Programs for you . . .

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


Jan.5 onward... Pesticide Recertification Classes: Offered from January through March with several in the Portland area. For complete information, go to this link or call our office for the information: http://www.ipmnet.org/Tim/Pesticide_Ed/Pesticide_Courses_-_2010/PSEP%20Brochure%20For%20Web%202010.pdf

Jan. 7 ................ Demonstration Garden and other MG Extension Projects Planning Meeting, 9 a.m., Columbia County Extension Conference room

Jan. 7 ................ Master Gardener™ Board Meeting, 10 a.m., Columbia County Extension Conference room

Jan. 12 .............. Lower Columbia Watershed Council, 7 p.m., Extension Conference room, St. Helens

Jan. 12-14 .......... North Willamette Horticultural Society: Meets on the 12th (organics) & 13th (vegetables), and 14th (small fruits) at the Clackamas County Fairgrounds in Canby. For more information, go the following link or call our office: http://oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC/Events.php

Jan. 20 .............. Soil & Water Conservation District, 7:30 p.m., SWCD office, St. Helens

Jan. 28 .............. Master Gardener™ Chapter Meeting, 6:30 p.m. The Loo Witt Room, St. Helens High School, St. Helens. Speaker: Weston Miller, the Extension Educator in charge of the Portland Metro Area Master Gardener program. Weston is very interested in the social functions of food gardens and the exciting role that Master Gardeners are playing in Oregon and around the country educating a wide range of audiences in food gardening. Weston is a fine speaker and this is his passion. It will be eye-opening and well worth your time. The Master Gardener Graduation and meeting will follow the presentation after a short break. The public is invited. Free. (CCMG's don't forget to turn in your dues - see Grapevine article.)

Jan. 30 .............. Hazardous Waste Disposal, 8 a.m. to Noon. Waste Transfer Station, St. Helens. If you have any questions about what is acceptable, call 503 397-1501.

Feb. 13 .............. Grafting Workshop, OSU Extension Conference Room, See back cover for details/to register.
Feb. 27 .............. Pruning Demonstration, See February's newsletter for more details. Public welcome!

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

Build a cold frame this month

Cold frames can do much of the work of greenhouses at a fraction of the cost. A cold frame is a four-sided structure, lower in the front, with a clear glass or plastic covering on top. The top can be opened or lowered as temperatures change.

Cold frames are best used for starting seeds and growing out small transplants. They are less useful for developing larger plants unless they are big structures.

Here are a couple of websites on cold frame construction.

http://muextension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/hort/g06965.htm

http://extn.msu.montana.edu/publications.asp  Click on Publications, then Yard and Garden publications and scroll down until you get to the cold frame link.

Landscape trees and the law

It probably won’t come as a surprise that neighbors can have strong disagreements about trees. In most situations, concerns can be resolved amicably, assuming the neighbors already get along. If not, the problems end up in court or mediation.

In my experience, concerns tend to focus on “dirty trees” (leaf/needle/fruit shedding), perceived hazardous trees, root spread or damage, excessive shading, or concerns about views being blocked.

What are some of the general principles that may come into play in disputes like these?

- In most situations, the owner of the tree is the one on whose property the trunk sits. A tree squarely on a boundary line may be considered to be jointly owned, subject to a lot of conditions.
- There is generally no right to a view unless a public ordinance or private covenant specifies those rights. Trees existing at the time an ordinance goes into effect are often “grandfathered” in. Covenants may be more restrictive.
- If someone seeks to have a tree removed that is not on their property, they have to clearly demonstrate that it is a hazardous tree and poses an imminent threat. This usually requires a professional arborist’s opinion. A dead tree is presumed to be hazardous. Mediation or a court may order removal. Insurance companies can require it as a condition for keeping a policy.
- Generally, you can remove limbs or branches that overhang your property as long as you do not harm the health or stability of the tree in the process. Limbs can only be cut back to the property line.
- Root removal, destruction, or covering with lots of fill may be construed as damaging to the tree and could subject the individual responsible to liability for damage.

