

## June 2024 Newsletter

Happy June!

Conspiring with Nature: Gardens, once created need us. Nature, on the other hand, doesn't. It carries on about its business heedless of us. The seasons move through their cycles, idle winter rousing into downy spring; spring exploding into summer; and summer retiring into fall. Gardening is what we do to wedge ourselves into the rhythms of nature, to attempt to become part of its vast drama.

A garden is a request we make to nature to collaborate with us. Nature may not need a garden, but we do!

Enjoy the summer in your garden!

### ***June Flower of the Month:*** **The Rose**

The rose family (Rosaceae) is made up of more than 100 species of perennial flowering shrubs. Many are cultivated for their beautiful flowers with colors including white, yellow, pink, and red. Most rose species are native to Asia, but some have origins linked to locations in North America, Europe, and Northwest Africa.

Roses are typically grouped into three categories—species, old garden, and modern:

- **Species roses** are those that evolved and adapted naturally over time.
- **Old garden roses** are classified as varieties developed by breeding efforts before the 1860s.
- **Modern roses** are descendants of both groups and varieties developed since the 1860s.

### **Rose Meanings and Symbolism**

The rose has long been a symbol of love, beauty, and affection. Each color rose holds a different meaning. A red rose means 'I love you' and is a sign of romance; pink represents happiness and admiration; a white rose symbolizes innocence and purity; orange means desire and excitement; and yellow represents cheer and happiness, although some folklore considered it to mean jealousy. A red and white rose paired together has come to symbolize unity.

***NO MEETING UNTIL SEPTEMBER:***

Date: Next meet is September 11

Time: 9:30 AM - Set-up

10:00 AM - Business Meeting

10:30 AM - 11:00AM - Social time and snacks

11:00 AM - Program - TBD

12:30 PM - Clean-up

Location: Our Savior Lutheran Church  
745 Front Street South  
Issaquah, WA

Snack Committee:

Hostess: TBD

Committee: TBD

***TIME TO PAY DUES:***

It's that time of year again when we need to pay dues for the next garden club year.

Amount: \$25.00 with or without a contribution to the club in lieu of having a plant sale / fund raiser this spring. Write checks payable to the Issaquah Garden Club.

Send to: Sandra Roberts  
4623 194th Ave SE  
Issaquah, WA 98027-4357

***YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED:***

## ***MAY MEETING SUMMARY:***

The business meeting was fairly brief with the main topic of conversation being about the new requirements for volunteers working at Bellevue Botanical Gardens:

Every five years the program goes through an accreditation process and this year the outcome was new requirements for volunteers. Here is a brief overview of the requirements:

- \*\* Review Bellevue Parks & Community Services Volunteer Handbook and sign attestation that this has been done. Must be an actual signature - either hardcopy or photo of form with signature (mail or email to Colin)

- \*\* Complete form giving BBG permission to manage your data

- \*\* Sign liability waiver

- \*\* YEARLY background check is REQUIRED. This is done through a company called Employers Choice. Submitting some basic information to Colin can get this process started or you can go directly to the company.

This new requirement does not impact our ability to attend functions at BBG such as classes, flower shows and board meetings. These are all things that fall under a "lease agreement" which negates the requirements needed to volunteer.

Program:

Molly Van der Bruch talked about Hummingbirds. Here are some interesting factoids she presented:

There are four species of hummingbirds in the Pacific Northwest. The primary ones we see are Anna (the bigger of the two we see) and Rufous.

The Anna Hummingbirds:

- \*\* Feed on nectar and small insects

- \*\* Males are known for their death defying courtship diversity

- \*\* They do not migrate so are around all year

- \*\* Fortunately their range is expanding probably due to increased plants in gardens that attract them and the abundance of feeders

The Rufous Hummingbirds:

- \*\* Smallest in North America

- \*\* Feed on nectar and small insects

- \*\* Are known to be the most feisty and often chase other hummingbirds away

- \*\* Courtship ritual is very noisy and they exhibit a unique flight pattern of flying in a figure 8 configuration around the female

- \*\* Winter in Mexico so arrive here in late February and stay through March then begin their migration back to Mexico

\*\* Numbers are declining probably due to a decreased amount of open spaces

#### General Hummingbird Facts:

- \*\* Found only in the Western hemisphere
- \*\* Can flap their wings 80X/second, fly backwards, upside down and hover. All of which are unique characteristics
- \*\* Use bills and nails to jab and poke at other hummingbirds but actual injuries are fairly rare
- \*\* They have, relative to their size, the largest brain
- \*\* Excellent memories as to where favorite flowers and feeders are located
- \*\* Females build the nest, lay eggs and sit on them as well as tend the young. They usually hatch two babies at a time
- \*\* Can lower their metabolism by 90% (like at night) but can recover in as little as 20 minutes (without the aid of coffee)
- \*\* Generally sit and rest about 80% of the time
- \*\* Eat their full body weight every day

#### About feeders:

- \*\* Feeder styles vary. Molly recommends a flat saucer style feeder called “Hummingzinger” from the Aspects company
- \*\* A bottle feeder style from “First Nature” is recommended
- \*\* In the cold weather you can either buy a heater to keep the feeder from freezing or have a couple and rotate them inside and out to keep food readily available. One recommended heater can be purchased through “Hummer Hearth”

