



Country Living

Provided to you by the
OSU Extension Service Columbia County
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The office will be closed Fridays from Noon to 1 p.m.
Website: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/>

December 2015

Programs for you . . .

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

- Dec. 1..... Scappoose Bay Watershed Council. 7 p.m., 57420-2 Old Portland Rd., Warren
- Dec. 3..... Demonstration Garden and other MG Extension Projects Planning Meeting. 10 a.m., OSU Extension Classroom, St. Helens
- Dec. 3..... Master Gardener™ Board Meeting. 10:30 a.m., OSU Extension Classroom, St. Helens
- Dec. 8..... Lower Columbia Watershed Council. 7 p.m., SWCD office-35285 Millard Rd., St. Helens
- Dec. 16..... Soil & Water Conservation District. 7:30 p.m., SWCD office-35285 Millard Rd., St. Helens

Dec 25 & Jan 1 - OSU Columbia County Extension Service closed for Holidays.

Jan. 12, 13 & 14, 2016 **North Willamette Horticulture Society meetings:** Tuesday is Organic session, Wednesday is Vegetable session, and Thursday is Berry session. Details available shortly. Aimed at the commercial grower audience. Go to the web site for more info <http://nwhortsoc.com/>



Chip Bubl

Chip Bubl, OSU Extension Faculty, Agriculture



Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources, Family and Community Health, 4-H Youth, Forestry & Natural Resources, 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

Turf talk

Many people made a decision this summer not to water their lawns. Normally, that is a good choice, especially if you are paying high rates for municipal water. Lawn grasses go dormant if they are not summer watered and rebound when fall rain starts.

But some lawns aren't rebounding so well this year. This has been most common in St. Helens where there are many lawns planted in shallow soils that are on top of basalt rock. It appears that many of these lawns could not stand the degree of dryness that persisted well into October. Lawns on soils with deeper rooting depth do seem to be in better shape.

Since it is too late to re-seed now, watch the lawn area through the winter and decide next spring whether to re-seed the whole area back to a lawn or convert part of it to shrub or flower beds that don't need mowing and get by with a lot less water. You probably will see a number of winter annual weeds get started in the lawn where the grass hasn't recovered

We have one other new turf problem. There is a new (since the early 2000s) moth that has caused spotty but significant problems to lawns, pastures and seed crops in the northern Willamette valley. It is called the large yellow underwing moth (*Noctua pronuba*). The caterpillars can be green or olive green to brown at the same time, perhaps to increase the chance that some avoid predation. There are some linear black

or black tan markings on the top side. They have two distinctive lines on their head (see a head shot and other links in the farm section of this newsletter).

When they show up, they are there by the thousands or millions. People have had garage floors covered with them as they tried to escape heavy rains several weeks ago. They can decimate lawns. There are even reports that dogs have gotten quite sick from eating them. What is clear is that they may continue to feed all winter, mostly at night. There are some control measures using either organic or conventional insecticides. It is not clear whether starlings or other caterpillar feeders will find them to

their liking. Please let me know if you have seen these caterpillars, whether anything seems to be eating them, and how much damage they have done. You might have to go out at night to see them.

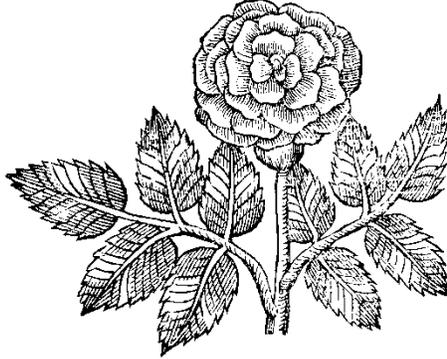


Rose talk

I realize that we are a long way from the rose-infused days of June. Yet winter is a good time to reflect on gardening practices. There is a buzz in the rose world about pruning techniques and I think you will find it interesting.

Rose growers have been taught to approach a bush carefully, removing all crossing and dead branches first. The rose is then lowered to the desired height, selecting the strongest canes and removing the rest. Cuts were supposed to be slanted and 1/4" above an outward facing bud.