These comments are not intended to be legal guidance. For that, seek advice from a competent attorney. This is a very confusing area of litigation where state case law, highly variable local ordinances, and the biological and social complexities of each situation come into play.
More from the garden

The spotted wing drosophila

Several months ago, I wrote about the emergence of the spotted wing drosophila, a new insect pest in the area. I am now convinced that it will be a significant problem for commercial farms and home gardens alike. To quickly recap the story: this fruit fly invades sound tissue of berries, cherries, grapes, plums, and peaches. It deposits eggs that turn into little maggots in the fruit. The fruit is softened. One gardener reported thousands of maggots wriggling in a pot of late season blackberries she was starting to cook for jam. It was quite unnerving.

In California, admittedly a warmer climate, there can be ten generations a season. We do not yet know how soon they might appear here. Most of the reports last year came from the first part of September onwards. Entomologists predict earlier and more intense infestations this coming year. However, it is possible that the cold weather in mid December might have damaged the overwintering pupae. Right now, the best insecticidal controls appear to be the spinosad products, either as a spray or bait. There are both organic and conventional forms available to growers but the compound was not as easy to find last year for the home gardener. Stay tuned as information is coming at a fast and furious pace.

FROM GARDEN TO TABLE

Cover Crops and Green Manures

Next to proper site selection, the soil - its structure, quality and fertility - is the most important and basic element of successful gardening. As gardeners, we are taught this in the very beginning. Organic matter is a vital part of soil health providing a wide range of benefits to our gardens – soil is easier to work, water and nutrient retention is improved for easy absorption by plants, improved soil aeration that helps soil warm up earlier in the spring.

Soil organisms break down organic matter and over time it becomes depleted. Gardeners need to build and regularly replenish soil with organic matter. We maintain piles of decaying vegetation or barnyard manure. We haul in compost by the sack, wheelbarrow or even truckload, arduously working it into the earth. One technique, however, that is often overlooked by home gardens is the use of growing cover crops to produce green “manures” that can be directly tilled back into the earth, the backbone of any annual cropping system that seeks to be sustainable. Too often gardeners neglect the fact that gardens that are left fallow and naked succumb quickly to soil erosion and nutrient depletion, as well as falling prey to a rampant invasion of weeds.

I must admit that I too have been guilty of such practice. In past years I have covered the vegetable garden with black plastic. This was effective in keeping weeds at bay and warming the soil up faster in the spring but it really did very little else other than providing a warm and dry refuge for mice. And although I worked compost into the rows before I planted, the soil wasn’t as vibrant and alive as it had been in the past. Like me, the soil was becoming tired. The task and cost of hauling and moving truckloads of compost was too daunting so I decided to try planting a cover crop this year instead. A cover crop is nothing more than plants grown at a time when others do not occupy garden space, becoming a green manure crop they are tilled back into the
soil. Now my garden is covered with a vibrant green carpet of rye, hairy vetch and Austrian winter peas. Information regarding cover crops and green manures abounds in research reports, Extension bulletins and the like. Although sifting through all of this knowledge can be somewhat overwhelming, the use of these gardening techniques needn’t be. It does require some thought and planning. The major benefits are the addition of organic matter and improvement of soil structure but there are numerous other benefits as well: nitrogen production (legume cover crops), increased soil microbial activity, nutrient enhancement, weed suppression, soil and water conservation, pest management benefits (creates habitats for beneficial insects), economic benefits, and the ability to be used in different rotations throughout the year.

There are three classifications of plants to grow for cover crops which include grains and grasses (cereal rye, winter wheat, spring oats, and spring barley), legumes (common vetch, hairy vetch, clovers, Austrian winter peas, and fava beans) and other broadleaves (tyfon and buckwheat). Most often cover crops are grown as a mixture, combining the advantages of each of the component species. Sometimes they will function synergistically, providing more benefits than the individual grown alone. Most are sown in the early fall for winter coverage to be turned into the soil in spring. Some, like the frost tender buckwheat, make an excellent choice for summer, being ready to turn in 30 days. Just remember, if allowed to grow too large, it becomes difficult to turn under.

Planting is a simple matter without any special requirements. Just choose the best time of year and situation for the plants you are growing. Although the seeds can be sown in rows, broadcasting is the simplest way, giving broader and closer coverage. Sow into prepared garden soil and rake to a depth of ¼ inch. They also may be planted prior to harvest of many late season crops by under sowing or sown between rows provided adequate irrigation is available.

