie dream to start a nursery. Thanks to you our customers we are beginning our sixth year and we have grown to the point where we can publish a newsletter. We hope to provide you with useful gardening information in an entertaining way (Of course we will also do some thinly veiled, shameless merchandising to help defray the printing and mailing costs.) Depending on your response, we hope to publish another edition in the fall. As a “thank you” gift and an inducement to read our first edition, we have included a discount certificate in this issue.

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. Hopefully, we will not display our profound grasp of the obvious too often! You are encouraged to share your copy with a gardening friend who is not already on our mailing list. Of course, if you consider it to be just another piece of junk mail, let us know and we will remove you from our mailing list forthwith.

To Water or Not to Water

With our relatively dry winter and talk of drought next summer, we wanted to share some thoughts about watering your landscape that we hope will be useful.

- ◇ Start checking moisture needs early. There is often a time in late March/early April when skies are overcast but it rains little if any. Plants are beginning to grow in this period and can get stressed but will not show it until the first few really warm days.
- ◇ Water deeply but less frequently. Frequent watering for a few minutes at a time encourages shallow root growth that dries out quickly in hot weather.
- ◇ Plants in gravelly or sandy soil dry out faster than plants in clay. Clay may waterlog from an amount of water that is insufficient for plants in looser soil. Whatever the type of soil, mix lots of organic matter with the native soil when planting—it holds more water in loose soil and it loosens clay.
- ◇ Trees and shrubs planted for less than two years require more water (deeply once a week in hot weather) than those that are well established. Automatic sprinkling systems often do not provide enough water in hot weather for newly planted plants. Supplemental hose watering is a good idea.
- ◇ Put the water where the roots are. Watering at ground level is most efficient. Water on leaves evaporates. The fine feeder roots that absorb water tend to be around the “drip line” of a tree or shrub (the plant sheds rain to where its feeder roots are). Plantings in containers or on slopes drain better than those on flat ground do so they usually require more frequent watering.
- ◇ Even “drought tolerant” plants should be deeply watered their first two years in the ground. They are only drought tolerant after they get a full-sized root system.
- ◇ Mulching around plants helps to keep roots cool and to reduce evaporation. Don’t mulch within three inches of the plant’s trunk. Voles can tunnel under the mulch and eat off the bark to kill the plant. Voles don’t like to go out in the open!
- ◇ Don’t wait until plants show stress before you water. Some plants will recover, but many (especially evergreens) don’t show stress until it’s too late.

Those #@!\$%! Slugs

Although slugs may munch your garden at any time of year, they are worst in the cool, moist days of spring and fall. We are often asked how to control them. The most common way is to use baits. Commercial baits are of two types. The ones made with iron phosphate (Sluggo and Worry Free) are effective and safe for pets and wildlife. They can be sprinkled on the ground without any particular precautions. We use, recommend, and offer Sluggo. Baits made with metaldehyde (Cory's and Deadline) are effective and sometimes less expensive, but they are poisonous to pets, wildlife and you. If you choose to use metaldehyde baits, make sure they are accessible to slugs but not to pets, wildlife, or children. A way to do this is to put the bait under a board or decorative piece of driftwood on the ground or put it in a small container with dime-sized holes for slug entry. Use commercial baits sparingly. Although they are supposed to be rainproof, a light application every couple of weeks is more effective than a heavy application once. Of course, never use metaldehyde baits around garden vegetables. (Duh!)

Beer is an organic bait that can be used. Put it in a covered container with dime sized holes above the liquid. A covered container is needed to keep rain and sprinklers from diluting the beer too much. We have had some positive reports about the effectiveness of this method but it can be expensive and I think it would give the beer rather more body than I like. Whether you use organic or commercial baits put them a couple of feet away from the nearest plants you want to protect. They actually attract slugs, so you want to attract them *away from* your plants.

Here's a more direct organic slug control. Place boards or driftwood in your garden. They make great hiding places for slugs, which can be collected from there, sealed in a plastic bag and put in the garbage. Collecting the slugs should be done daily. Otherwise, you will have created a slug resort in the middle of your garden.

Finally, for those of you with real killer instinct, there are two other direct ways to control slugs. Sprinkling salt on them is effective, but introducing salt into your garden can harm your plants. Another search and destroy approach is to shoot individual slugs with a squirt gun filled with a strong solution of ammonia and water. But aim between the eyes, they may charge if they're wounded.

