

Gardening e-News

Benton County Master Gardener Association Newsletter



December 2011/January 2012

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Oregon State UNIVERSITY **OSU** Extension Service Benton County

Calendar

Dec 7th	Greens Party 10am to 1pm Guerber Hall, Fairgrounds
Jan 5 - March 15	MG Training Thursday 8:30-4pm Tangent Training Center
Jan 10 - 28	Gearing Up for Gardening Tuesady 12:10pm Corvallis Library
Feb 11	Insights into Gardening

Insights into Gardening Volunteers Needed:

This is a day-long seminar on Feb. 11, 2012, offering practical, hands-on garden learning.

Volunteers are needed as door monitors and classroom aides, for help with registration, coffee and cookies, and other tasks.

If you'd like to help, please contact Bob Smythe at patbobsmy@peak.org.

Reminder:

Please Submit Your Dues.

Drop off or mail \$15 to
Benton Couty Extension Office
1849 NW 9th St
Corvallis, OR, 97330

The Once and Future Trainee: views from inside the front line

by Lynette Dupee

As with many new endeavors, views from outside exist quite independently from views gained once inside. This phenomena fuels curiosity and encourages us to plunge into the unknown.

The road that led to my becoming a Master Gardener was a vivid example of this. It began, from the outside, with a simple expectation that following just 70 hours of immersion into the world of gardening my grasp of the subject would be firm. Firm enough to warrant sticking a marker on my shirt indicating 'mastery of all things found in the soil' even though the paltry set of gardening successes I could recall surely amounted to an absence of mastery. But plunge and flounder I did, having logged the requisite hours that culminated in a spirited graduation.

I've found however, despite the inside views, that when it's time to put my badge on I'm tempted to place a piece of tape directly over 'Master' and just go with 'Gardener.'



Pesticide Training

Throughout the program and over the months spent at my kitchen table pouring through the Sustainable Gardening Handbook (the MG bible of sorts), I'd frequently stop to reflect on the previous weeks' activities...

Lectures covering wide subject matter such as botany basics and soil science to outdoor demonstrations on how to 'build your own worm bin' recalling the Experts with their warm personalities more kid-like than professorial. The energetic groups of us trying our hand at plant ID wielding our newly acquired skill-set obtained via elaborate computerized plant tables designed to reduce our hysteria over learning that 375,000 plant species existed! One couldn't forget those mock plant-hotline sessions gently crafted

The Once and Future Trainee (cont'd)

to steady our nerve and sharpen our inner-Sherlock.

One presenter alerted us, "If the caller's got bugs in the house they'll blame it on the garden!"

We listened to composting stories on 'getting your heap hot enough so wild animals will gather around it to keep warm at night' which got us excited about things that rot. One of our fellow trainees told us about her chicken coop she called "Clucking-ham Palace" having named her hens after scandalous English Queens; a relevant aside since chicken poop is the royal ingredient of compost.

The lunch circles spent sharing 'what we grow and think we know' were lively forums for learning while making new friends.

I firmly believe the joy and heart of the program lies in how and where the learning is had. At the end, pulling it all together from the rich medium of the classroom, each of us gained a larger shed of gardening tools, with room for many more.

"I am frequently reminded how much I do not know in spite of how much I learned," one MG aptly summarized.

Another revealed that she was more than just a little intimidated by the thought of working the desk, realizing later that "it helps a tremendous amount to have a good-humored desk buddy." I agree.

She expressed that "the clients who call have great questions, and while they're looking for answers to their questions, they also appreciate someone simply listening to them with interest," adding that, "people who love plants and the soil are wonderful people."



Trainees having fun at 'The Desk'

The Once and Future Trainee (cont'd)

“A good many, but certainly not all of the questions are simple and easy to answer,” a Benton County trainee stated, further conceding that “the computer system on the desk is not easy to work with.” He was in good company as I’ll never forget the day my computer skills rose to genius proportions simply for having located the ON button!

One of the sages of our class who had been gardening for 40 years summarized things beautifully: “As with life if we love something it is contagious. Our excitement and love of it oozes out. The Master Gardener program seems to attract the type of people who are extremely caring, sharing, kind and giving of their time and knowledge. They share in the desire to never stop learning and passing on good things.”

I think this Master Gardener is referring to Passion.

Since much in life is a footnote to the Greeks, I’ll share this little story: It has been said that the Greeks didn’t write obituaries, they only asked one question after a man died “Did he have passion?”

It’s impossible not to find passion in our great big backyard of earth or in our view together as a class looking back, from the inside looking out.



Some of Benton’s passionate gardeners: Barb, Kathi & Paula

Gearing up for Gardening

Start your new year by getting into the mood for gardening! The annual Gearing Up for Gardening lecture series starts on January 10. Every Tuesday through February at 12:10 pm in the Library's Main Meeting Room there will be entertaining and informative programs to get your green thumb tingling. OSU Master Gardeners, Linn-Benton Community College Benton Center, and the Library collaborate on this popular series with features knowledgeable local experts. Bring your lunch and a friend, and enjoy!

