Spring Fever
A PASSION FOR PROJECTS
BY AMY KEPFERLE

Green thumbs who can’t it to the Northwest Flower and Garden Festival taking place Feb. 26-March 1 in Seattle at the Washington State Convention Center should remain calm. Related events are on the horizon, making for numerous opportunities to cure your garden-and-project-induced spring fever.

WHATCOM COUNTY HOME AND GARDEN SHOW

In Lynden, the 41st annual Whatcom County Home and Garden Show happens March 6-8 at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds. Find inspiration from a roster of approximately 200 of the county’s landscapers, contractors, designers and more, and even meet Captain America.
INFO: WWW.BIAWC.COM

NATIVE PLANT SALE AND EXPO

Head to Whatcom Conservation District’s Native Plant Sale and Expo at Whatcom Community College, where local nurseries, vendors and community groups will be on hand to provide plant purchasing and related activities. Tip: Preorder from among 40 tree and shrub species by March 16 to guarantee you’ll get what you need.
INFO: WWW.WHATCOMCD.ORG

SICBA HOME & GARDEN SHOW

From March 27-29, the 40th annual SICBA Home & Garden Show will return to the Skagit County Fairgrounds. Spread out between six buildings and acres of outdoor space, the event includes face-to-face interaction with vendors across the home and garden spectrum, make-and-take classes, activities for kids, and wine, beer and spirits tastings.
INFO: WWW.SICBA.ORG

FAIRHAVEN PLANT AND TREE SALE

That same weekend, local and regional nurseries will sell perennials, ornamentals, trees, herbs, vegetable starts, outdoor art and more at the 32nd annual Fairhaven Plant and Tree Sale on Sat., March 28 at Hillcrest Chapel. Participating vendors donate a portion of sales to Fairhaven Neighbors, which uses proceeds for neighborhood projects and to support other nonprofits.
INFO: WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FAIRHAVEN-PLANTANDTREESALE

As winter becomes spring, keep an eye out for the Whatcom County Dahlia Society’s Tubber Sale, Whatcom County Master Gardeners’ Plant Sale, and Sustainable Connections Cascade Cuts fundraiser. In other words, if you’ve got a passion for projects, you won’t be lacking for inspiration.

INFO: WWW.HARDWARESALES.NET

BEEKind
BEST FLOWERS FOR POLLINATORS

Changes in microclimates each year may cause exact times to differ. The most important indicator of when to plant seeds depends about soil temperature. For more information on planting and gardening in Washington state, visit mastergardener.wsu.edu.

SEEDS101
A PRACTICAL PLANTING GUIDE

Spring is just around the corner and it’s the perfect time to start your seeds!

FEBRUARY
Broccoli
Beets
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Kale
Lettuce
Onions
Peas
Peppers
Spinach
Tomatoes
Blueberries

MARCH
Beans
Cantaloupe
Cucumbers
Pumpkins
Zucchini
Sweet potatoes
Watermelon

APRIL
Brussels sprouts
Corn
Squash
Sunflowers

Changes in microclimates each year may cause exact times to differ. The most important indicator of when to plant seeds depends about soil temperature.

Do your part to keep our fuzzy-butted friends merrily buzzin’!

Dandellions: Yes, it’s true! Dandellions offer a great early source of food for bees during the spring.

Catnip: Perfect for your feline friends, but remember cats and bees don’t mix!

Rosemary, oregano, cilantro, thyme, parsley, sage, fennel: Not only the bee’s knees, but also delicious for human counterparts.

Oswego tea, fuchsia, sunflowers, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, lavender, California poppy, hyacinth, lemon balm, honeysuckle, geraniums: Bees love flowers that are white, blue, violet and yellow.

Don’t forget: Keep your plants native and your gardens free of pesticides.

Visit a nursery and ask the experts about designing your pollinator-friendly garden.

Information provided in part by the WSU Whatcom County Extension Master Gardener Division.
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Home Sweet Home
CORNER THE MARKET WITH CREATIVITY
BY MIMI OSTERDAHL-EGGERS

By now, everyone knows Bellingham—with its high quality of life, location halfway between Seattle and Vancouver, and many amenities—is a desirable place to live. With that desirability comes a red-hot and highly competitive housing market. According to the February 2020 statistics from the Northwest MLS, the average price of a single-family home (including condos) in Whatcom County is $430,638, while the average median income in Whatcom County is $56,419. So, if your dream is home ownership in Whatcom County, it’s time to get creative!

