

2014 WSNLA Pioneer Awards

Honoring Innovation and Enduring Contributions within the Green Industry

SHARON J. COLLMAN

WSU Snohomish County Extension

Sharon J. Collman began her career as the first woman to be hired as an agriculture agent in Washington 1974. Since then she has pioneered as a leader in our industry. Here are a few of her career highlights:

Master Gardener Program – Dave Gibby and Bill Scheer were the birth fathers and developed the concept and first training in 1973 in King, Pierce and Snohomish. When I joined Extension, I became the foster parent guiding it through its infant years. George Pinyuh adopted the program and it has grown up and has children all over the US and other countries. The Master Gardener training series now accepts nursery and landscape professionals as tuition-only students without volunteer payback. Integrated pest management – trained Master Gardener volunteers to assist in diagnosing plant problems in King County. When I was moved to Snohomish County these diagnosticians continued to support the Master Gardener program in this capacity, providing their own training for another 27 years.

Nursery and landscape professionals –attended nursery and pesticide applicator meetings with specimens of bugs and blight and Extension updates from 1979-1986.

Bugs and Blights: column in *Balls and Burlaps* (now *B&B Magazine*) was started at the invitation of Honore Hockanson former Executive Secretary of WSNA. The column placed 2nd in the U.S. in national competition with other Extension columnists (1986). Also



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Outstanding Urban Horticulture program in the U.S. (1986).

Extension Liaison to EPA: Appointed to be the first extension liaison at EPA Water Division in Region 10 (WA, OR, ID, AK) to link land grant university research and science and EPA environmental mandates from 1989-2004. And was asked to return in 2004.

Extension Urban IPM Coordinator: appointed at EPA Region 10 (WA, OR, ID, AK) providing linkages and training and grant management. Organized the first regional urban IPM Summit.

WSU Growing Groceries training – assembled a team of groups interested in teaching about growing food and we organized the first Growing Groceries Mentor whose goal was “building the capacity of communities and families to

grow healthy food. To meet the demand for information on how to grow food during the “Great Recession”, she taught classes in local venues, and organized two major garden events. The program was adopted in many forms around the Puget Sound and in Snohomish County has evolved into an Extension volunteer program.

Awards from WSNLA: Nurseryman of the Year (1985), Honorary Lifetime Member (1985), and Educator of the Year award (2008).

Service to the nursery industry and WSNLA: Bugs and Blights column (30 years) and board member Education Caucus and many workshops.

“Forty Years of Growing Together”: was the theme of the annual Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference hosted by Snohomish County Master Gardeners. It also sums up my involvement in WSU Extension, with the volunteers and the nursery industry: providing hands-on training workshops, lectures throughout the Pacific Northwest; researching pest biology and life cycles and writing extension publications and articles for books and periodicals. Most important has been the interaction with adults and great nursery professionals eager to learn about diagnosis and beneficial insects and willing to think about solving pest problems in new ways with new methods that protect human and environmental safety.