Spring Cleaning for Evergreen Ferns and Hellebores

There are many kinds of beautiful evergreen ferns and hellebores that make your garden look more "alive" in the winter when deciduous perennials have been cut to the ground. But these evergreen perennials often get a ratty look in early spring. Many hellebores get winter spots on the leaves. The old growth on evergreen ferns often tends to sprawl and/or turn brown. For both of these plants, the new growth begins at the center of the plant. New sprouts are easily identified in late winter or early spring. When the new growth is just beginning to swell, cut off *all* of the old foliage even if it's still green. This does not hurt the plant at all. Both hellebores and ferns will produce all new luxurious foliage without any blemishes. Try it!

Plant Your Own Eden

Although many gardeners don't consciously think about it, gardening is an art form. You use the same elements of line, color, texture and form as would a painter or sculptor. You also have other elements (e.g., fragrance, sounds, temperature, birds and butterflies) that other artists don't have. Another difference is that gardening deals with living things, so your work of art doesn't stay "finished." The joy is in the imaginative artistic process as much as in the final product. The following is the first of a series of garden design suggestions we plan to include in our periodic newsletter.

Multiple Season Plants

One way to keep your garden beautiful year around is to use plants with multiple season interest. Don't just think about flowers. Consider also foliage, bark, fragrance and form. Some plants change their appearance dramatically at different times of the year. Others come into their glory during the winter when many plants

are dormant or drab. We have over 800 kinds of plants in our nursery, so we can't describe all of their year around characteristics. Using our impeccable taste, we have selected the following for description here, but we offer many other multiple-season plants. (And, there are those few folks who consider our taste to be quite peccable.)

Coral Bark Maple (*Acer palmatum* 'Sango Kaku.') This relatively small upright tree has red bark year around. The bark is brightest in fall and winter and is best in full sun. It has small light green leaves that turn a reliable golden yellow in fall. The foliage always contrasts beautifully with the bark. Like all Japanese maples it requires good drainage and resents soggy ground. It grows to be 20' tall in time.

Contorted Filbert (*Corylus avellana contorta* "Harry Lauder's Walking Stick.") Because of its curiously contorted branches festooned with many long catkins, this shrub is at its most decorative in winter. Ours are grown on their own root so all of the suckers will also be contorted. Avoid less expensive grafted ones because the suckers will be upright and straight.) Unpruned, this shrub can get to 8' x 8' in time but it can be kept smaller with regular pruning. Cut branches make nice additions to flower arrangements. Grown in a large frost proof stoneware pot, it is a showy winter deck plant.

Dwarf Deodar Cedars (*Cedrus deodora* dwarf varieties.) Conifer fanciers have selected many varieties of deodar cedars that remain small--unlike the species, which will become a large tree. "Creampuff" is a beautiful one with blue-green internal needles and almost white new growth at the branch tips. We have one in our display garden that is about 7' tall. We shear the branch tips in late winter, which causes it to grow still more branches with the beautiful light tips when new growth starts. Similar ones are "Deep Cove" and "Snow Sprite" which we grow as spreading shrubs by removing any branch that would become an upright leader. They could also be trained into small trees by staking up a leader. They grow very slowly so they are easily kept in bounds. In tree form, they can get to be 10' tall in time. Shrub form can be kept at 3' x 4'. All are beautiful year around, but stunning in spring when the new growth comes out.

"Winter Flame" and "Midwinter Fire" Dogwoods (*Cornus sanguinea* varieties.) These two named varieties are light years more beautiful than other red-twig dogwoods. In the summer, both have yellow-green foliage and small clusters of tiny white flowers. They come into their own in winter when the leaves fall off and the stems become very bright. "Winter Flame" has bright orange stems and "Midwinter Fire" has bright yellow stems with bright red tips. Both are especially stunning against a dark evergreen background or planted with white barked birches. Both should be cut back nearly to the ground in early spring when new growth begins. This keeps them at about 5' x 5' and causes them to produce all new branches which will be brightest the following winter.

