

## Ethnobotany Provides Clues to Beargrass Declines



*Daniela Shebitz in the field with son Jonah.*

Imagine being asked exactly where your great grandparents went to gather plant materials and how they managed the land.

This information was an important piece of the puzzle to figure out the changes in beargrass (*Xerophyllum tenax*) communities over time on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. Daniela Shebitz, who recently completed her doctorate at the University of Washington in restoration ecology, worked with members of the Quinault and Skokomish tribes to learn about the decline in beargrass habitat and traditional practices. Dr. Sarah Reichard, Head of Conservation at UW Botanic Gardens, was Shebitz' advisor.

The project started when the tribes reported that it was getting harder to find beargrass, used for making baskets, hats, and other objects. Shebitz used multiple methods to study the problem; an ethnobotanical approach interviewing and working with tribal members, and an experimental approach, with field and greenhouse studies. She found that there was a significant decline in beargrass in low elevations on the Olympic Peninsula. The main factors were found to be fire suppression and illegal harvesting by the floral industry.

Prairies and savannas were dominant forms of vegetation in the Puget Sound lowlands before 1850, and they were maintained through both natural and human-caused fires. Fire suppression followed the movement of tribes onto reservations, and this changed the landscape and knowledge of traditional burning practices.

"My goal was to help cultures continue traditions that would be threatened without the plants available to them," explained Shebitz. "I wanted to make sure the tribes felt their knowledge is important, and help scientists gain a new perspective and show other ways of thinking."

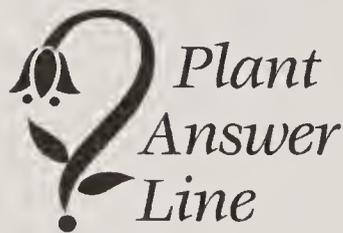
When asked about why prairies and savannas were maintained, Michael Pavel, a Skokomish teacher and a consultant in Shebitz' study replied: "It was a joyous place to be able to gather... This would become our grocery store, but it was also our bedroom and our living room. It was a place that we could worship... And it is what we are hoping to continue because it wasn't so long ago that we forgot, that the people that I grew up with still took it to heart to be able to share because they felt it was meaningful."

Shebitz finished her PhD in the summer of 2006 and has moved to Union, New Jersey to begin a position as Assistant Professor of Ecology at Kean University.

*For more information on Shebitz' beargrass research, photos, and links, visit our website, [www.uwbotanicgardens.org](http://www.uwbotanicgardens.org).*

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## Looking for Repulsive Plants and Other Gardening Questions



The Plant Answer Line is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Call 206-UW-PLANT (206-897-5268), or e-mail your question to: [hortlib@u.washington.edu](mailto:hortlib@u.washington.edu)

Librarians at the Miller Library answer hundreds of gardening questions a month, ranging from the common to the surprising. This past summer questions have been coming in via the phone line, email, and in-person at a record pace; 416 in May, an all-time record, and over 300 each in June and July. The following are a few samples (with responses severely pruned to fit the space).

Q: "I am looking for plants that are so repulsive that wild rabbits, free ranging peacocks and sheep will not eat them."

A: Former Librarian Carol Orion responded that while there aren't many truly rabbit-resistant plants, providing plant protection, using repellents and scare devices, and modifying habitat are the best approaches. (She also found websites with peacock information, and sources for sheep advice.)

Q: "Does there exist a good and thorough list of tasks to be done in the garden for autumn cleanup and getting the garden 'ready' for winter?"

A: Librarian Rebecca Alexander recommended the book *Gardening in Washington and Oregon Month-By-Month*, by Mary Robson and Christina Pfeiffer (Cool Springs Press, 2005). It covers indoor and outdoor plants, lawns, bulbs, shrubs, and trees.

Hundreds of these questions and answers along with gardening tips are now available to search or browse in the Gardening Answers Database - follow the link from the Miller Library homepage, at [www.millerlibrary.org](http://www.millerlibrary.org).

