Country Living

Provided to you by the
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April 2010

Programs for you . . .

Listen to the Gardening Spot on KOHI (1600 am) radio - Every Saturday, 8:05 to 8:15 a.m.

Apr. 6..................Scappoose Bay Watershed Council, 7 p.m., Scappoose Bay Watershed Council's office, Warren
Apr. 13.............Lower Columbia Watershed Council, 7 p.m., Extension Conference room, St. Helens
Apr. 21.............Soil & Water Conservation District, 7:30 p.m., SWCD office, St. Helens
Apr. 22.............Master Gardener™ Chapter Meeting, 6:30 p.m. Extension Conference room, St. Helens.
Apr. 24.........15th Annual Spring Garden Fair, by Columbia County Master Gardeners™. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. St. Helens High School
Apr. 24.............Hazardous Waste Disposal, 8 a.m. to Noon. Waste Transfer Station, St. Helens. Columbia County is offering free household hazardous waste disposal the last Saturday of each month at the waste transfer station in St. Helens (paints, cleaners, automotive chemicals (though not waste oil), pesticides, fluorescent lights, and many other items). If you have any questions about what is acceptable, call 503 397-1501.
Apr. 29.............Hot Topics in Vegetable Gardening, 7 to 9 p.m. Extension Conference room. St. Helens. Chip Bubl, Speaker.

Joy Creek Nursery Seminars

We are fortunate to have such an exceptional nursery like Joy Creek in our county. They have an outstanding series of seminars most Sundays throughout the summer. You can visit their website www.joycreek.com for a complete list. The April seminars (which begin at 1:00 pm and are free unless otherwise indicated) are as follows:

April 4: 1 to 2:30 p.m. – Two workshops: A Celebration of Edibles in the Garden - Introducing Edibles to Your Containers, Baskets and Landscape, Claude LeDoux and How to Start Your Own Vegetable Seeds, Sue Berge; April 11: Divisions, Leslie Gover; April 18: Paths and Circulation, John Caine; April 25: Path Construction, Mike Smith.

Chip Bubl, OSU Extension Faculty, Agriculture

Agriculture, Family and Community Development, 4-H Youth, Forestry, and Extension Sea Grant Programs. Oregon State University, United States Department of Agriculture, and Columbia County cooperating. The Extension Service offers its programs and materials equally to all people.
In the garden

Vegetable gardening tips

- To give seedlings and transplants a “jump start”, make sure phosphorus is available in cold soils. Do this by banding super phosphate (0-20-0) under the seeds or transplants. Make a three inch deep furrow (for seed) or a six inch deep furrow for transplants in the planting area. Into this furrow, evenly sprinkle one-half cup of super phosphate per 40 linear feet of bed. Cover the band of phosphate with two inches of soil.

- You can use a high phosphorus transplant drench several times as a substitute. African violet fertilizers would work well.

- Warm soils with clear plastic a week or so before planting. You can raise the temperatures by 15-20 degrees. Then cover seeds or plants with row cover after planting if you have some.

- For best results, select transplants that are about as tall as they are wide, dark green in color, vigorously growing, and free of spots on the leaves.

- When thinning larger plants, use a knife to cut the stem at ground level. This thins the plant population effectively (which you need to do to get good plant vigor) and does not damage the root systems of the remaining vegetables. Pulling plants can damage the remaining plants.

It’s all about heat

Some years ago, I watched an experiment in Cowlitz County conducted by the now retired WSU Extension agent Joe Kropf. Row covers were new and he wanted to see whether they made a difference in growth and maturity for vegetables like peas that are often planted when soil temperatures are quite cool.

Two plots were laid out and one row was covered in row cover after planting. The cover was kept in place for about 40 days and then permanently removed to trellis the peas. The other row was trellised but had no row cover. Planting time was early March.

Both rows were evaluated in late May. The uncovered peas were starting to bloom and set peas and had a height of about 36 inches on the trellis. The row-covered peas were in full production and had been for several weeks. They had climbed to over five feet on the trellis! Yield when all the picking was done was about 40% greater on the row-covered peas. This was a graphic demonstration of the value of early heat for “cool-season” vegetables.

Below are some minimum soil temperature and ideal soil temperature comparisons for vegetable seed germination:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
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<td>Peas</td>
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<td>Beans</td>
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<td>Squash</td>
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<td>Peppers</td>
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<td>Spinach</td>
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The closer you get to the ideal temperature, the faster seeds emerge and start growing.
More from the garden

Why won’t my plant bloom?