Let’s explore a few creative ideas and alternative paths to achieving your home ownership dreams.

We Are Family: Multigenerational living has gone mainstream, and one emerging trend is friends or siblings entering into a co-buying arrangement. Lending guidelines, how each individual will take title in the property and who will be on the loan are important things to consider when thinking about co-buying property.

In Land Trusts We Trust: Nonprofit community land trusts (CLTs) make buying more affordable by selling you only the dwelling with a long-term lease for the land. In Whatcom County, Kulshan Community Land Trust helps those who qualify open the door to ownership and equity building. The people who purchase homes through Kulshan CLT’s program are ready to be homeowners, but have been priced out of the market and need a little help affording a home of their own.

Habitat for Humanity: Folks who earn an income between 30 and 60 percent of their area’s median income for a family their size might think home ownership to be unattainable. But that’s not necessarily the case thanks to Habitat for Humanity’s Home Buyer Partnership program. Along with income requirements, applicants must have lived in Whatcom County for at least one year. If this sounds like you and you’re here to stay, check them out to see if you qualify.

Co-ops: Not Just for Groceries: Another emerging trend, particularly in metropolitan areas, is cooperative home ownership. The housing cooperative, or co-op, is a legal entity allowing a group of people to share ownership of one or more residential buildings. The shareholder-owners divide the mortgage, taxes, insurance, maintenance and other expenses. Compared to condos, co-ops typically have lower financing and property tax costs, and lower transfer costs at the time of resale.

Expand Your Horizons: Be willing to look outside of your focus neighborhood. If the Bellingham real estate market is financially out of reach for you, expand your search area and you will open up possibilities and likely will get more home for your dollar. Driving a little can save you a lot. If you are buying outside of an area you know well, don’t hesitate to do a little research. A local Realtor can guide you to community resources where you can learn more about your potential new neighborhood and community.

Mimi Osterdahl-Eggers is 2019 WCAR Realtor of the Year, managing broker of eXp Realty and founder of NW Living. She used her unmatched creativity and expertise under challenging circumstances to help a Cascadia Weekly staffer achieve her dream of home ownership. Contact Mimi at (360) 220-6787 or mimi@nwlivingre.com.
JOIN THE COMMUNITY OF CLEAN SOLAR ENERGY

BY TIM JOHNSON

With our high latitude and soft, diffuse light, the Pacific Northwest is surprisingly ideal for solar power. It’s safe, it’s clean—it’s renewable. The cost savings for homeowners can be substantial and, in some cases, even allow homeowners to sell their surplus power back to the grid.

The City of Bellingham and other communities around the Salish Sea are committed to meeting substantial renewable energy goals by 2035. Homeowners can be part of the solution, but—no—homeowners will not be required to refit their homes.

People are adding solar because it is smart and cost-effective. The City of Bellingham is in the earliest stages of creating a Clean Energy Fund that even can help provide financial resources for energy upgrades. It’s an exciting time for renewable power.

Hundreds of thousands of solar panels have popped up across the country as an increasing number of Americans choose to power their daily lives with the sun’s energy. Thanks in part to public investments, the cost of going solar goes down every year.

Solar panels are built to work in all climates, but in some cases, certain rooftops may not be suitable for solar systems due to age or tree cover. If there are trees near your home that create excessive shade on your roof, rooftop panels may not be the most ideal option. The size, shape and slope of your roof are also factors to consider.

Typically, solar panels perform best on south-facing roofs with a slope between 15 and 40 degrees, although other roofs may be suitable too. You should also consider the age of your roof and how long until it will need replacement.

You may be considering the option of adding a solar energy system to your home’s roof or finding another way to harness the sun’s energy. While there’s no one-size-fits-all solution, many local heating companies offer expert consultation. They can tell you if your home is suitable for a solar energy system and give you an estimate of how much energy a system is likely to generate.

Even if a solar professional determines that your roof is not suitable for solar, or you don’t own your home, you can still benefit from solar energy. You can buy into a local community solar project, a shared solar array, or you can participate in Puget Sound Energy’s Green Direct or equivalent program structured to offer renewable power at no cost premium to residents.