Well, some curious Englishmen decided to look at what impact simply shearing the rose to the desired height (usually 12-18") would have on future



performance. No attention was paid to removing dead wood, saving the strongest canes, or where the cut was in relation to the eye. Miracle of miracles, the sheared roses consistently out-performed the "classically" pruned roses.

The study has been repeated in quite a few locations, always with the same result. As this news swirled around the rose community, the explanation for the results seems to center around removing less material, thus leaving more buds leading to more leaves, leading to more effective capturing of sunlight.

It must be emphasized that roses do need to be pruned. No pruning is the worst decision you can make.

In a related matter, it is now not necessary to "deadhead" your rose blossoms down to the first set of five leaflets. Modern technique suggests cutting them off at the neck and leaving all the leaves. As before, this provides the rose with the means to gather in sunshine and turn it into new growth.

Finally, if you don't know about them, the Portland Rose Society is an invaluable source for rose related information. Their

newsletter, from whence these insights came, is always packed with great writing. To become a member, send \$15 (for a one-year membership) to The Portland Rose Society, PO Box 515, Portland, OR 97207-0515. Make sure to include your name, address, email address (if you have one) and phone number.

Christmas gifts for gardeners

- Nice gardening gloves, especially those flexible kinds that rose thorns don't penetrate or nice-fitting leather glove.
- Knee pads or knee benches for gardeners to make close work less of a pain.
- A well made spading fork or shovel.
- Cast aluminum hand tools or specially designed "ergonomic" tools for less muscle strain.
- A greenhouse or a good cold frame (could be home-made).
- High quality loppers or hand pruners
- Gift certificates to garden centers
- A soil thermometer is always useful. So are moisture meters with ~12-inch probes.
- Easy grip hand tools for the gardener with arthritis



That's the Way it Grows

Protecting Your Plants From Winter

I've spent the last couple of dry weekends raking leaves. I guess we've planted a few trees in the 21 years that we have lived here. I don't mind too much, though, because I use the leaves in my compost, in the chicken coop, and to protect my plants during the winter.

While we have a pretty mild climate here in the Northwest, some plants can use protection from frost, freezing, foliar damage, sunscald and breakage.

Mulching is one easy way to protect some plants, such as roses and caneberries, which benefit from about a foot of mulch to cover the crowns. Other tender perennials, such as chrysanthemums and hardy fuchsias, like a few inches of mulch as well. Strawberries will also enjoy a blanket of mulch.

Mulch can be straw, leaves, woodchips, pine straw or compost. I rake my leaves off the lawn into the garden beds. They will help insulate the soil to protect roots from freezing, protect tender plants, and possibly smother some weeds.

If a big freeze threatens, you can temporarily cover small tender plants with a large pot filled with leaves, a circle of chicken wire or a tomato cage filled with leaves, or a circle of cardboard. Filled with leaves, of course. In a pinch, you can throw a blanket over your plants for the night, to protect from frost.

Larger plants like junipers, can be wrapped with burlap or row cover material. You can place stakes around a plant and wrap them to prevent wind-drying, which can cause foliar damage, yellowing, and die-back. The wind sucks water from the foliage that the roots can't supply from dry or frozen ground.

Arborvitae need help weathering winter. They aren't a tender plant, but can incur damage in snow and ice. Arborvitae look like a single trunk, but really are a multi-stemmed shrub. As they grow, these stems get bigger and heavier. Add a load of snow or ice, and the branch bends under the weight. I'm sure we've all seen some beautiful, tall arborvitae with

long arms reaching out with handfuls of snow and ice. Many times, branches break under the weight.

Preventative measures can be taken to save your arborvitae from winter damage. The first is to regularly trim them. Many folks want them to grow as tall as possible and never trim them, but that creates a weak shrub. A buzz cut every year, even when they are young, will help them grow thicker and bushier, and more able to withstand winter.

Another way to prevent arborvitae and juniper damage is to tie up the stems with twine before heavy weather, so the snow and ice cannot accumulate on branches. Just a spiral of twine will do the trick. Try wrapping with Christmas lights and get your decorating done at the same time!