When plants don’t bloom there could be several possible causes. First, they are in the wrong place, usually one too shady. Second, a frost nipped the blooms before they fully opened. Third, the plant is still vegetative. This is a problem on some woody plants that require a certain age before they will start flowering. Heavy pruning slows that maturation process. Fourth, pruning at the wrong time removed floral buds.

Don’t confuse failure to bloom with failure to set fruit. An apple tree may bloom vigorously yet not get flowers pollinated due to poor pollination weather (poor bee activity, late frost, wet-weather diseases). Here are common problems:

Daffodils: Bulbs need dividing leading to bulbs too small to bloom; cutting foliage after flowering before the bulbs can replenish their reserves;

Lilac: Not enough sun; some varieties take a long time (10+ years) to flower;

Dogwood: Not enough sun; tree is an un-grafted seedling which means it will take longer to bloom; pruning in summer/fall; previous summer very dry.

Peony: Not enough sun; planting too deeply; botrytis blight killed flower buds.

Tulips: A warm winter; bulbs too small to bloom; mice ate the bulbs; poor drainage; not enough sun; bulbs are too old and should be replaced; various diseases.

Wisteria: Vine is a seedling and not grafted – it may take years to bloom; fertilizing with nitrogen that stimulates vegetative growth vs. floral buds; not enough sun; excessive pruning in the summer.

Those clever brassicas

Brassicas, otherwise known as the cabbage family, have been a heavily bred vegetable crop family over their 3-5000 years of domestication. Two modified broccoli types of similar characteristics are gai lan (otherwise known as Chinese broccoli) and rapini (otherwise known as Italian broccoli raab). Both feature thick, edible stems, pungent/sweet leaves and modest floral structures. They are about one-third the size of a broccoli plant.

They can be sown now in seed flats or direct seeded where you can keep them somewhat warm. Neither likes the intense heat of the mid summer. Plant spacing is 6-10 inches within the row and rows about 12 inches apart.

They mature in about 45-60 days depending on variety. For both rapini and gai lan, there are a lot of varieties to choose from.

The vegetables are excellent in stir fry and pasta dishes, and soups. The harvested plants keep well in the refrigerator for some time.
Scouring the holler that lies east of our house for sweet violets I happened to spy vast patches of stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) growing along the stream bank. These infamous plants have been the nemesis of many a hiker meandering through the woods. I, however, had a different point of view realizing it had been a long time since fresh greens graced the supper table.

Donned in protective gear, I picked a good six quarts and took them back to the house. After scalding with boiling water the sting is rendered harmless. I blanched them twice, drained them well, and then fried up this fine mess of greens with bacon and new green onions. Add a hot pone of cornbread and supper doesn’t get any better than this.

“But these are weeds”, you may be thinking as you gasp in horror and disbelief. As gardeners we are constantly battling these foes – pulling and digging and hoeing and spraying. One way to beat them is to eat them, as long as they are edible of course.

Since prehistoric times, humans have gathered wild plants. After the invention of agriculture more and more of the human race has switched to obtaining food from domesticated crops. Today, most inhabitants of so called civilized nations eat almost entirely domesticated foods. Just remember that at some point in time every domesticated food plant once had a wild predecessor.

Nevertheless, some wild foods are still popular. Before you go foraging in the yard or garden or adjacent meadows, woodlands or wetlands there are some important rules that you must consider. **Know what you are picking. Collect only what you can positively identify as edible. Harvest only plants that look healthy in areas uncontaminated by pesticides or pollutants.** Eat only small quantities when first trying an edible plant. There are some 1000 edible wild plant species at our disposal. Here is a list of some of our common edible garden weeds. And before you take on any preconceived notions just remember, one man’s weeds just might be another man’s dinner.

**Common plantain** (*Plantago major*), **Buckshorn plantain**, (*Plantago lanceolata*): This old time green with a slightly tart and earthy flavor is a fine salad embellishment in its youth. As it matures it becomes rank for salads but remains an excellent cooking green.

