WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Master Gardener Program

Research Guidelines for WSU Master Gardeners

1. **Keep It Local.**
   Include regional keywords such as 'Washington' or 'Pacific Northwest' in your search.

   Other parts of the country have different soils, weather, and pests. Gardening recommendations from other areas may not be appropriate for the Pacific Northwest. Even the same pests behave and are managed differently in different climates. If possible, limit gardening research to the PNW (Washington, Oregon, and Idaho). That being said, there are many useful extension publications and websites from other regions, especially for more general gardening topics. These sources can be used; just keep in mind that our local climate and soil may produce different results.

2. **Keep It Science-based.**
   Limit your search to university websites ('.edu' domain names) by typing 'site:.edu' into the search field after your keywords.

   As Master Gardener volunteers, you are representing WSU. Information in articles and presentations must be science-based. This is especially important for pest management. A list of approved references for pest management is available at http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/approved-references-for-pest-management-recommendations/. Also try 'site:.gov' to search only government websites. To search non-profit organizations, use 'site:.org' but keep in mind that some organizations present biased information that is not science-based. *Ask your program coordinator, if you are unsure whether a reference is science-based.*

3. **Keep It Focused.**
   Try multiple keyword combinations. Putting quotation marks around multiple words will search for that exact sequence of words. Additional keywords are often listed under the detailed record listing and are especially useful in narrowing your search efforts.

   It is easy to become sidetracked by the sheer volume of information available online. By focusing your keyword search, you will be able to research much faster.

4. **Go to the Local Library.**
   Librarians are trained to help access both online and print materials. You can access the WSU library catalog through interlibrary loan (http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/general/interlib.htm) with your local public library account. WSU library will send hard copies of books and electronic copies of book chapters or magazine articles through interlibrary loan.

   Books and other printed material are a great resource. Most books have been subjected to more rigorous fact-checking than online information. However, books can be outdated and inappropriate for our region. Keep in mind the publication date and author's location.

5. **Keep a List of Sources.**
   As you collect information, keep a list of sources. Provide these sources at the end of the article or powerpoint presentation. Although this list may not be included in the print version of a newspaper article, it is important for checking facts and fielding questions.