Some trees will need protection from winter sunscald. Sunshine can awaken tender tissue in thin-barked trees like cherry, crabapple, linden, honey locust, maple, mountain ash and plum. Young and newly-planted trees could suffer as well. To reflect the sunlight, whitewash trunks, or use trunk wrap. Even bubble wrap in a pinch.

Potted plants need extra care, as they have no protection from the cold from any angle. The best protection is a greenhouse or to bring plants indoors during the winter. Large pots can go into the garage, barn or shop. Wheel them out for some sunshine on warm days, and water them. You could also surround pots with chicken wire and fill that with leaves for insulation. Be sure to insulate the bottom of the pots from the cold ground. Small pots can sit in a window. My boys' ghost pepper is in the window at the moment, with a single pepper ripening very slowly.

Since my favorite winter activity is coming inside where it's warm, I plan to insulate my plants, cover the veggie garden, and then sit back and plan next year's seed order.

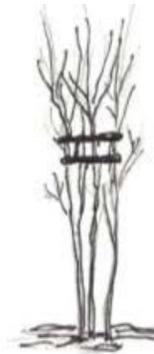
Have a Wonderful Winter!

—Lisa M. Long

Columbia County Master Gardener™

Free gardening ebooks at:

Smashwords.com/profile/view/LisaMarieLong



DECEMBER

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.

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.
- Do not walk on lawns until frost has melted.
- Make sure that landscape plants in protected sites receive water regularly during the winter.

Planting/Propagation

- Good time of year to plant trees, landscape shrubs.

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.

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





The Grapevine
 News for Columbia County Master Gardeners™
www.columbiacountymastergardeners.org



December 2015

Deadline for THE GRAPEVINE - All materials will need to be into the OSU Extension office no later than the 20th of each month.

President's Corner

Greetings folks. We are truly starting to experience our normal fall weather. Here at our house we are having some truly measurable rain; we had one day lately with almost an inch and a half of rain and we have had a couple of nights of temperatures below freezing. It is nice to see the weather change gradually giving plants an opportunity to become accustomed to the lower temperatures. All our Dahlias had been blooming up until the first frost which finally knocked them on their heels.

This is the time of year where we have time to spend with friends and family gathering around the Thanks Giving and Christmas tables. We store up our strength for a new gardening year that is just over the horizon. The seed catalogs have been joining the junk mail in our mailbox and while looking through those some ideas for next year's garden are being developed.

Take this time to reflect on the great year we had and enjoy your holidays.
No two gardens are the same. No two days are the same in one garden. ~Hugh Johnson
 --Wes Bevans

From the Treasurer

Any committees without standing bills for approved projects, **I need the bills by the 15th of December.** Please send them to me at 34571 Millard Rd., Warren, OR 97053.
 --Peggy Crisp CCMG Treasurer



Calendar: At-A-Glance	
Dec. 3..	Demonstration Garden and other MG Extension Projects Planning meeting, 10 a.m., Extension office
Dec. 3..	Board Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Extension office

Volunteer Payback

LOG YOUR HOURS, and turn them into Extension office. Hours worked by veteran as well as new Master Gardeners™ 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 PDF.

Master Gardeners Contacts	
Officers for 2015	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Name</u>
President.....	Wes Bevans
Vice President	Joe Crisp
Past President	Dennis Snyder
Secretary.....	Susan Snyder
Treasurer	Peg Crisp
Historian.....	Lavina Patterson
OMGA Rep	Chuck Petersen
OMGA Alt. Rep.	Deb Broberg
Demo Garden	Linda Bainbridge
.....	Mary Newell-Dickenson
Spring Fair.....	Kathy Johnson
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

Wildlife notes

Protecting new trees from animals

Columbia County has large populations of deer, elk, beaver, and voles (meadow mice). They all are passionate about young tree seedlings. Beaver, of course, like trees of all sizes. Protecting seedlings from these animals (and grass/weeds that steal moisture) will help to get them off to a good start. Fortunately, we don't have many gophers or rabbits.

Voles can be deterred by several strategies. First, they like cover (tall grass, landscape fabrics, and the like) and anything that you can do to reduce the cover (tight mowing and/or herbicides) improves the odds that your cat, owls, coyotes, and hawks will have many vole meals.