The amount of money you can save with solar depends upon how much electricity you consume, the size of your solar energy system, if you choose to buy or lease your system, and how much power it is able to generate given the direction your roof faces and how much sunlight hits it. Your savings also depend on the electricity rates set by your utility and how much the utility will compensate you for the excess solar energy you send back to the grid.

Intrigued? Here’s how you can learn more.

Bellingham’s Climate Action Task Force holds regular forums to discuss energy target goals. Sustainable Connections sponsors an Energy Club to provide energy-efficiency enthusiasts all of the tools, information and connections they need to make steps toward energy efficiency. In Skagit County, Fire Mountain Solar is hosting free public workshops on renewable energy systems for residential, commercial and agricultural properties. These workshops cover the many benefits of solar, including how solar makes sense as part of your financial plan.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

Learn More
WHAT: Energy Club
WHEN: 8am Thurs., March 19 (and every third Thursday)
WHERE: Sustainable Connections, 1701 Ellis St. Suite 221
INFO: www.sconnect.org

WHAT: Fire Mountain Solar Workshops
WHEN: 6pm, Thurs. Feb. 27
WHERE: Farmstrong Brewing, Mount Vernon
WHEN: 6pm Thurs., March 26
WHERE: RE Sources Bellingham
INFO: www.firemountainsolar.com

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“I forgot to read the Cascadia Weekly last week, and now I have no idea what I’m doing.”
Curb Appeal
PAINT LIKE A PRO
BY AMY KEPFERLE

Eight summers ago, I hired pro painter and What's Up! magazine founder Brent Cole to help revive my York neighborhood Victorian. Whoever had last painted the exterior had cut a lot of corners, and the then-112-year-old house’s age was showing.

After getting a couple of wildly differing bids, I concluded that my budget dictated that my boyfriend and I do a lot of the work ourselves, and hire others on a part-time basis. Cole came highly recommended, and was willing to show up on an as-needed basis.

He also offered solid advice and tips that saved us plenty of headaches as we sanded, scraped, caulked, replaced shingles, primed and incrementally brought the painted lady back to life. I caught up with him recently to ask him to clarify what people should consider before committing to one of the biggest house projects around.

For those going the DIY route, Cole says to make sure it’s feasible for them. “I’ve been called in a few times by folks who thought they wanted to paint their house, got a day or two into it, stopped, then months went by and they were left with a partially painted house,” Cole says. “That aside, the internet has some great tutorials on how to prep a house for painting—from pressure washing (which is very important), caulking, sanding and priming to the actual painting.”

If you choose to have someone else do the heavy lifting, Cole advises getting several bids. However, if a company comes with prior bona fides and you jibe when you meet them, that works too.

But before contacting the professionals, he says to consider in advance two big costs—labor and materials. “It’s a good idea to talk to one of the local paint stores about how much materials might cost so you can get a sense of what you’re up against,” Cole says. “Materials aren’t just paint, of course, but possibly primer, tape, rollers, sandpaper and caulk—to name a few things.”

Other tips include lining up bids well before summer gets underway, purchasing quality paint—he used Rodda Paint on our house, and the color still remains rich and true—and getting mix-and-match samples to minimize the wide array of color options. He also recommends spending a little more on quart samples to see what works on different parts of the house. Thoroughly testing your paint color will ensure you don’t get halfway through the job only to realize you don’t like the color you’ve chosen.

If you’re making a change to your domicile by painting its interior, Cole also has some sage advice. “As with exteriors, make sure the surface is clean to start,” he says. “If something is stained and just not coming clean, then prime it first. There are tons of different primers and something will work. Then just tape everything, lay tarps and start! I almost always put two coats on whatever I’m painting—it just looks more striking.”

Reach Cole Painting at (360) 410-7735 or cole.paintingwa@gmail.com

RECYCLING101
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
Successful recycling depends on recyclable materials being empty, clean and properly prepared for collection.

SCRAP PAPER AND NEWSPAPER
NEW! Scrap paper and newspaper can be recycled in the same bin.
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SET NEXT TO BIN
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Set bins out the night before or by 6:30am on collection day. Moderate quantities of extra materials can be placed next to bins in an open cardboard box or plastic container no larger than a curbside recycling bin.

For more details, visit www.ssc-inc.com or email ssc@ssc-inc.com.

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