#### Ants, Wasps & Bee:

- \*\* Use a wasp trap as a sting from a wasp will kill a hummingbird
- \*\* Can also use an ant trap and these can be purchased separately and added to existing feeders
- \*\* Moving the feeder to the shade may also help deter ants, wasps and bees

### **SAVE THE DATES:**

**June 8 - 11, 2024:** Annual Meeting and Flower Show - “Our Extraordinary Earth”

to be held at Little Creek Casino in Shelton

**July 18 - 20, 2025** (Friday, Saturday & Sunday) - Flower Show at Bellevue Botanical Garden

## EDUCATIONAL CORNER

# Why You Should Embrace a Chaotic Garden

Stop trying to achieve a perfect garden and make room for more joy.

Here's a secret: Gardening isn't about plants. Plants don't need us puttering around or deciding where they should live; they do a better job of it on their own. Gardening is about our hopes and expectations: planning a summer yield of tomatoes with nary a bug bite, or a solid hedge of sunflowers that the squirrels won't use as scaffolding. For inspiration, we check out Instagram accounts of flower gardeners holding impossibly large snapdragon bouquets standing in a flower field, or the kitchen potager out of a Meryl Streep movie where the garden was so perfect, it turns out it was achieved using an [entire team of gardeners](#) who glued vegetables in place. Instead of aspiring to an impossible garden standard, I say we embrace chaos gardening as a way to reduce stress and bring fun back to growing things.

## You can't control plants or the weather

The reality is that gardening can get messy. To realize a precise plan you have to be constantly weeding and feeding and pruning and planting, all within the tight confines of the summer season. You can't control the sun or snow or rain in any given year, nor can you do much about viruses or fungus. If a crop fails, it can feel like personal failure. While gardening has been shown to reduce stress, it can also certainly cause it if you are too rigid in your plans, as many new gardeners are. Chaos gardening suggests that you just start sticking plants into empty spaces and see what happens.

## It helps to know about co-planting and invasives

Before you give in to *total* chaos, there are some rules you might want to think about. First, some plants coexist better than others. For instance, fennel does not enjoy the company of other plants. Brassicas prefer to stick together, as do nightshades. But within companion planting are wonderful bedfellows: Cucumbers love being with beans, and onions and tomatoes grow spectacularly together. Sweet alyssum and flowering dill benefit the vegetables around them. While thinking too hard about companion planting can be overwhelming, it can be as simple as looking at the empty space where you're about to plant, say, a cabbage and seeing what's around it. If there's an eggplant, plant the cabbage somewhere else.

You should also know if a particular plant will spread easily, like mint, foxgloves or berry canes, because they can easily take over a space. Invasives like bluebells can seem charming at first, but they're very, very hard to control once they take root. While herbs like dill and parsley can perennialize, meaning they just spread and come back year to year on their own, they don't take over a space and crowd out other plants like mint does. You can use plant identification apps to tell you what you're planting, what's near it and if it will spread.

## If you keep throwing plants at the ground, some are going to stick

What you plant will always be a mix of perennial and annual plants, meaning that some will come back year to year, and some will likely die after a season. It's been my personal experience that if you just keep sticking plants into empty spaces, over time spaces feel fuller as the perennials take hold and you'll find a few plants that should be annuals that perennialize anyway as you're trying them in different spots. That's the thing: Plants are excellent at finding the right spot for themselves.

## Chaos gardening creates less vulnerable plants

By spreading plants out across the garden you eliminate monocultures. This means it will be much harder for a crop to get taken out by a pest or virus, because there isn't one giant target to hit, and the plants are spread out, so problems can't spread as easily. In fact, spreading the plants out is better for soil health and plant health. An entire bed of peas is great, because peas fix nitrogen, but it doesn't benefit any other plants,

like the corn next door that desperately needs nitrogen. But if you interplant, they can benefit each other.

Through chaos gardening the landscape takes on a much more interesting texture of different colors and heights and patterns. Around every corner is a new discovery or delight and plants that aren't doing as well don't make the same impact. If something dies, tear it out and plant something else, doesn't matter what it is.

## Parameters can make chaos feel more comfortable

If you still want some control, give areas themes or loose rules. The area in front of my house is strictly for cutting flowers, but there is no order to what kind. Perennial echinacea mixes with annual zinnias and bulbs of every height and texture. My flower wall along the edge of the property has only one rule: planting is by height, so the tallest plants go at the back. Asparagus and artichokes mix with 16-foot sunflowers and free growing foxgloves and tulips. In the vegetable garden, slow bolting cabbage lives with Egyptian walking onions and shiso, resulting in a show-stopping mix of colors and structure. When the cabbage is done, I yank it out and plant something else that's around. Each empty space is just an opportunity to grow something new. You can even designate some areas for chaos and some for more orderly planting, if it's important to you.

Ultimately, it's important to remember that gardening, while addictive, is supposed to be relaxing. While formal gardens with clean lines and obvious themes are beautiful, entire teams are required to maintain them. If you can relax a little and embrace a little more chaos, you may find more joy in your garden.