When to turn the crop under is a matter of debate. Some experts say the best time to turn the crop under is before the plant has a chance to flower. Others say the best time is after most of the plants have started to bloom or are close to heading, but before going to seed. The claim is that harvesting earlier is fine but the plants will not have reached their maximum amount of stored nutrients and potential organic matter. Whichever you choose, don’t wait too long and allow the plants to become woody as they are much slower to decompose. If they happen to flower, take heart. They provide forage for pollinating insects.

Mow the vegetation down mechanically or manually and then turn under using a tiller or spade to a depth of 3 to 6 inches – provided the soil is dry enough, of course. In about three weeks, the matter will be decomposed enough and the garden ready to plant again. Your fruits and vegetables will love you for it and your soil will be healthier to boot.

--Robert Hammond, Columbia County Master Gardener™
Garden Art—Forget the Chainsaw!

Winter pruning can be looked at in two ways: either as a chore, or as an opportunity to get out in the fresh air and have some fun with some loppers and a pair of hand pruners.

I actually look forward to pruning each year. Once I start cutting, I find I can’t stop. I start looking for more trees to work on, either at the homes of my family members, or out at the Master Gardeners’ Demo Garden.

Pruning is like creating art to me. I walk around the tree a bit, stare up at the network of limbs, branches and twigs, study the buds and their direction of growth. Usually, I walk straight into a branch or two while looking up. The neighbors must get a kick out of watching me, I’m sure.

I’m pretty heavy-handed with the trimmers, but then fruit trees really need it. But I don’t cut hastily. Each cut has a plan for the future. I leave some branches or twigs in case I need a replacement for one I think will fail or cease to bear fruit. I trim for a balance of branches, but I also reduce the canopy to allow proper sunlight to the leaves and air flow for the health of the tree and fruit.

Once I’ve decided what main limbs and branches will stay, then I start chopping.

All those watersprouts must go. They are the long, vertical-growing twigs that suck up the tree’s energy, yet never return to normal growth, nor bear fruit. Ironically, hard dormant (winter) pruning encourages the growth of watersprouts. Pruning them a bit during the growth season can reduce their occurrence.

Next, I look for crossing or rubbing branches and eliminate the ones that are not growing in the direction I want. I head back long branches that might get too heavy under a load of fruit, but I make sure to cut large branches or limbs at a branch collar, the swollen area where a branch grows from a larger branch, or the trunk. This is the only proper cut for large branches, because the branch collar will heal over the cut, protecting it from decay, insects and disease. Don’t paint the cuts: make proper cuts and let the tree heal itself.

Very small twigs, up to pencil size, may be cut back to an outward facing bud (not upward, or you’ll get a watersprout). Some will die back, and need cutting off at the branch collar the following year, but many will be fine. Cutting off the terminal bud on the twig will stimulate the remaining buds, including those fruit spurs, the buds that will flower instead of grow a twig.

I spend a couple of hours on a single semi dwarf tree sometimes, but the smaller, dwarf varieties don’t take that long. That’s a consideration when you pick out your fruit trees at the nursery. I cut, study the tree, cut some more, walk around, go to another tree, then return and cut some more, until I’m satisfied that my trees will grow the way I want them too, be healthy, and bear fruit.

I have to rein in my tendency to heavily prune when I start on the ornamentals. I try to just trim out the crossing or rubbing branches. Individual ornamentals have pruning considerations to encourage flowering, and consulting a book on pruning is a good idea so you can keep your trees and shrubs healthy and looking great.

Take the time to study up a bit on proper pruning. Call the Extension office for publications on pruning. Then get outside and have some fun.

Happy winter gardening!

—Lisa M. Long
Columbia County Master Gardener™
Compost, rock and bark dust delivered; 397-2989
JANUARY 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
- 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.
- Do not walk on lawns until frost has melted.
- 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 infected branches with a clean pruner or saw. Sterilize tools before each new cut. Burn or send to landfill before bloom. See EC 631, 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.
- 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.