**Sheep sorrel** (*Rumex acetosella*), **red sorrel, sour weed, field sorrel**: This one has several uses in preparation of food including a garnish, a tart flavoring agent for soups and sauces, and a curdling agent for cheese. Put tender leaves in salads. Not to be confused with garden sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), it can be used in much the same way. As with any plant that contains moderate amounts of oxalic acid, use in moderation and pair with calcium rich foods.

**Common chickweed** (*Stellaria media*): This annual weed can be used in salads or as a potherb (leafy vegetable) with a flavor that resembles spinach when boiled.

**Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*): The scourge of lawns is actually fondly regarded throughout the world, containing a tremendous amount of vitamin A (25 times more than tomato juice and 50 times more than asparagus). Pick when young and tender and use in salads or as a potherb. Soak in ice water for 20 minutes. Do this two times using new water each time to remove some of the bitterness. Flowers are often used to make folk wine. Don’t confuse with false dandelion (*Hypochaeris radicata*).
Upland cress (Barbarea verna): We called this member of the Brassica family “Creasy greens” in the South and we anticipated these late autumn and early spring greens. Now seed catalogues carry the seed so it can actually be cultivated in your garden. Cook like spinach or use raw in salads or sandwiches as you would watercress. Not found here.

Lambs quarter (Chenopodium album): A wild spinach, it’s highly nutritious when eaten as a steamed vegetable, potherb or in soups or salads; eat the young leaves and stems.

Miner’s lettuce (Claytonia perfoliata): California Gold Rush miners ate this one to get vitamin C in order to prevent scurvy. This resident of cool, damp locations is most commonly eaten raw in salads, preferably mixed with other greens, or cooked like spinach, which it resembles in taste. The seeds are available in gardening catalogues for cultivation of this old time favorite.

Wild amaranth pigweed (Amaranthus spp.): Of the 80 species of amaranth, several carry the name pigweed. Some species are cultivated as a vegetable in many parts of the world and some for amaranth grain. It contains moderate amount of oxalic acid so use in moderation and pair with calcium rich foods.

Garlic mustard (Alliaria petiolata) has become a highly invasive species in the Pacific Northwest since it introduction to North America in the 1860’s as a culinary herb. One way to combat it is to eat more of it. Its name is derived from the garlic-like odor of the crushed leaves. As with other wild mustards, the leaves are edible and best when young used in salads, pesto or as a potherb. [Editor’s note: This is such an awful invasive plant, it needs to be eradicated. If you find an infestation, call the Extension office.]

Garden purslane (Portulaca oleracea): This succulent plant with a slightly sour and salty taste can be eaten in salads, stir-fried or cooked liked any other potherb. It contains more Omega-3 fatty acids than any other leafy vegetable. Cultivars can be found in catalogues.

Thistles – Common thistle (Cirsium edule), Canada thistle Cirsium arvense), Bull thistle (Cirsium vulgare), Perennial sow thistle (Sonchus arvensis), Prickly sow thistle (Sonchus asper), Annual sow thistle (Sonchus oleracus): Despite what the books say, I still have reservations about this one, but if the research is true then eating it is certainly one way of combating these formidable foes. Most of the species have thorny leaves so they aren’t much good as a pot herb without a lot of preparation. To use the stems, clip off leaves, peel off the shreddy rings, cut up what’s left and boil in salted water for 5 minutes. The roots can be cooked and eaten too. Eat in moderation; some thistles are carcinogenic.

Robert Hammond
Columbia County Master Gardener™

Warning - Extreme Danger. It is important to carefully identify the plant before use. There are many poisonous plants that look very similar to edible species. Many guide books should be used, and someone with a great degree of skill should be asked to confirm a species. Its great to enjoy wild edibles, but please be very careful.

There are old foragers and there are bold foragers but there are no, old bold foragers. [That is the editor’s last comment, except to note that he does eat true dandelion, nettles and purslane as greens.]
Last Month: “I first became acquainted with the wonder of seeds as a child. I watched my mother plant asparagus seed for our backyard vegetable garden one year. She must have explained to me that there was an easier way to grow asparagus, because I remember understanding there was something special about planting those seeds. It was a hope and faith that those tiny seeds would grow and give us a crop. Several years later, at the age of twelve, I tromped out to the back acre of our new home. There was no garden, and I was determined to fix what I saw as a problem.” and now . . .

Full Circle of Life: Infinity

We had always had a garden. It took up nearly a quarter of the yard at our old house. But the new house was devoid of vegetable patch. So, taking rusty shovel in hand, I tore up hay sod and tough roots and made my own.