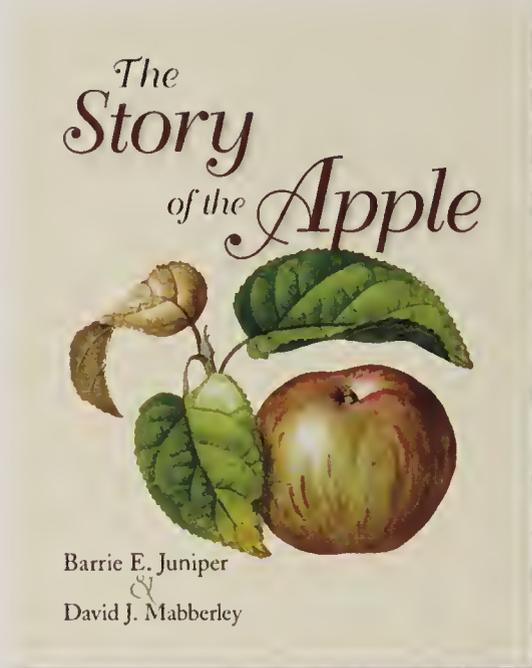
## Family Programs

Saturdays 10 – 10:45 a.m.  
Free

Stories and activities that celebrate gardens, plants, and nature; for 2-7 year-olds and their families.

## Book Launch

UW Botanic Gardens Director David J. Mabberley will be discussing his new book October 26, 6-8 p.m., at the Miller Library.



## Red Label Means Green Light for Circulation

More books than ever are available for borrowing from the Elisabeth C. Miller Library. Until now, only a small portion of the library's collection of books could be borrowed by the public. Library staff are in the process of converting a significant number of books to lending status. By the end of the year, the number of circulating titles (of those published after 1950) will grow from around 15% to 90%.

What does this mean to library users? Readers will have a much wider selection of books that can be borrowed and taken home, to enjoy at your leisure. Look for the red label on the spine of the book that indicates it is a lending copy. Not a current library user? Simply bring in your driver's license, fill out a form, and start reading! With over 15,000 books on horticulture, botany, landscape and garden design, you're sure to find inspiration for your garden.

September 9  
October 14  
November 4  
December 9  
January 6

Trees are Terrific!  
Lovely Leaves  
Harvest Stories  
Winter Magic  
Plants Through the Year

# Notes and Classes

## From the Editor

I am thrilled to be at the UW Botanic Gardens as the new Education and Outreach Manager! I would like to thank my predecessor Sue Nicol and Bev Gonyea, who was the interim Education and Outreach Manager, for all their great work.

Thanks also to subscribers who responded to our newsletter survey last fall. Over half of the respondents prefer a hard copy of the newsletter over electronic. Appreciative comments included **"Thank you for your work and your presence in the community"** and **"CUH [Center for Urban Horticulture] and its programs and field trips have given me much pleasure as well as broadened my life."**

UWBG will continue to offer paper and electronic versions of this newsletter. We are exploring ways to provide more information to more people at a lower cost. We have combined the *Urban Hort* and *ProHort* newsletters, and launched a new monthly on-line newsletter, **E-Flora** (see sidebar).

Please contact me at 206-543-3889 or [eloudon@u.washington.edu](mailto:eloudon@u.washington.edu) with your questions or suggestions. Look for our winter edition of the newsletter – it will be twice as big!

Elizabeth Loudon  
Education and Outreach Manager

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON BOTANIC GARDENS  
NEWSLETTER, VOL. 23, NO. 1

(CONTINUES URBAN HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER  
AND PROHORT NEWSLETTER)

**Mission:** *Sustaining managed to natural ecosystems and the human spirit through plant research, display, and education*

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### UWBG Management:

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Carrie Cone, Administrative Services  
Kern Ewing, Head of Restoration  
Fred Hoyt, Grounds and Facilities  
Elizabeth Loudon, Education and Outreach  
Karen Preuss, Elisabeth C. Miller Library  
Sarah Reichard, Head of Conservation

## Fall Quarter Classes

All fall classes are limited to 15 students; pre-registration is required.