Cryptomeria "Elegans" and "Elegans Nana" (*Cryptomeria japonica* varieties.) These are two varieties of evergreen that are often sold as "Japanese plume cedars." They both have soft fluffy blue-green summer needles that turn deep burgundy in winter. Although they are similar in foliage they are quite different in habit. "Elegans Nana" is a shrub that eventually grows to 4' x 4'. Cryptomeria "Elegans" is a small tree that will grow to 30' x 10' in time.

Cryptomeria "Sekkan Suji" (*Cryptomeria japonica* variety.) This is another variety of Japanese cedar that has dark green inner needles and lemon yellow branch tips. The bright colors remain year around, but containerized and newly planted trees sometimes take on an amber color in winter. Weather in the 'teens can cause some frost damage to branch tips, but the plant recovers quickly in spring. We shear ours in spring to keep it at 7' x 4' and to cause it to produce more bright branch tips.

Pyracantha (*Pyracantha* hybrids "Mojave" and "Lalandei.") This versatile evergreen shrub can be grown as a hedge plant or espaliered flat against a wall or fence to provide color for long periods. Grow in full sun and do not overwater to avoid possible diseases. We grow the "Mojave" variety as a 3' hedge in our display garden, but it can grow to 6' if left unpruned. In spring it has many clusters of small white flowers

against the dark green foliage. The flowers turn into clusters of bright orange berries in fall. The bright berries remain on the plant all winter until the robins return in spring. Then they disappear in about a week! We offer “Mojave” in shrub form or already espaliered on a 3’ x 3’ trellis. We also offer the “Lalandei” variety which can be trained to a taller (6’ - 8’) hedge, espalier or shrub.

Corylopsis (*Corylopsis spicata* and *C. pauciflora*.) These are two beautiful species of winter hazel that bloom in late winter (before they leaf out) when everyone is hungry for spring flowers. They grow relatively slowly at first, but can become 6’ in time. Spike Winter Hazel (*C. spicata*) has short clusters of 6 to 12 pale yellow flowers at joints along the stems and rounded blue-green leaves with an interesting texture. Buttercup Winter Hazel (*C. pauciflora*) has green textured leaves and smaller clusters of pale yellow flowers. It also grows slower to a slightly smaller ultimate size than *C. spicata*. Both plants prefer partial shade and look good against a dark evergreen background. Fall color for both species is a pleasant yellow.

Benches, Birdbaths, Containers, Lanterns and Statuary add focal points and class to your garden year around. Place benches in partial shade near something to view while sitting on them. Place lanterns or statuary in niches in the garden or at pathway junctions. If you have more than one lantern or statue, place them far enough apart so they won’t compete—ideally out of sight from each other. Lanterns and statuary can be placed on a flat stone to add height and emphasis. Place birdbaths in the sun and away from bushes that can provide cover for predators like cats. Container plantings are great on patios and decks.

The beautiful roofed gate, stone benches and stone birdbath in our display garden were built by Northwest Projects. (This is a blatant plug for a company owned by Larry’s son, Dan, who’d be delighted to build you some too!) At the nursery this year we have expanded our offerings of quality containers, birdbaths and lanterns. We now carry several different styles of carved granite Japanese lanterns. We have replaced the cement lanterns in our display garden with samples of our granite lanterns, so we are offering our used lanterns at bargain prices—some of the used lanterns already have moss that gives the patina of age so prized in a Japanese garden.

In addition to lanterns, we now offer beautiful stoneware, mosaic and natural stone birdbaths, chair side mosaic tables and mosaic stepping stones. We offer many more styles of frost-resistant stoneware containers this year too. Oh yes, we also have blown glass moon and dragonfly garden stakes that glow in the dark with beautiful swirling colors. These last are really cool and not nearly as tacky as they sound!

You Can Special Order Hardy Plants With Us!

The chances are you can meet your plant needs from our extensive offerings already on hand, but sometimes you may have heard about plants we haven’t. (As dedicated plant geeks, we are *always* looking for new hardy plants to test and perhaps to offer.) So if you don’t see what you are looking for let us know and we may be able to find it for you. We have many contacts among specialty growers and we make buying trips almost weekly in the spring. Sometimes special plants are hard to find so we maintain a “wish list” to make sure the search will continue..