Whether by design, or just because they were busy, my parents gave me the room to succeed or to learn from failure with that garden. The 4’ by 4’ plot was mine alone. Instead of telling me what I could or couldn’t plant, or how to do it, they left me alone to experiment.

The only crop that thrived were the two Brussels sprouts that I had direct-seeded. I was quite proud back then that they required chopping down with an axe in the fall. I learned a bit about gardening that summer, a lot about aphids, and how hard lugging a watering can to the back acre was. Then I discovered boys, and gardening took a back seat for many years.

But even then, I was enthralled with the wonder of the seed and how it grows into something to eat. Growing vegetables is still my favorite kind of gardening. Maybe it’s a throwback to the caveman instincts in my DNA, but planting seeds and growing food to put on my family table is one of the most satisfying practices to me. As our lives are inexorably complicated with technology, growing food the way it has been done for millennia is comforting.

Because my parents allowed me the freedom to till my own plot of land, I learned a great deal, and went on to grow bigger and more beautiful plants than those homely, aphid-covered Brussels sprouts. I learned from practice, and continued my education with Master Gardener™ training. Then, strangely, my mother started coming to me with her gardening questions.

Just as the towering redwood packs its code for survival in a tiny seed built for success, so I attempt to pass on the wonder of plants and nature that I learned from my parents to my own child by giving him the freedom to explore, and his own plot of land to plant seeds.

Now, my mother is among the ranks of OSU Master Gardeners™ as well, and her enthusiasm for gardening and plants bubbles over. Now I give her the space to excel in her own right at something I first learned from her. She passed the love of plants to me, and I in turn show my sons the wonders contained in nature, and in the small, yet amazing seed.

Full circle, in two generational directions. I think we call that figure Infinity

—Lisa M. Long

Columbia County Master Gardener™
Compost, rock and bark dust delivered; 397-2989
APRIL 2010
Garden hints from your OSU Extension Agent

Oregon State University Extension Service encourages sustainable gardening practices. Always identify and monitor problems before acting. First consider cultural controls; then physical, biological, and chemical controls (which include insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, botanical insecticides, organic and synthetic pesticides). Always consider the least toxic approach first. All recommendations in this calendar are not necessarily applicable to all areas of Oregon. For more information, contact your local office of the OSU Extension Service.

Planning
❖ Write in your garden journal throughout the growing season.
❖ Prepare garden soil for spring planting. Incorporate generous amounts of organic materials and other amendments, using the results of a soil analysis as a guide.
❖ Prepare raised beds in areas where cold soils and poor drainage are a continuing problem. Incorporate generous amounts (at least 2") of organic materials.
❖ Use a soil thermometer to help you know when to plant vegetables. When the soil is consistently above 60°F, some warm season vegetables (beans, sweet corn) can be planted.

Maintenance and Clean Up
❖ Allow foliage of spring-flowering bulbs to brown and die down before removing.
❖ Apply commercial fertilizers, manure, or compost to cane, bush (gooseberries, currants, and blueberries), and trailing berries.
❖ Place compost or well decomposed manure around perennial vegetables, such as asparagus and rhubarb.
❖ Cut back ornamental grasses to a few inches above the ground, in early spring.
❖ Cover transplants to protect against late spring frosts.
❖ Optimum time to fertilize lawns. Apply 1 lb. nitrogen per 1,000 sq.ft. of lawn. Reduce risks of run-off into local waterways by not fertilizing just prior to rain, and not over-irrigating so that water runs off of lawn and onto sidewalk or street.
❖ Optimum time of year to dethatch and renovate lawns. If moss was a problem, scratch surface prior to seeding with perennial ryegrass.
❖ Prune and shape or thin spring-blooming shrubs and trees after blossoms fade.

Planting/Propagation
❖ Plant gladioli, hardy transplants of alyssum, phlox, and marigolds, if weather and soil conditions permit.
❖ It’s a great time to start a vegetable garden. Among the vegetables you can plant, consider: Oregon coast: beets, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chard, slicing cucumbers, endive, leeks, lettuce, onion sets, peas, and potatoes. Western valleys, Portland, Roseburg, Medford: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chard, chives, endive, leeks, lettuce, peas, radishes, rhubarb, rutabagas, spinach, and turnips.