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.
- Plant dwarf annual flowers inside for houseplants: coleus, impatiens, and seedling geraniums.
- Gather branches of quince, forsythia, and flowering cherries; bring indoors to force early bloom.
President’s Corner
HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL
As newly elected president, I would like to thank Kathy Johnson, and her slate of officers, for doing such a fine job, during the past 2 years. This also includes all the previous members that have served, and brought this chapter of Master Gardeners, to its current status. I have asked for some assistance, and people have been willing to step up and help out. Thank you one & all.

As I reflect upon this past year, I was able to travel to Costa Rico, Victoria BC, and Mexico. As I was touring some of the gardens, I realized how much I learned from the Master Garden Program. I could almost keep up an intelligent conversation, with some of the garden curators and care-takers. It made me realize how adaptable plants are through-out the world. My apple crop was pathetic, but the kiwi, both hardy and fuzzy, were plentiful.

As we begin a new decade in time, this chapter is in for some changes. We will work and learn together. This is your chapter; I encourage you to become active and attend the meetings and activities, so you can be heard. We need to know. Get involved.

The deeper a man digs for knowledge in his garden the more he realizes that he has only scratched the surface. (Unknown)
--LeRoy Schmidt

Calendar: At-A-Glance
Jan. 7... Demonstration Garden and other MG Extension Projects Planning meeting, 9:00 a.m., Extension office
Jan. 7... Board Meeting, 10 a.m. Extension office
Jan. 28. Chapter Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Columbia Tech Center. The Master Gardener Graduation and meeting will follow the presentation after a short break.
Mar. 1.. CCMG Dues Due!

Volunteer Payback
2009 Payback hours are due by January 14th

LOG YOUR HOURS, and turn them into Extension office. Hours worked by veteran as well as new Master GardenersTM accumulate to justify continuance of our program through OSU.

To get a form off the web:
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/master-gardener-volunteer-program choose Master Gardener™ Volunteer Log Sheet – word document or to get an electronic form go to:
www.columbiacountymastergardeners.org, choose Chapter News, Select a Topic, and then choose either the electronic file or printable form.

The Grapevine
News for Columbia County Master Gardeners™
www.columbiacountymastergardeners.org
January 2010
Deadline for THE GRAPEVINE - All materials will need to be into the OSU Extension office no later than the 20th of each month.
Master Gardener Membership
Dues – DUE!
It is time to renew your annual membership in the Columbia County Master Gardener™ Association for 2010.

For only $10 you are a member of our local chapter and the Oregon Master Gardener™ Association. You will get a chapter membership Roster if the Treasurer has your dues by March 31.

Make your check payable to CCMGA and mail to:
Larry Byrum
2675 Sykes Road
St. Helens, OR 97051

Dues must be in the State office April 1st. Include any phone or address changes and an e-mail address, if you have one. If you have already paid, please disregard this notice and thank you for renewing your membership.

--Larry Byrum, Treasurer

COLUMBIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENER™ ASSOCIATION
Summary, December 2009, Board Mtg.
The secretary and treasurer reports were accepted as presented.

Old Business: Notebooks for outgoing officers and committee chairs should be updated and passed onto the new chairs/officers.

--Diane Schnur, Secretary

2010 Master Gardener™ Class Held in Vernonia
After twenty-one years of having the Master Gardener classes in St. Helens, this year’s classes will be held in Vernonia. Some enthusiastic Vernonia area Master Gardener graduates and community volunteers collected a list of about thirty people who were interested in classes.

The classes will be held at the Vernonia Grange each Tuesday from 11:30 to 3:30 p.m. starting March 9th; there will be about 10 class days. Classes will start in March to avoid the worst weather and will go through early May.

Payback projects (an obligation for all Master Gardeners™) will be focused in the Vernonia area and nearby communities. If you signed the list that circulated this summer in Vernonia, we will be in touch with you. If you didn’t sign that list (or aren’t sure) and are interested in the Vernonia program, please call the Extension office 503 397-3462 to get more information and to get on the mailing/email list.