There is no obligation or charge for our search, and if we find your special plant we will call you with a price and description before we order it. If you want the plant at the price offered, we will ask for your credit card number before we buy your plant. If you don’t want the plant at the price offered, just say “Forgettaboutit!” and you’re off the hook.

When asking us to search for a plant, it is helpful if you give us the full botanical name: frequently two unpronounceable words printed in italics (for the genus and species) *and* the variety name, (usually shown in quotes.) We are not among those who wish to turn gardening into a priesthood by insisting on *only* botanical names, but they *are* more precise and we want to get exactly what you want.

Great Plant Picks



As we have in past years, we continue to offer many of the plants chosen as Great Plant Picks by a panel of gardening experts. The panel chooses trees, shrubs and perennials that do well in the Northwest and are showy, hardy, available, non-invasive, and relatively easy to grow. (The full list of criteria is too detailed for this newsletter.) For the most part, we agree with their recommendations, but we occasionally veto a few based on our own arbitrary and capricious judgment about attractiveness, uniqueness, hardiness, or availability. (Hey, it's *our* nursery!) This is a very useful program and you can find their complete selection criteria, photos and lists of their current and former picks on the web at www.greatplantpicks.org.

Got Some Weird Bug or Disease?

We can help identify common diseases and insects 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 our mirror.

Thurston County 360.786.5445 x7908, Lewis County 360.740.1212

Avoid Guilt! Feel Noble!

Plants that come from growers are frequently pot bound so we re-pot them upon arrival. This time of year we have a "pot party" nearly every day. Nursery pots are becoming very expensive. One of the ways we keep prices down is to recycle pots. As confirmed tree huggers, it also makes us feel noble to keep them out of the landfills. When we sell plants, particularly ones in large pots, we try to extract a promise from customers to return the pots for reuse. If you have a garage full of pots you have promised to return, why not cleanse your conscience and assuage your deep feelings of guilt by bringing them back now? Then you can feel noble like we do. 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 and larger pots. The smaller ones are not useable and might as well be in your garbage as ours. We aren't *that* noble.

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, we will have a booth at the following home and garden shows this year:

Garden and Gift Show sponsored by Jr. League of Olympia at St. Martin's College in Olympia
Friday May 13, 10 AM to 8 PM, Saturday May 14 10 AM to 6 PM and Sunday May 15 10 AM to 4 PM.

Home and Garden Show sponsored by the Master Gardeners of Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties at the Fairgrounds in Elma WA. Saturday May 21 10 AM to 5 PM and Sunday May 22nd 10 AM to 4 PM

Olympia Master Builders Home and Garden Show at St Martin's in Olympia
Friday Sept 30, Saturday Oct 1 and Sunday Oct 2.

Dates for next year – Mark your Calendar

Home and Garden Show sponsored by Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce at Southwest Washington Fairgrounds in Centralia, Friday, Saturday and Sunday March 24-26, 2006

Nisqually Valley Home and Garden Show sponsored by Yelm Chamber of Commerce at Yelm Middle School, Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2, 2006.

When is a Good time to Plant?

Many people ask when is a good time to plant? Like pruning where the answer is “Whenever your clippers are clean and sharp,” the answer is simple. In the Pacific Northwest, it is a good time to plant whenever you can dig the hole. With our maritime climate, the ground rarely freezes hard so we can plant year around. The advantage to planting in the fall and spring is that in a normal year, we get several months of free watering from the rain.

Some confusion about when to plant may involve the *transplanting* of plants. Generally plants should only be *dug up and moved* when they are dormant. Once the deciduous trees have lost their leaves, it is generally safe to transplant live plants. Most transplanting can be safely done from November through February. Digging an actively growing plant can seriously damage the root system and result in severe transplant shock or death. Rhododendrons, with their shallow root system are an exception and may be transplanted all year except when they are blooming, provided they are kept well watered after transplanting.

At our nursery, the plants are grown outside and are thus hardened off to our climate. You can plant them year round. Seedlings and annuals (we don't stock these) that are greenhouse grown should not be set out until danger of frost is past. We carry over 800 varieties of plants and they may be bare root, balled and burlapped, in root control bags or potted.