Pest Monitoring and Management
❖ Clean up hiding places for slugs, sowbugs and millipedes. Least toxic management options for slugs include barriers and traps. Baits are also available for slug control; iron phosphate baits are safe to use around pets. Read and follow all label directions prior to using baits or any other chemical control.
❖ Monitor strawberries for spittlebugs and aphids; if present; wash off with water or use insecticidal soap as a contact spray. Follow label directions.
❖ If necessary, spray apples and pears when buds appear for scab. See EC 631, Controlling Diseases and Insects in Home Orchards.
❖ Cut and remove weeds near the garden to remove potential sources of plant disease.
❖ Use floating row covers to keep insects such as beet leaf miners, cabbage maggot adult flies, and carrot rust flies away from susceptible crops.
❖ Help prevent damping off of seedlings by providing adequate ventilation.
❖ Manage weeds while they are small and actively growing with light cultivation or herbicides. Once the weed has gone to bud, herbicides are less effective.
❖ Spray stone fruits, such as cherries, plums, peaches, and apricots for brown rot blossom blight, if necessary.
President’s Corner
I would like to extend a big welcome, to all the students in this year’s Master Gardening class, taking place in Vernonia. Learn your lessons well, as we need your help and look forward to working with you.

Several events will be taking place very soon. We will start working in the Demo-Garden, at the Columbia County Event Complex, on April 5, 2010 from 10 a.m. to Noon. New class members may participate, as veteran gardeners will be there to help you. This is a good learning experience for all, as we all learn from one another. The Spring Fair will be held April 24 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the St Helens High School Commons area. Again, the new class is encouraged to participate, as we want to get to know you, and work with you.

As for my gardening experience this year I haven’t done much yet. The nights are still pretty cool but I did get my raised bins full of compost and they are ready to go. I had some potatoes that sprouted, so I filled a garbage can with compost and planted them. They are now growing very well. I will be curious to see what kind of yield I get.

A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all, it teaches entire trust. (Gertrude Jekyll)
--Le Roy Schmidt

Calendar: At-A-Glance

April 1.. Demonstration Garden and other MG Extension Projects Planning meeting, 9:00 a.m., Extension office
April 1.. Board Meeting, 10 a.m. Extension office
April 5.. Demo Garden work begins – each Monday from 10 a.m. to Noon, County Fairgrounds
April 19 Tomato Information Training class for Spring Fair, 1 p.m. Extension office
April 22. Chapter Meeting, 6:30 p.m. Extension conference room, Spring Fair prep.

Don’t forget that each Monday from 10 a.m. to Noon work is done at the Demo Garden.

Calling All Master Gardeners! Raffle Tickets to be Sold
Raffle tickets are now available for the Columbia County Master Gardener Annual Spring Fair to be held April 24, 2010 at the St. Helens High School from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. More than ever we need the support of all Master Gardeners to sell tickets. The contributions from the proceeds we receive from the Spring Fair raffle help us continue our educational programs. Tickets are available to sell or for purchase at the OSU Columbia County Extension Service office as well as the next Master Gardener meeting. Help make this year’s fair the best ever. Your support is appreciated.
--Spring Fair Raffle Committee: Robert Hammond, Tina Skolfield, Terrie Shoemaker, Sheryl Putman, Judy Sene

Pruning Demo a Success!
What a day in the Demonstration Garden! The weather cooperated for our annual pruning demonstration and the turnout was great. We had over 50 people sign in.
Chip started the session by addressing the problems of diseases and insects in the
garden and what remedies are available for the home gardener.

A big thank-you to Ross Carter who demonstrated pruning on fruit trees, Kathy Johnson on roses, Larry Byrum on ornamental grasses and LeRoy Schmidt who covered tool maintenance and I covered berries and grapes.

Also thanks to Kathy Phelan who helped organize, sign people in and pass out the printed materials.

By all accounts those attending enjoyed the session and were happy with what they learned.

--Dennis Snyder, 2003 Class

SPRING FAIR 2010
SATURDAY, APRIL 24th

The Columbia County Master Gardener’s Association 15th annual fund raiser for 2010 is drawing near. In fact it’s a mere few weeks away!

Here is the Progress - There are about 50 varieties of heirloom and modern tomatoes will sell for $1.25 each. We have vendors with gardening as their theme. Advertisements for our event are appearing all over the county from newspaper articles, radio, reader boards, flyers and TV.