Master Gardeners Contacts
Officers for 2010

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>LeRoy Schmidt</td>
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<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Liz Davidson</td>
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<td>Past President</td>
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<td>Kathy Ryan</td>
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<td>OMGA Rep</td>
<td>Chuck Petersen</td>
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<td>Demo Garden</td>
<td>Jane Allen</td>
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<td>Spring Fair</td>
<td>Kathy Johnson</td>
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CCMG website: www.columbiacountymastergardeners.org
Webmaster ............ Larry Byrum
OSU Extension Service:
Extension Faculty .......... Chip Bubl
Secretary ................. Vicki Krenz
Guide to Plant Disease Control:
OSU.................. http://plant-disease.ippc.orst.edu
Farm and livestock notes

Too soon to fertilize a pasture?

Western Oregon pastures don’t show much growth from late fall into winter. For years, farmers held off fertilizing until late March. But research in England and Canada indicated that grass was able to respond to fertilizer often a month earlier. Generally, the value of the additional forage significantly exceeded the cost of the nitrogen application.

Research showed that grass roots and crowns begin spring growth when sufficient heat unit targets have been met. They used a centigrade temperature scale to measure heat unit accumulation.

You can do this at home! Take the daily high and low temperature starting January 1st and convert the readings to centigrade (°F -32) x .556 = °C. Thus, (42°F -32) x .556 = 5.56°C. Do that for both the high and low temperatures each day, add the high and low centigrade temperatures (count anything below 0 °C as zero) together, and divide by two. Record each day the °C average and keep a running total from January 1st onwards. When the number hits 200, it is time to consider fertilizing. In the Scappoose/St. Helens area, T-sum 200 often occurs by mid February.

Research in the mid-Willamette valley indicates that T-sum 200 applications of 60#s of N/acre increase the forage by about 1700 pounds/acre through late March.

Additional fertilizer should be applied in early April to boost late spring forage.

Several cautions:

- If the field was grazed hard through much of the fall and winter, it won’t respond to this fertilizer program. Stop fall grazing when the grass is no less than 3 inches tall.
- If you don’t have livestock that can take advantage of this forage, don’t waste the money.
- If hay is your only objective for a field, fertilize in early April.
- If your field tends to be wet, it doesn’t make sense to try early fertilizing and grazing. The long-term soil damage will be too high.
- Rotation grazing makes the best use of the improved forage.
- Some grasses, like bentgrass, will not respond to the fertilizer. Tall fescue, ryegrass, and orchard grass will respond.

To read more, go the OSU bulletin Early Spring Forage Production for Western Oregon Pastures (EM8852-E) linked below:

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/em/em8852-e.pdf

Are you a new (or prospective) farmer?

The videos linked below were produced in New York and have a number of beginning farmers talk about why they chose to farm, what some of the challenges were, and what they have learned to date. I found them to be useful for people just getting started. Cornell “Voice of Experience” videos:

http://www.nybeginningfarmers.org/vidLessons.php
Planning for new fruit trees
The best selection of new fruit trees and berry bushes is available in February. There are several things you can do to help ensure a successful start for them.
- Read catalogs to understand which varieties seem most suitable for our area.
- Get deer fencing up before you plant.
- Spray out existing sod with something like Roundup before you work the ground.
- Dig a hole 3-4 feet wide and about a 1½ feet deep for each new tree.

Grafting workshop
We will have our annual grafting workshop Saturday, February 13th from 9 am – 12 at the Extension office in St. Helens. Space is limited. Call for reservations (503 397-3462). Cost will be $15 and will include five dwarf apple rootstocks. If you have a favorite apple tree that you want to make “copies” of, take some 12” cuttings from last season’s growth (about pencil thickness), using the middle third of the shoots. Bundle and label the cuttings and place them in plastic bag and store them in the refrigerator until the workshop. Free cuttings will be available of several varieties.

Weather facts for January
(St. Helens data)
Mean temperature: 40° F
Average high: 46.5° F
Average low: 33.5° F
Maximum recorded: 63° F
Minimum recorded: 9° F
Average monthly rainfall: 6.13 inches
Extreme 24-hour rainfall: 2.30 inches
Monthly snowfall: 1.28 inches
Average number of days with temperatures below 32° F: 13.1

Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials—without discrimination to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, disability, or disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran status—as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer. OSU Extension programs will provide reasonable accommodation to persons with physical or mental disabilities. Contact the Columbia County Extension office at 503.397.3462 to request reasonable accommodation.