Fig leaf and fruit - illustration by Louise Smith, instructor and award-winning botanical artist

### Botanical Drawing for the Complete Beginner (5-part series)

Mondays, Oct 9 – Nov 6

Mornings 9:30 a.m. – noon OR evenings 7 – 9:30 p.m.

Instructor: Louise Smith

Fee: \$155; pre-registration required

### Practical and Creative Landscape Design (8-part series)

Tues/Thurs, Oct 17 – Nov 9

7 – 8:30 p.m.

Instructor: Kim Rooney

Fee: \$250; pre-registration required

In this fun, interactive studio class you will develop your own home garden project to plant next spring.

### Continuing Botanical Painting: Getting More Comfortable with Watercolor (4-part series)

Every other Thursday, Oct 19 – Nov 30

9:30 a.m. – noon

Instructor: Louise Smith

Fee: \$120; pre-registration required

### Continuing Botanical Painting: The Art of Painting Leaves (4-part series)

Every other Wednesday

Nov 1 – Dec 13

7 – 9:30 p.m.

Instructor: Louise Smith

Fee: \$120; pre-registration required

## For full class descriptions or to register:

~ check the website at [www.uwbotanicgardens.org](http://www.uwbotanicgardens.org)  
~ call 206-685-8033

## E-FLORA

Get the freshest news with E-Flora, UWBG's new on-line newsletter. To subscribe to E-Flora, email [jrobins@u.washington.edu](mailto:jrobins@u.washington.edu) or call 206-685-2590.

## **Union Bay Natural Area Walking Tour**

**Saturday, Oct 7, 10:30 a.m. - 12 Free**

**Meet at trailhead to UBNA**

Join UWBG Head of Restoration Kern Ewing on a tour of this former landfill, now a restoration site and home for wildlife. Dress for the weather, tour will take place rain or shine!

## **Hidden Gems: Undiscovered Pacific Northwest Plant Books**

**Thursday, Oct 12, 7 - 8:30 p.m.**

**Fee: \$10; pre-registration required**

**Miller Library**

Brian Thompson, Curator of Horticultural Literature at the Elisabeth C. Miller Library, reads and shares from his personal favorites amongst the many books by lesser known PNW authors, both present and past, in the Miller collection.

## **Maple Walk in the Arboretum**

**Saturday Oct 21, 1 - 2:30 p.m.**

**\$5 suggested donation**

**Meet at Graham Visitor's Center**

Join Horticulture Staff Supervisor David Zuckerman for a walking tour of the Washington Park Arboretum maples, one of the top three most diverse maple collections in the country.

## **Maple Viewing in the Japanese Garden**

**Saturday, Oct 21, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.**

**(entrance fee for Japanese Garden)**

UWBG Education staff will have a table of children's activities at the Maple Viewing event, sponsored by the Japanese Garden.

## **The Story of the Apple: Book Launch**

**Thursday Oct 26, 6 - 8 p.m.**

**Miller Library**

UW Botanic Gardens Director David J. Mabberley will discuss his new book, published by Timber Press with co-author Barrie E. Juniper.

## **Halloween Cemetery Tree Tour**

**Sunday Oct 29, 2 - 4 p.m.**

**Fee: \$20; pre-registration required**

Where: Lake View Cemetery, 1554 15<sup>th</sup> Ave E, adjoining Volunteer Park

Legendary Tree Expert Arthur Lee Jacobson will lead a tour of this fascinating park with over 80 different kinds of trees. Dress for the weather, tour will take place rain or shine!

**Weekend Walks: Free Guided Tours of Washington Park Arboretum  
1st and 3rd Sundays, 1 p.m., meet at Graham Visitors Center**

## **University of Washington Botanic Gardens**

**College of Forest Resources**

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