If you haven’t had the opportunity and you would like to sign up to work at the Spring Fair - It’s not too late.

Here is some additional information:

All Volunteers who have signed up to work the morning hours are to report to the High School at 6 a.m. on April 24th. Afternoon Volunteers are to come at noon.

Remember to wear your Master Gardener Badge and your Master Gardener T-shirt should you have one. Ladies, remember to leave your purses home.

From 6 a.m. on the April 24th until 9 a.m. we will be setting up the Spring Fair. Doors to the public will open at 9 a.m. and close at 3 p.m. When the doors close, clean up of the high school will begin.

All Committee Chairs will have prepared for each of the Volunteers a “TO DO” list that will be handed out either at the business meeting on April 22nd or in the morning of Saturday, April 24th. This “TO DO” list will advise the Volunteers what is expected in their respective areas for which they volunteered.

Volunteers who wish to help with the setup on Friday, April 23 at the high school may show up at 3:15 p.m. and work until finished.

If you work with us to setup on Friday night, you will be able to purchase tomatoes, otherwise, you will not be able to purchase your tomatoes till 9 a.m. on Saturday.

Remember to keep track of the hours spent working the Spring Fair! This can be used as payback.

Last of all, thank you for your help, enthusiasm, and support. Have Fun Everyone, I and the Spring Fair Committee Chairs will see you on April 23rd and 24th.

--Katherine Johnson, Spring Fair Coordinator

From Your State OMGA Representative:

This is a belated attempt to let everyone know what is going on at our OMG State meetings. I promised to do so earlier but “stuff” kept getting in the way and I never got it going until the info was out of date. So here goes!

Top on the agenda was discussion on Mini College, OSU finances and how that would impact the OMG and Extension Offices. Gail Langelotto, OSU rep, told us that budget cuts would be coming and that her participation in managing the set up and ongoing assistance for the Mini College would have to be curtailed dramatically.

There was much discussion among the Officers of the OMG Board as to how to handle this. Out of that discussion came a recommendation to the membership that we (the Master Gardener Association) take on those duties and use Gail and her staff as we can for support to put on the Mini College.

Mini College is the Master Gardener Association’s largest event and the most significant event for education that we put on. It is also our biggest contributor financially. The Board (that is the officers as well as all State Representatives) feels that participation by more local Master Gardener
Associations to assist in taking on some of these additional tasks would make the whole process go considerably easier. Most of the items needing help on are those that local groups already perform in their own areas but this would give them a State wide view. There are tasks already being handled by various people throughout the State but more will be required as we are going into somewhat uncharted territory. The first VP will be heading up this effort and has asked for assistance and ideas.

The new OMGA website was unveiled by our own Larry Byrum. It is located at www.oregonmastergardeners.org take a look and if you have any comments or suggestions please let Larry know.

OMGA is also on Facebook so take a peek there to see the types of things going on.

The County chapters all reported on their events and projects for the last quarter. Several Counties reported supporting petitions to get funding for their local Extension Services because without it the Extension will go away. Most of the County Master Gardener Associations are holding plant sales or garden tours to raise funds for their groups this Spring in April or May. If you wish to see more detail on what is happening please let me know and I can send you a copy (by email) of all the reports.

Next meeting is in June in The Dalles.

--Chuck Petersen, Columbia County MG Rep

COLUMBIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENER™ ASSOCIATION

Summary, February 2010, Chapter Mtg:

- Demo Garden- Andy Thayer reports that he and LeRoy Schmidt met with the Fair Board voicing interest in the orchard project. It will be at least 2 years before the trees will be planted in the ground, so there will be no drain on the budget for at least 2 years. No commitment was made at this time. It was suggested that we graft our own. We will need veteran volunteers more than ever this year at the Demo Garden which starts Monday April 1st.

- OMGA- Chuck Petersen reports he will be attending the next OMGA meeting in Medford. He also informed everyone of the seed packets purchased in support of outreach to local chapters.

- Web-Larry Byrum reports new files need to be updated. As of March 6th OMGA has a new website. You can find them at www.oregonmastergardeners.org. He reminded everyone that dues need to be in by April 1st to have your name and information included in the 2010 roster.