- ◇ **Bare root** trees and shrubs are plants that were field grown, dug and have the soil removed from the roots for transporting. Roots should be kept moist until the tree or shrub is planted. Bare root plants are normally stored in bark, sawdust or cold storage.
- ◇ **Balled and burlapped plants (b&b)** are also field grown and when dug their root ball is wrapped in burlap and tied with twine or nails to contain the roots and keep them moist until planting.
- ◇ **Root control bags** are another method used to contain the roots. Plants are field grown inside a bag and are dug in fall and winter. Root control bags must be removed before planting.
- ◇ **Potted, containerized or canned** plants have their roots controlled by the container.

All of these methods of handling the plants contain the roots without damage and with the exception of bare root, allows them to be planted year round. Bare root should be planted or potted in spring. When planting please be sure to follow good planting techniques.

- ◆ Plant the tree at the same depth that it was originally.
- ◆ Loosen the roots *gently* so the plant knows it is free to grow.
- ◆ Cut and remove any twine or other restriction around the trunk. The burlap can be left or removed, it will rot. If the plants roots are growing through the burlap, it is better to leave the burlap on.
- ◆ Water thoroughly at planting time and at least weekly thereafter in warm weather until the plant is established. In gravelly or rocky soils, water more often.
- ◆ If staking is required, use two stakes and tie plant loosely so it moves in the wind. The movement alerts the plant to produce hormones to strengthen its trunk.
- ◆ Enjoy your plant as it consumes carbon dioxide and produces oxygen.

If you have any questions, please ask us for a copy of the extension bulletin on Planting Landscape Plants.

Reminder: All our remaining bare root trees and shrubs—this includes fruit, shade and flowering trees and shrubs—are 10 % off the regular price. Once we pay somebody to pot ‘em, we charge more! We can’t find anyone to do this work for free.

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.

Yechy Soil? Got you Down, Worried About Your Plants Well-Being?

There are a wide variety of soil types in the greater Rochester Suburban area (Olympia, Elma, Centralia, Chehalis, Yelm) and not all are good. In fact some are just plain awful. Rocky, gravelly soil drains fast and has little nutritive value; clay soils sometimes seem never to drain and some of you poor folks have rock gardens without adding rocks. Whatever your soil type, a solution is to add organic matter. Mixing organic matter in the planting area will improve your soil texture, enrich the soil and improve drainage in clay soils or water retention in sandy soils.

There are a wide variety of materials you can choose: compost, bark, composted manure and many types of planting mixes and topsoil. Our favorite is 'Claybuster Soil Amendment' from Little Hanford Farms in Centralia. We use this at the nursery and offer it for sale by the yard, loaded in your truck. You may arrange to have larger quantities delivered right to your yard by calling Little Hanford Farms at 360.736.6673, fax 360.736.1342.

Claybuster is a combination of recycled ingredients including yard waste, poultry and livestock bedding, bark and gypsum. It is composted at 145 degrees, aged, dried and weed free. Composting organic materials generates heat. You may have seen the steaming pile in our nursery. The soil mix needs to be watered thoroughly BEFORE planting. It usually takes 3 thorough soakings to rehydrate the mix.

Did You Know That We Test Plants?

We love all plants, but they don't all love us. Often we hear about a great plant but before we offer it for sale, we like to test it to see if they will actually grow for us in our wet, windy and somewhat cooler area.

Some of the test plants, we are now able to offer include:



Larry contemplates the demise of yet another expensive test plant

Blue Poppies (Meconopsis) very limited supply
Chusquea Culeo - a Chilean clumping bamboo for full sun
Cimicifuga - late summer fragrant white spikes with dark foliage
Daphne Lawrence Crocker & Summer Ice—evergreen & fragrant
Hardy figs (Ficus) - no fruit yet, but we're hopeful
Some Hebes—mostly small leaved ones
Libertia - an evergreen/orangey ornamental grass
Parahebe, an evergreen, succulent with eucalyptus like leaves
Certain varieties of New Zealand Flax (Phormium)
Phylliopsis - a heather like plant that blooms all summer
Toad lilies (Tricyrtis) - mid-summer blooms with freckles
Windmill Palm (Trachycarpus fortunei) - big tropical fronds

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

<http://www.camellias-acsc.com/culture.html> - Camellia Society web site

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

There You Have It

That's your reading assignment for today boys and girls. Now go outside and play in the garden!

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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.**

Laels Moon Garden Spring Newsletter #1 - April 2005