Second, mouse traps tied off to stakes can catch quite a few of them. They aren't smart. Third, most of the girdling/feeding damage is to the roots just below and the stem just above the soil line. Voiles don't climb well. Chuck Peterson, a Columbia County Master Gardener, has found that incorporating oyster shell fragments into the soil in the planting hole seems to deter voles from feeding on roots right at the crown. This strategy allows roots to out-grow the voles. I think it is quite a clever idea and provides some calcium on the side. Another strategy in the same vein is to put a wire cage into the ground at planting that can exclude voles though I haven't seen many people have success with that.

Finally, baits are available but they are a challenge to use. They need to be placed in bait-safe containers that don't allow access by non-target animals (pet and others) and used in locations and in a manner consistent with the label.

Deer and elk present different problems. The most permanent solution is a fence tall and strong enough to keep deer and elk out and allow your fruit trees, small fruits, and vegetables to grow. They are expensive and time consuming to build but if the poles are rot resistant, they should last for 30+ years. Fences should be at least 7 feet tall.

Individual tree protectors are good for forest seedlings which only need to be large enough to escape browse and "free to grow". Commercial tree tubes ("Vexar" is one brand) are great for conifers and can be moved up to protect the leader as the tree grows. Some forest owners use homemade tree protectors made from wire fencing to slow leader browsing. Bigger cages can be made for deciduous tree seedlings. Since deer and elk like to remove plant protectors for fun, many forest owners like to stake the cylinders and tie them in place. That said, a playful elk is not easily deterred.

Individual tree protection is not so useful for fruit trees which need to be trained to a specific height and form.

Finally, we get to beaver. Many restoration projects have been destroyed by beaver. Tree protection is important from the first year and for 15-20 years more. If trees are planted where it may seasonally flood, wire tree tubes (the only practical protection) need to be secured tightly to the tree so they don't come loose in high water and cause problems downstream (not to mention having to replace the cylinders). As the tree grows in girth, new cylinders or barriers like metal roofing need to be put around the trees to prevent girdling. The other option is to plant thousands of trees along a corridor with the assumption that enough will survive beaver feasting to make for a successful restoration.

There are some trees that are unpalatable to deer, elk, or beaver. There even vole preferences. But that is another story.

Farm and Livestock Notes

How much hay will a cow consume?

Estimating forage usage by cows is an important part of the task of calculating winter feed needs. Hay or standing forage intake must be estimated in order to make the calculations. Forage quality will be a determining factor in the amount of forage eaten. Higher quality forages contain larger concentrations of important nutrients so animals consuming these forages should be more likely to meet their nutrient needs from the forages. Also cows can eat a larger quantity of higher quality forages.

Higher quality forages are fermented more rapidly in the rumen leaving a void that the animal can re-fill with additional forage. Consequently, forage intake increases. For example, low quality forages (below about 6% crude protein) will be consumed at about 1.5% of body weight (on a dry matter basis) per day. Higher quality grass hays (above 8% crude protein) may be consumed at about 2.0% of body weight. Excellent forages, such as good alfalfa, silages, or green pasture may be consumed at the rate of 2.5% dry matter of body weight per day. The combination of increased nutrient content AND increased forage intake makes high quality forage very valuable to the animal and the producer. With these intake estimates, now producers can calculate the estimated amounts of hay that need to be available.

Using an example of 1200 pound pregnant spring-calving cows, let's assume that the grass hay quality is good and tested 8% crude protein. Cows will voluntarily consume 2.0% of body weight or 24 pounds per day. The 24 pounds is based on 100%



dry matter. Grass hays will often be 7 to 10% moisture. If we assume that the hay is 92% dry matter or 8% moisture, then the cows will consume about 26 pounds per day on an "as-fed basis". Unfortunately, we also have to consider hay wastage when feeding. Hay wastage is difficult to estimate, but generally has been found to be from 6% to 20% (or more). For this example, let's assume 15% hay wastage. This means that approximately 30 pounds of grass hay must be provided for each cow each day that hay is expected to be the primary ingredient in the diet.