- Jan. 10 **Fruitful Endeavors** - All about cane fruits.
 Chad Finn, Research Geneticist, Agricultural Research Service,
 U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
- Jan. 17 **Waterless Wonders** - Drought-tolerant plants for the Willamette Valley
 Neil Bell, Horticulturist, Marion & Polk Co. OSU
 Extension Service
- Jan. 24 **Veggie to the Max** - Planning your vegetable garden for maximum
 production. Rose Marie McGee, Nichols Garden Nursery
- Jan. 31 **From the Ground Down** - How to have good soil.
 Jeff Cope, Accredited Organic Land Care Practitioner,
 Grow Green Lawn and Garden Care Co.
- Feb 7 **Heavenly Hellebores** - Learn about these winter garden gems.
 Ernie & Marietta O'Byrne, Northwest Garden Nursery
- Feb 14 **SOS – Save Our Species** - Learn about the threat of invasive plants,
 how to identify and control them. Heath Keirstead, Benton Soil &
 Water Conservation District
- Feb 21 **Not Tonight Deer** - How to design plant combinations to thwart deer.
 Lee Powell, Landscape Architect, Garland Nursery
- Feb 28 **There's No Place Like Home** - How to care for houseplants.
 Lynette Shonnard, Shonnard's Nursery

Outstanding Ornamental or Invasive Weed?

By Barb Fick

As a certified plant lover, I am always searching for new or bigger or better plants for the yard and vegetable garden. Usually the results are successful, but sometimes I end up with a problem plant. Fennel and borage will always be in my vegetable garden, and not in places where I planted them. How was I to know they would spread uncontrollably?

Sometimes the plant description will give tips, such as Jerusalem artichoke from the Sunset Western Garden book states “Plants can become a pest.” Words such as “freely self-sows” (Jupiter’s beard, red valerian, bachelor’s buttons, cornflower, or garden heliotrope), should send up red flags. The key is to read or talk to a couple of gardeners before you plant.



Borage blossoms



Beautiful but bothersome English ivy

Beware of free plants from fellow gardeners. The English ivy taking over their backyard should not be moved to your yard.

Outstanding Ornamental or Invasive Weed? (con'td)

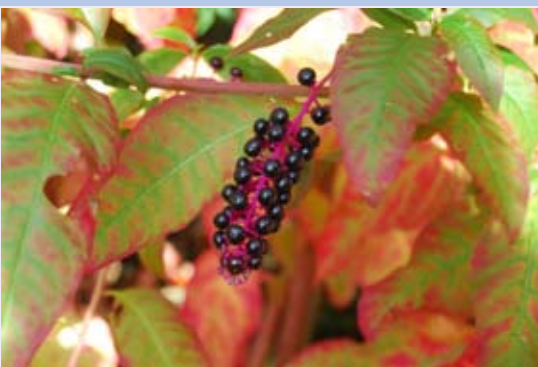
I confess to numerous garden blunders.

Even though the plant is called Poke Weed (clue!!!!) and is native to the eastern US, it had not spread in another person's garden in the Corvallis area; it did in mine. This perennial grows like it is on steroids; becoming 10-feet tall in lush garden soil with irrigation.



Poke Weed's vibrate leaves

As the photos show, the black shiny berries with the fantastic hot pink foliage and dark pink stems make this giant stand out in the fall garden. Flower arrangements sparkle with this plant. Unfortunately, the birds love the berries and I am finding new plants in the landscape.



Prolific berries



The Poke Weed that ate Barb's yard

Insights Into Gardening

Sneak Peak into IIG Classes

February 11th

LaSells Stewart Center Oregon State University, Corvallis OR 97330

We have a great line up this year with plenty of ideas to make your gardening easier and more successful.

Registration form soon available online or in the mail. Contact the office for more info: 541.766.6750

Doing Dahlias: The Easy Way.

by Larry Buschman

Tomatoes: Love/Hate Relationship; Especially in the Willamette Valley.

by Ross Penhallegon

A Holistic Approach to Plant Nutrition and Soil Management

by Gisele Schoniger

Creating Interest in Your Garden Every Month

by Karen Hopson

Hostile, Harmless or Helpful: getting to know your garden's insects.

by Gail Langelotto, Ph.D.

Selection and Maintenance of Garden Tools.

by Lowell Cordas

Tree Care Through the Year

by Kristin Ramstad

Eat from Your Garden Year Round; Preserve Your Own

by Nellie Oehler

Designing and Managing Your Backyard Greenhouse.

by Gail Gredler

December Garden Calendar

Reminders of key garden chores, such as fertilizing, pest control, planting, and maintenance for this month. Recommendations are not necessarily applicable to all areas of Oregon. For more info, contact your local OSU Extension Service office.

Maintenance and Clean Up

- * Spread wood ashes evenly on vegetable garden. Use no more than 1.5 lb/100 sq ft/year. Don't use if the soil pH is greater than 7.0 or if potassium levels are excessive.

