



# GARDEN DELIGHTS

Issaquah Garden Club Newsletter—February 2008  
Michele Peltonen, Editor

At the January meeting, members really ate up Gen Keyser's presentation on heirloom vegetables. Since there was such interest I thought I would include additional information in this edition of the newsletter. - Michele (PS. Sorry for the bad pun. I couldn't resist.)

## HEIRLOOMS

In a normal grocery store there are few varieties of each type of produce. Sometimes only one. As Gen showed us, there are many (sometimes hundreds!) of varieties of each. But at an industrial scale of growing and selling, variety isn't economical. On top of that, the varieties that are offered have usually been selected over time for uniformity of size, shipability, ease of harvest, etc. Taste, smell and color get lost in the process. Not having suffered this fate, heirlooms offer a feast for all the senses.

But the importance of heirlooms isn't just about taste. The lack of variety in commercial agriculture leaves the industry, and the people who rely on it, subject to large scale disaster. Monocultures are vulnerable to catastrophic epidemics and infestations. In contrast, heirlooms are a genetic bank account from

## MONOCULTURE



which to draw diversity. Each variety has adapted through a combination of natural and human selection to meet countless local conditions around the world. As a result, old varieties can be used by plant breeders seeking beneficial traits such as hardiness, vigor and disease resistance, to combat the challenge posed by rapidly evolving pests and diseases.

The localized growing characteristics of heirlooms are also a boon to home gardeners. There are so many varieties that it is more likely to find a variety of a particular plant suited to your growing conditions.

If you are serious about saving your own seeds, the most highly recommended book is *Seed to Seed* (2nd ed.) by Suzanne Ashworth. But if you are like me and can't see yourself letting some of the lettuce go to seed, there are lots of great mail order sources. Some suggested by Gen are: Seed Savers Exchange, Heirloom Acres Seeds, Territorial Seed, Seeds of Change, Bountiful Gardens and Abundant Life Seeds. All these suppliers have easy to find websites. (Or contact me for phone numbers if you would like to order a catalogue and aren't so handy on the computer.)

## GENETIC DIVERSITY



You can also find heirlooms varieties on the seed racks. Even Burpee markets heirlooms now. Watch for the words heirloom or open pollinated on the package. You can't get in trouble saving these. Locally you might check Grange Supply on Gilman Blvd. And Seed Savers Exchange seeds are available at Walt's Organic Fertilizer Co. on Leary Way in Seattle.

## **SLOW FOOD vs. LOCAL FOOD**

Gen mentioned the "Slow Food" movement (which really did start in Italy in resistance to fast food). You may have also heard of the "Local Food" movement. These are not mutually exclusive ideas. Indeed, there is a great deal of overlap.

Slow Food objectives include the preservation of heirloom varieties and heritage breeds and the celebration local culinary traditions. Local Food objectives focus somewhat more on economic and environmental issues. But both stress local supply, sustainability and eating within season, among many common goals.

I can barely scratch the surface of this topic here. If you are interested in learning more, the online encyclopedia Wikipedia will get you started with a good description of both movements and information on related topics such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) buying programs. [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

Here are some websites and books on this subject that you might find interesting.

**Puget Sound Fresh** Our very own King County resource for putting farmers and consumers

## **GARDEN MEMORY—in tribute to James Figgins**

*Since my husband's passing, I have a new garden story. When we lived in northern California, I planted dozens of roses. Every time I came home from the nursery, there was James, post-hole digger and shovel in hand, smile on his face, asking where I wanted the next hole. He never complained; just dug a hole for my new rose and admired the finished product. - Janet Figgins*

together. Sign up for their emailing list for monthly news. [www.pugetsoundfresh.org](http://www.pugetsoundfresh.org)

**LocalHarvest** A website putting farmers and consumers together at the national level. Get information or shop for food and natural products. Go to the Events tab to sign up for their "keep me posted" monthly email with information about events and farms in your own area. [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

**Slow Food USA** The American member organization of the Slow Food movement has a wonderful website. And the local Seattle chapter has recently succeeded in having the Ozette potato added to the "Ark of Taste". [www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org)  
[www.slowfoodseattle.org](http://www.slowfoodseattle.org)

## **Recommended Reading**

- The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan
- Harvest for Hope: A Guide to Mindful Eating by Jane Goodall
- Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life by Barbara Kingsolver
- The Botany of Desire: A Plant's Eye View of the World by Michael Pollan

## **GARDEN CLUB EVENTS**

### **February 13<sup>th</sup> – CONTAINER PLANTINGS**

As we look forward to spring just around the corner, many of us are starting to think about what we might want to plant in our hanging baskets and containers this year. At our February meeting, staff from Squak Mountain Nursery will teach us tips for healthy container plantings and suggest ideas for new creations.

