**Multi County MG Plant Sale Meeting**

**October 12, 2020 Via Zoom**

In attendance were representatives from: King, Kitsap, Chelan/Douglas, Cowlitz, Jefferson, Kittitas, Spokane, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, Whatcom, Yakima counties

Hosts: Gary Scheider, King Co, Ann Haines, Kitsap County (note taker)

**Format: Shared discussion of how each county handled 2020 sale, and how each is preparing for potential 2021 sales.**

King:

* Sale is 36 yrs old. Largest portion historically held on UW campus (CUH complex, home of Program offices) and thus impacted by their regulations. In-person sale cancelled this spring. Have 2 greenhouses in Demo Garden where grow veggies. Perennials donated by MG’s. They also host commercial Vendors of specialty plants and share profits.
* 2020 created online plant store using Constant Contact platform
* Sold nearly 4100 units, made over 12K in a much smaller sale than past. Unsold (#300 donated to food banks)
* 2021 do not expect to do in person sale but laying basic plans. Have MG tech team researching sales platforms for online store. Plan to upsize last year’s online sale – more lines of veggies and possibly some type of sale of perennials.

Kitsap:

* Sale >25 yrs old. Held at county fairgrounds in rented building. Two day event (setup 1 day, sale 1 day) weekend of Mothers Day
* 2020 broke into 4 sep events.
1. Operation Veggie: MG growers brought starts to central place. Divided into orders and delivered to local food banks and MG demo gardens. Encouraged customers to shop from local growers.
2. Tomato Extravaganza: Open to public. Did usual purchase of tomatoes to support local vendors. Online orders of a mixed 4 pack using website (Wix) and prepay (Paypal). Drive through pick up at local mall parking lot. 4 canopies for pickup stations. Greeter directed. Advertised via social media and email.
3. Set up online Dahlia tuber store for our grower. Website created on Weebly with Square for payment. Mailed or drop off points around county. Advertised to MG’s and friends via email.
4. Perennial Inventory reduction: one day appointment only shopping for MG’s at our 3 perennial storage sites on private property. Five 45 min slots @ ea property. Salvage teams went to MG homes to help divide and pick up plants
* 2021 looking at online or a blend of in person and online.

Yakima:

* Have greenhouse where they grow plants.
* 2020 sale sold only to MG’s. Lottery based schedule. 3 day sale. Also donated veggies to nursery in exchange for donation to program. Donated rest to local service groups.
* 2021online and possibly hybrid of in person/online for sales to MG’s only.

Kittitas:

* Mg’s grow plants.
* 2020 did online sale. Square-Up platform and ads on website. Issue with no pictures on sale platform. Next year would only do for 1 week and not 2. Took 3 days – day one drop off plants, day 2 filled orders (took 10 hours), day 3 metered pickup.

Thurston:

* Have own spot for nursery and sales. Sell mostly trees, shrubs and perennials. Nursery closes in Nov and reopens in February.
* 2020 marketed to MG’s with a personal shopping experience. By appointment on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Brought in $12k. Continuing through fall with 25% off. Restrictions limit them to MG sales so limited audience. Need to make space for donations from 2 nurseries. Plants they do not usually get.
* 2021 crew is 7-8 MG’s so looking at continuing with personal shopping appointments. No tech experience to do online sale.

Spokane:

* Site is at Extension Office. Veggies, herbs grown by MG’s.
* 2020 very limited access to site so gave away many plants. Perennials stored at private home, did 2 week sale by appointment. Used signup Genius to schedule ½ hr appointments.
* 2021 will need to rent space.

Skagit:

* Have WSU greenhouse access for propagation. MG’s grow tomatoes. Sale at fairgrounds
* 2020 sold tomatoes in 4” pots to nursery and to MG’s and friends via online orders with drive by pickup. Donated tomatoes and veggies to community gardens, etc. Also sold annuals and veggies to nursery. Did fall sale for perennials to MG’s by appointment in propagation house. Encouraged to take orders for friends and family. Did sales to nurseries at wholesale. Used social media to advertise where their tomatoes were being sold.
* 2021 do not expect to do in person sale. Fairgrounds likely not open. Will look at selling online and to MG’s.

Snohomish:

* 2020 sold “Mystery Box” of veggies and tomatoes. 4 hours, 10 people every 30 mins. Place checks in a box, no credit cards. Used SignUp Genius for schedule appointments MG’s only.
* 2021 may do a tomato day and a veggie day to public – on WSU property so may be limited. Also looking at online over 4 weekends.

Jefferson:

* Veggie sale to MG’s. Sold tomatoes to nurseries at wholesale. Online sale planned for 5 days, sold out in 4. MG’s spread the word. Used a food bank site for pickups. Gave time slot when paid. Used walkie talkies to coordinate pick up. 2 two days to fill orders. Best $$ sale ever!

Cowlitz:

* 2020 flash sale to MG’s. Spreadsheet list with drive thru pickup. No prices, asked for donations. Used Cheddar Up platform – online market place for nonprofits (Mason Co has used and liked). Cheddar Up charges flat 10% fee. Co-Victory gardens, boxes of plants at locations around town they gave away.
* 2021 brand new greenhouse so they are hoping for in person sale, although think that is a long shot.

Whatcom:

* Sale is done in demo garden in County park. Have a greenhouse.
* 2020 online shop for veggies, 1600 tomatoes, dahlia tubers. Used Shopify. Park was open to public. Drive thru pickup at the park. Donated 100 veggies and tomatoes to food banks, etc. Perennials used SignUp Genius to schedule MG only sale on private property. Had tables of plants for sale at demo garden. Unattended, honor system with cash box. Sold out!! Advertised on social media, newspaper stories.
* 2021 no organized public sale. Will do similar to 2020. Plan to increase education on plants they sell via downloadable handouts.

Chelan/Douglas:

* They purchase all perennials wholesale.
* Donated all tomatoes and veggies to nonprofit who sold them.
* 2021 focusing on online sales. Fine tuning pick up plans. Want platform that is simple for them and their customers.

**General Discussion**

* Sell plants at clinic booths or at farmers markets? Not sure if allowed by all Program Coordinators or markets. Many markets would require to become a vendor and pay for space, abide by rules.
* Issue of $10 nursery permit (sales allowed for 3 times a year for up to 4 days, can lump together) vs. wholesale nursery business licenses $63 to $273/yr (King Co has).
* Definitely have orders filled ahead and ready for pickup.
* Do pre payments. Platforms used included Square, Paypal, Cheddar Up.
* Put donation option on sales page – King Co raised $1k this way.

**Topics for future discussion:**

* Online sales platforms. What is everyone using for stores and payments?
* Programs for sign ups and scheduling
* Mediums for advertising
* Processes for order pickups

**Next Steps:**

* Gary and Ann will investigate best method for collecting and sharing info on future topics and get request out to all.
* Gary and Ann will set up a second meeting in November or December.