- LeRoy Schmidt suggested helping Jane Allen in her yard as she is unable to do the work this at this time. Jean Landers will coordinate time with Jane and get back to everyone.

- Summary, March 2010 Board Mtg.

- Treasurer’s Report-Larry Byrum reports that we now have 77 paid members, he will be sending a mass e-mail reminding everyone that membership for 2010 needs to be paid by April 1st. Those who are paid by that date will be included in the 2010 MG Roster. Year end report to OMGA has been sent and the 2009 audit is set for Monday March 8th. Chuck voiced concerns about possible deficit spending with purchases for Spring Fair. Chuck moved to accept the report as presented. Motion passed.

- Demo Garden-Andy Thayer reports he is still looking for coordinators for different areas in the demo garden. Kathy Johnson volunteered for roses and Lynne Schultz volunteered for the shade garden. He will be sending an e-mail to ask for other volunteers. Things to be done include spraying the pathways for weeds, checking ½ barrel for replacement, and completion of permanent plant signage.

- Spring Fair-Kathy Johnson reports 30 tables were purchased for $25 each.

- Wreath making-LeRoy Schmidt has made arrangements for our wreath making get-together for 11:30 on Saturday, December 4th at the Yankton Grange. A potluck is being planned again this year.

--Lynn Schultz, Secretary
Natural areas

Adaptability of native evergreen trees

Washington State University Extension educator Jim Freed described a variety of trees that small forestland owners might find or want to plant on their property:

* Douglas fir grows in well-drained sites. This is prime construction lumber, the No. 1 commercial species in the West.

* Grand fir tolerates wet feet up until bud break, in late March or early April, thriving along streams that flood in winter. Its odor has earned it the nickname "pee fir," so wreaths made of grand fir should be solely for outdoor display. It should be more widely planted on appropriate sites.

* Port Orford cedar thrives in the same site as grand fir, but it is susceptible to root rot. Its native range is along the Southern Oregon coast. Many trees planted in Columbia County die in 25-40 years. But up to that time, they are quite beautiful.

* Western red cedar -- actually an arborvitae -- tolerates water most of the year, but grows best in sites that dry up in spring and summer. Heavily deer browsed when young. One of the predominant species found along our streams (with big leaf maple and red alder).

* Sitka spruce tolerates a very wet site. Its strong, lightweight wood has been used for ship masts, airplane spars and ladders. It is unclear what its range was but it seems reasonably well-adapted except for periodic growing leader removal by the white pine weevil.

* Incense cedar likes drier sites and tolerates frost. Deer and elk may bypass this one.

* Willamette ponderosa pine, especially the Fort Lewis strain, is a promising tree that has a root structure tolerating wetter soils as well as drought.

* Western hemlock is shade-tolerant and grows in cool, wet sites. The wood is brittle but suitable for pulp or biomass energy.

* Western yew tolerates all but full sunlight. It's a great understory tree, both rot-resistant and slow-growing.

* Redwoods need deep soil for their taproots, growing in fog belts and along gravelly streams. "I've planted redwoods on old road sites. That's where they grow best."

* Giant sequoias like cooler sites usually at high elevations. However, there are a number of stunning large trees in Columbia County and the rest of the Portland area so it is worth a try.

Adapted from an article by Scott Brown in the Capitol Press newspaper.
Farm and livestock notes

Sell what you grow

The economic meltdown of 2008 has changed the way we live and what we buy. Gone are the frothy times with purchases covered by another home equity loan. People are separating wants from needs. It hasn’t been easy but empty storefronts are clear testimony to the rapid reset in expectations.

With the consolidation of distribution channels over the last 50 years, farm marketing is also undergoing changes. If you are selling to a large market buyer, your percentage of the farm production dollar has been shrinking dramatically. And input costs like fertilizer, crop protection materials, and labor have generally been going up. There are some advantages to selling into those markets, particularly the ease of moving your product. For crops like wheat or grass seed, you really don’t have many options. Large numbers of cattle or sheep aren’t easy to sell (or process, for that matter) locally. But it still hurts to see less in the bank at the end of the season.

An increasing number of farms devote a portion of their crops and time to more direct market sales. Options include direct on-farm sales, farmers’ markets, marketing to stores and restaurants, and more unique systems like Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms.

With more people entering those markets, competition has increased. Your ability to get your products in front of the right buyers and to communicate to them why they want your products is critical to your success.