[Editor's note: This time of year there is little feed in most pastures, so hay (and perhaps some supplements) are most of what your cattle, sheep, or goats will get. Body weight percent consumption for differing quality hay is the same for sheep and goats, e.g. 2% for a 170-pound ewe is about 4.2 pounds of hay per day taking into account moisture of the hay and wastage. Cold, wet weather and later stages of pregnancy increase the animals' need for need for high quality feed.]

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Beef Specialist

Winter cutworm, drought, and other pasture issues

After great spring pasture growth and some excellent hay put up in May and early June, some pastures are showing signs of stress. There have been reports of large patches of grass that just disappeared and other reports of grass there but struggling to grow once rain started again this fall.

Several things are in play. First, pasture grass grazed too hard over a long period of time have very shallow roots. This favors deeper rooted weeds and can interfere with the ability of grass to bounce back once fall rains start. It is quite possible that some

grass died this summer, especially when hard grazing grass on shallow soils.

In addition, we had the surprise appearance of the winter cutworm, the larvae of the yellow underwing moth. This moth was first described in western Oregon about 15 years ago. A distinguishing feature are the two dark lines on its head (Photo credit: Chris DiFonzo, MSU).

Some pastures (and lawns) had huge numbers of these caterpillars that decimated existing grass. They will continue to feed all winter. Grass and clover seed fields in Washington County are being affected by these insects. Control is complicated on small farms. I am very interested in samples and descriptions of locations where these have been found in high numbers in Columbia County. Call our office and/or drop some of the caterpillars by. For more information and pictures, see the following links:

<http://fieldcropnews.com/2012/11/tracey-is-back-and-so-are-winter-cutworm/>

<http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/edcomm/pdf/CIS/CIS1172.pdf>

Bottom line is that there may be some pastures or areas within pastures that will have to be over-seeded next spring. That in itself is a complex topic to be covered next month.

Why do we care about pasture weeds?

Pasture are mixtures of grass and broadleaf plants. Some were intentionally planted, others started from the soil seed bank or

blew in from who knows where. We prefer palatable grasses and legumes (clover and lotus/trefoil). What we often have in addition (or in the worst case, substituting for the “good” grass and legumes) are false dandelion (the one with the hairy leaves), dock, tansy ragwort, tussock if the ground is wet, bracken fern, buttercup, Canada and bull thistle, and some very coarse grasses.

What all these weeds have in common is that livestock generally don't like to eat them. So they survive and prosper while the more desirable plants are grazed harder and harder until they can't really compete with the

weeds. This results in a progressively lower quality pasture stand. It takes more bites and more grazing time to meet your livestock's needs. You need more acres to produce the pounds of beef, lamb, kid, or poultry than you used to.

In some cases, poisonous weeds may be consumed when there is not much else there. This is true of tansy ragwort (poisonous only to cattle and horses), buttercup (a digestive concern in the fresh state, not hay), bracken fern (especially hard on horses but can affect other classes of livestock), and false dandelion (can cause “stringhalt” in genetically susceptible horses).

If there is enough palatable grass still growing in the pasture, good pasture management can significantly improve the stand. Weeds can be managed by the right herbicides applied at the right time combined with grazing practices that encourage the grass at the expense of the weeds. Re-seeding is expensive and often the last resort.



**Master Gardener™ classes to be offered in St. Helens
Starting February 1st, 2016**



The OSU Master Gardener™ class will be offered in St. Helens on Mondays, starting February 1 and will meet every Monday for 10-11 weeks. The classes will meet from 9:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. with a break for lunch. The class fee is \$80.00.

The classes will be held at the OSU Extension Service class room in St. Helens. Topics to be covered will include vegetable gardening, insect identification, botany for gardeners, plant problem diagnosis, growing fruits and berries, lawn management, weed identification and management, pesticides safety, and plant propagation.

Students completing the class will be expected to pay back about 60-66 hours on community horticultural projects. For more information or to register, contact the OSU Extension Office in St. Helens at 503 397-3462 or email either Chip Bubl (chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu) or Vicki Krenz at (vicki.krenz@oregonstate.edu).



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