

A holistic approach to landscaping



Q&A

with

Leslie McClanahan

Q: Your business, Arcadia Organic Landscaping, describes itself as doing “Holistic landscape design.” What does that mean?

A: Holistic landscape design uses all the steps of a conventional design and then goes a step further by incorporation details that insure a beautiful thriving garden that has a greatly reduced need (if any) for pesticides and chemical fertilizers. And even beyond that, my goal is for my gardens to enrich more than my clients enjoyment in their garden, my goal is to enrich the environment surrounding it. Encouraging beneficial insects and other wildlife adds balance to a garden. A simple example of this is choosing plants that provide bee forage year around.

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Another example is hardscaping with native stone. Many years ago, the late Elaine Meyers hosted “Rainforest Gardening” on KMUN and I’ll never forget one episode about snake motels! A little creepy, right? But the gist of it was that our common garter snake eats a tremendous quantity of slugs and snails. Well, snakes love warm stones and also to sleep between dry laid stones in stone walls. So, providing habitat for snakes will go a long way toward reducing slug and snail populations. My gardens don’t look that much different from conventional gardens as there are still lawns, hedges, shrub, flower borders and hardscapes. It’s just that the materials chosen have an added purpose.

Q: What is organic lawn and garden care?

A: Organic lawn and garden care is using the best cultural practices so that the plants are never stressed and are all thriving as much as possible, so that they can fend off problems. We mulch, thatch, aerate, prune, and always use organic fertilizer. We are always watching for aphids and slugs so that we can control them before their populations become difficult to control. And always, planting the right plant in the right place is key.

Organic lawn care is extremely challenging just because of the weeds. I think that an organic weed-free monoculture grass lawn of any considerable size is pretty much impossible. I have tried so many organic weed control products for lawns and they have always failed. I hope that someone reads this and can prove me wrong! Call me! When I have clients who want a lawn, I try to steer them to an herbal lawn seed mix. I have used this for more than 20 years and I love it. It fixes its own nitrogen, provides bee and beneficial insect forage, needs less mowing and watering than a conventional lawn. But it’s not for everyone.

And lastly, organic gardening only uses nonorganic herbicides, fungicides, or fertilizers as a very last resort. I admit, last year I had to use a pesticide to control European crane fly because the population was just too large to use beneficial nematodes (which is our usual defense).



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Leslie McClanahan poses near one of her landscaping projects in Tolovana Park.

Q: What ways have you found to lower maintenance in the gardens you design?

A: Hate to sound like a broken record, but again, a good design will lower maintenance. That said, most maintenance is weeding, especially in young gardens that have a lot of exposed ground. Mulching with compost or bark works well. I’m not a huge fan of bark for many reasons, but I understand why some people are locked into that idea. The compost mulch is ideal, and you can always plant an annual like nasturtiums that

will smother weeds during the growing season.

Q: Describe the joy you gain from gardening.

A: For me, gardening is a spiritual practice. I can always ‘come back to myself’ when I’m looking up into a tree, gazing deeply into a flower, or just marveling at a really good dirt!

Leslie McClanahan has worked in the horticulture business for more than 34 years, starting at Raintree Garden Center in Seaside. She now owns Arcadia Organic Landscaping in Tolovana Park.

Writers, recipes welcome

If you are a writer who would like to submit a column on gardening, beliefs, technology or have a recipe to share, contact Sue Cody at The Daily Astorian: scody@dailyastorian.com or 503-325-3211, ext. 218. We also welcome suggestions for short feature stories that staff members could pursue.

Fukushima radiation has reached North American shores



AP Photo/David Guttenfelder, Pool

The crippled Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station is seen through a bus window in Okuma, Japan Nov. 12, 2011. Tiny amounts of radiation have reached the shores of Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

By TRACY LOEW
Statesman Journal

Seaborne radiation from Japan’s Fukushima nuclear disaster has reached North America.

Scientists at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution detected small amounts of cesium-134 and cesium-137 in a sample of seawater taken in February from a dock on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

It’s the first time radioactivity from the March 2011 triple meltdown has been identified on West Coast shores.

Woods Hole chemical oceanographer Ken Buesseler emphasized that the radiation is at very low levels that aren’t expected to harm human health or the environment.

“Even if the levels were twice as high, you could still swim in the ocean for six hours every day for a year and receive a dose more than a thousand times less than a single dental X-ray,” Buesseler said. “While that’s not zero, that’s a very low risk.”

Massive amounts of contaminated water were released from the crippled nuclear plant follow-

ing a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami. More radiation was released to the air, then fell to the sea.

Frustrated by the absence of monitoring by U.S. federal agencies, Buesseler last year launched a crowd-funded, citizen-science seawater sampling project.

He’s tracked the radiation plume across 5,000 miles of the Pacific Ocean, using highly sensitive, expensive equipment at his Cape Cod, Massachusetts, laboratory. There, he analyzes samples sent to him by West Coast volunteers and scientists aboard research cruises.

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