- * Protect new landscape plants from wind. Use stakes, guy wires and/or windbreaks as needed.

- * Yard sanitation: Rake leaves, cut and remove withered stalks of perennial flowers, mulch flowerbeds, hoe or pull winter weeds.

- * Turn the compost pile and protect from heavy rains, if necessary.

- * During heavy rains, watch for drainage problems in the yard. Tilling, ditching, and French drains are possible short-term solutions. Consider rain gardens and bioswales as a longer-term solution.

- * Check stored flower bulbs, fresh vegetables, fruits for rot and fungus problems. Discard any showing signs of rot.

- * Tie limbs of columnar evergreens to prevent snow or ice breakage.

- * Western Oregon: Do not walk on lawns until frost has melted.

- * Western Oregon: Make sure that landscape plants in protected sites receive water regularly during the winter.



Planting/Propagation

- * Western Oregon: Good time of year to plant trees, and landscape shrubs.

December Garden Calendar (cont'd)

Pest Monitoring and Management



- * Monitor landscape plants for problems. Don't treat unless a problem is identified.

- * Check for rodent damage around bases of trees and large shrubs. Remove weeds to prevent rodents from using them as hiding places. Use traps and approved baits as necessary.

- * Avoid mounding mulching materials around the bases of trees and shrubs. The mulch might provide cover for rodents.

- * Monitor spruce trees for spruce aphids. Treat if present in large numbers. Read and follow pesticide label directions.

* Identify problems before acting, and opt for the least toxic approach. Cultural, physical and biological controls are the cornerstones of a sustainable pest management program. Use chemical controls only after you identify a pest problem and carefully read the pesticide label. Least-toxic choices are insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, botanical insecticides and organic and synthetic pesticides. These recommendations might not apply to all areas of Oregon. For more information, contact your local OSU Extension Service office.

Houseplants and Indoor Gardening

- * Protect poinsettias from cold, place in sunlight, don't let leaves touch cold windows; fertilize with houseplant fertilizer to maintain leaf color.

- * Monitor houseplants for adequate water and fertilizer. Water and fertilizer requirements generally are less in winter.

January Garden Calendar

Reminders of key garden chores, such as fertilizing, pest control, planting, and maintenance for this month. Recommendations are not necessarily applicable to all areas of Oregon. For more info, contact your local OSU Extension Service office.

Planning

- * Keep a garden journal. Consult your journal in the winter, so that you can better plan for the growing season.

- * Check with local retail garden or nursery stores for seeds and seed catalogs, and begin planning this year's vegetable garden.

- * Have soil test performed on garden plot to determine nutrient needs. Contact your local Extension office for a list of laboratories or view EM 8677 online.

- * Take hardwood cuttings of deciduous ornamental shrubs and trees for propagation.

- * Plan to replace varieties of ornamental plants that are susceptible to disease with resistant cultivars in February.

Maintenance and Clean Up

- * Clean pruners and other small garden tools with rubbing alcohol.

- * Reapply or redistribute mulches that have blown or washed away during winter.

- * Place windbreaks to protect sensitive landscape evergreens against cold, drying winds.

- * Western Oregon: Do not walk on lawns until frost has melted.

- * Western Oregon: Water landscape plants underneath wide eaves and in other sites shielded from rain.

Pest Monitoring and Management

- * Monitor landscape plants for problems. Don't treat unless a problem is identified.

- * Scout cherry trees for signs and symptoms of bacterial canker. Remove

January Garden Calendar (cont'd)

infected branches with a clean pruner or saw. Sterilize tools before each new cut. Burn or send to landfill before bloom. See EC 634, Controlling Diseases and Insects in Home Orchards.

* Watch for field mice damage on lower trunks of trees and shrubs. Eliminate hiding places by removing weeds. Use traps and approved baits as necessary.

* Use dormant sprays of lime sulfur or copper fungicide on roses for general disease control, or, plan to replace susceptible varieties with resistant cultivars in February.

* Western Oregon: Moss in lawn may mean too much shade or poor drainage. Modify site conditions if moss is bothersome.

* Mid-January: Spray peach trees with approved fungicides to combat peach leaf curl and shothole. Or plant curl-resistant cultivars such as Frost, Q1-8 or Creswell.

* Identify problems before acting, and opt for the least toxic approach. Cultural, physical and biological controls are the cornerstones of a sustainable pest management program. Use chemical controls only after you identify a pest problem and carefully read the pesticide label. Least-toxic choices are insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, botanical insecticides and organic and synthetic pesticides. These recommendations might not apply to all areas of Oregon. For more information, contact your local OSU Extension Service office.

Houseplants and Indoor Gardening

* Monitor houseplants for correct water and fertilizer; guard against insect infestations; clean dust from leaves.

* Protect sensitive plants such as weeping figs from cold drafts in the house.

* Propagate split-leaf philodendrons and other leggy indoor plants by air-layering or vegetative cuttings.

* Western Oregon: Gather branches of quince, forsythia, and flowering cherries; bring indoors to force early bloom.