Marketing requires a clear idea of what you are selling and to whom. Over time, both elements can change in response to experience gained. But you have to start with a well-defined concept to test. Elements of your marketing plan include product qualities, pricing, placement (where it is available), and promotion.

Assuming you have kept good production records up to the point of secondary processing and marketing, you should know how much it costs you to produce a unit of production (box of lettuce, side of beef, etc.) at your current volume or scale. Look at the numbers carefully. Did you include everything? Often missed are depreciation of equipment, a charge for your family labor, and return on investment. Can you make changes that could improve your efficiency with your current budget? Are you making a lot more money on some crops versus others? Do you need those economically-challenged crops to sell your more lucrative ones? Or not? How strong is the competition?

Cost of production will lead to product placement options. But there are a number of costs in doing more direct marketing. Packaging and/or presentation are very important for both the end consumer and a wholesale buyer. How much secondary processing do you have to do and at what cost? What size quantities do you have to transport to how many places and how often? Is the packaging expensive or will good display skills and an engaging presence in front of the consumer sell your product? How will your buyers find you? You need realistic cost estimates for all these elements. You also need good (and conservative) sales/volumes estimates. If you think you can get to market in a price/quality competitive position, it should be worth a shot.
More farm notes

Why pastures decline

1. **Overgrazing.** Grass has to have periods of rest to develop enough leafiness to capture sunlight. Contrary to popular opinion, very little of the grass plant comes from minerals in the ground. If you took a load of hay (10-14% moisture) and burned it to ash, the ash weight is what came from the ground. Grass is mainly carbohydrates and that is what photosynthesis makes. Whoever gets to the light, wins! Without enough leaf area to capture sunlight, you will have a declining root system and a declining crown and eventually a missing plant. Let grass grow to six inches several times a year. In addition, letting livestock eat what they like best will ensure that, after a time, all that will be left are those plants they don’t like.

2. **Undergrazing.** Ironically, pastures that are only hayed, particularly if they are hayed late (late June onwards), will tend to thin out as well. This is because grass evolved being grazed by animals. Grass needs periodic grazing followed by periods of rest. Hay fields should either be cut as close to the first of June as you can or grazed in mid-April for several weeks and then allowed to recover before haying.

3. **Little or no fertilizing.** Removing hay without adding nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, calcium and sulfur back will lead to pasture decline. Nitrogen can be supplied by a healthy stand of legumes like clover or lotus (trefoil) but the other minerals have to come from somewhere else. If you buy feed for your livestock, you are essentially importing fertilizer. Make sure you get their barn manure spread back on your fields.

4. **Grazing in the winter.** Besides removing leaves when the pasture needs to recover from fall grazing, winter grazing on our wet soils inevitably leads to soil compaction. Compacted soils are starved for oxygen and grass and legume pastures need good aeration. The best advice: Raise sheep, which don’t tend to cause compaction, or don’t have your animals on pasture from November through March. The English use deep-bedding systems to barn-feed cattle during their similar winters. Horse owners make well-drained exercise yards to allow activity without grazing.

   If you have lots of acres (say 5 acres per cow or horse) that you are willing to use for winter gazing, you may get away with winter grazing (if you manage carefully). Additionally, some very well-drained soils are more resilient to hoof compaction. In the end, the quality of your grass in March will tell you how well you, as the manager of the grass of your realm, did. Grass that has been overgrazed will be very slow to respond to the longer and warmer days of spring.

**Did you know?** Our pastures produce 60% of the grass they will produce all year between April 1st and June 30th!
Summer Food Preservation Classes

Back by popular demand are our summer food preservation classes. This series of classes is great for both the beginner and experienced canner.

Classes will be held in St. Helens at the First Lutheran Church on 360 Wyeth Street (the corner of North 4th and Wyeth)

- Tues. June 15th, 10am to 1pm – Jams and Jellies
- Tues. July 20th, 10am to 1pm – Fruits and Pie Fillings
- Tues. Aug. 10th, 10am to 1pm – Pressure Canning Vegetables and Meats
- Tues. Aug. 31st, 10am to 1pm – Tomatoes and Salsas

Additional dates may be added. Cost to attend is $20 per class or $70 for all four. A small number of scholarships are available. Payment must be made in advance to hold your spot. Contact the OSU Extension Service – Columbia County office at 503-397-3462 to register.

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