



Country Living

Provided to you by the

OSU Extension Service Columbia County

505 N. Columbia River Hwy, St. Helens OR 97051

Phone: 503.397.3462 ▪ Fax: 503.397-3467

Email: chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu

Office hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The office will be closed Fridays from Noon to 1 p.m.

Website: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/>

February 2014

Programs for you . . .

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

- Feb. 4 **Scappoose Bay Watershed Council.** 7 p.m., Scappoose Bay Watershed Council's office, Warren, 503-397-7904, www.scappoosebay-wc.org
- Feb. 6 **Demonstration Garden/MG Extension Projects Planning.** 3:15 p.m., OSU Extension Classroom, St. Helens
- Feb. 6 **Master Gardener™ Board Meeting.** 3:45 p.m., OSU Extension Classroom, St. Helens
- Feb. 11 **Lower Columbia Watershed Council.** 7 p.m., SWCD office-35285 Millard Rd., St. Helens, 503-728-2945, Magruder@clatskanie.com
- Feb. 15..... **Grafting Workshop-Clatskanie.** 9 a.m., Johnson Family Feed, Clatskanie, \$15 fee, call them for reservations at 503-728-3140
- Feb. 19..... **Soil & Water Conservation District.** 7:30 p.m., SWCD office-35285 Millard Rd., St. Helens
- Feb. 22 **Grafting Workshop.** 9 a.m. to Noon, OSU Extension Classroom; \$15 fee, call for reservations, 503-397-3462. Space is limited.
- Feb. 22 **Oregon Small Farms Conference.** OSU, Corvallis. see article on page 8
- Feb. 27 **Master Gardener™ Chapter Meeting.** 6:30 p.m. Speaker will be Don Sprague, The Gopher Guy, OSU Extension Classroom, St. Helens. **The public is invited. Free.**
- Feb. 27 **Upper Nehalem Watershed Council.** 7 p.m., Vernonia Grange, <http://nehalem.org/> 503-429-0869
- Feb. 28-Mar. 2. **Yard, Garden and Patio Show.** Sponsored by Dennis' Seven Dees Nursery. It will be held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. There are many great speakers, exhibits, display gardens and lots of other events of interest to the new or experienced gardener. There is a modest entry cost that gets you in to all the seminars and other special events. For complete information and speaker schedules, visit their website at <http://www.ygpsshow.com>
- Mar. 8. **Tree Sale - Columbia County Small Woodlands Association.** 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Lawrence Oil, St. Helens - Arrive early for best selections!
- Mar. 15 **Pruning Demonstration.** 10 a.m. to Noon, Master Gardener Demo Garden, Columbia County Fairgrounds. **Public welcome!**
- Apr. 3 **Homesteading in St. Helens: Producing Food on a Small Lot.** 7 p.m., St. Helens Public Library, see the back page for more details.

Chip Bubl

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

Row covers available again!

The interest in row covers continues to increase. For those of you that missed the buzz, row covers are made from a gauzy fabric. They come in six-foot widths and, when we cut the roll, in lengths of 50 or 100 feet. Row covers are used in vegetable production on farms and home gardens.



They serve several purposes:

Covers increase temperatures around transplants and growing plants by 4-6 degrees during the day and 3-4 degrees at night. This is valuable heat in the spring and fall.

Seeds planted under row covers aren't seen by crows.



Soils warm with the covers but don't crust, so seed emergence is faster and more even.

Covers can be left with enough slack so that broccoli-sized plants can grow tall underneath them.

Covers can keep insects out like carrot rust flies and cabbage root maggots.

However, slugs prosper under covers so slug controls are needed. Weeds also like it under cover, so persistent weeding pays.



In 2012, we sold, in 50 or 100 foot pieces, about a mile (!!) of cover. This year we are selling one ounce covers versus the half ounce ones of previous years. Cost is \$20 for a 6 x 100' piece or \$10 for a 50' one. The benefit of the heavier piece is that there is a little better heat retention and the fabric is stronger and less likely to rip. You cut them down further to fit your gardening needs. Call our office (503 397-3462) if you want some. It went fast in previous years.

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug

Oregon has had the brown marmorated stink bug for at least seven years. Other areas of the country, especially the east coast, have also acquired this pest since 2001. Tree fruit growers along the eastern seaboard are reporting significant losses from the pest and field numbers that are hard to believe. We saw damage in Oregon (including Columbia County) this year on peppers, tomatoes, blueberries, blackberries, and late apples.

As with many pests, the BMSB does not have many natural enemies. It can fly and apparently reproduce in fairly prodigious numbers. It causes damage on fruit crops, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, green beans, and corn by injecting its plant juice extracting stylet and sucking up the sugar rich cell contents. As it feeds on apples, it can inject toxins causing corky cell growth leading to un-saleable fruit. In softer fruits like tomatoes and peppers, the stylet carries yeasts which then invade the soft tissue and cause fruit rots. The insect can also cause significant damage to some ornamental trees and shrubs since they can feed through the bark of young trees and new twigs on any tree. None of this is very comforting.

The early life stages, called instars, look like smaller, distorted versions of the adult stink bug. All the instars are

capable of feeding on fruit. One useful identifying tip is that the adult has antennae that have alternating dark and light bands.

Since they are so mobile, short-term insecticides haven't worked well. Kill the bugs in the field and new ones move in. In commercial settings, the longer-lived products are disruptive of natural predators of other insect pests so farmers prefer to avoid these treatments but they may not have other options.

We don't yet know how significant the BMSB will become in Oregon. Research is ongoing to understand their life history here (number of generations, etc.) and which crops will be most susceptible. Maybe we will get lucky and have a natural predator already at work keeping the insect in check. Observations you can make in your gardens will be useful. Here is a great resource <http://www.stopbmsb.org/where-is-bmsb/state-by-state/OR/>



Looking toward spring gardens

This has been an interesting winter again. Right now, we are very short of normal winter rainfall. We may pay for this later, but last year, the same conditions allowed gardens and farms to be tilled a month to two months before normal. Many fields and garden plots produced an extra crop. Watch your soils and if they are dry enough to till without damaging them, it may be worth the gamble in at least part of your garden (or farm).

It is time to start some vegetable plants in your greenhouse or cold frame. Vegetable species are started at different times depending on their tolerance to cool conditions and light frosts. For example, cabbage family plants are generally tolerant of temperatures down to 28° F once they have gotten to a certain size and have been hardened off. They can be started now.

Hardening off means taking your transplant out of the greenhouse environment for several hours per day prior to transplanting. They are placed in indirect light and allowed to adjust to cooler conditions and wind. A week of hardening is often enough.

After transplanting, vegetables can be protected by hot caps, floating row covers (a gauzy fabric that traps some heat) or plastic cloches. Cloches add more heat but must be opened and closed to avoid "cooking" the transplants.

Tomatoes and other sub-tropical vegetables require more care. They cannot stand frosts and need more heat. Peppers are very intolerant of cold soils. Tomatoes are usually started in mid-March for transplant out by mid-May. Peppers should be started two weeks later for early June transplanting.

It helps to preheat the soil before transplanting (or seeding for that matter) by putting clear plastic over the soil. This can raise the soil temperature from 45° to 65-70° in a matter of two or three days.

Spring frost date planning

<u>Location</u>	<u>Average last date (90%)</u>		
	24°	28°	32°
Portland	2/27	3/19	4/19
Hillsboro	2/28	4/17	4/30
Vernonia	4/7	4/21	5/29
Astoria	2/15	3/24	4/30



These averages represent the 90% certainty that the last spring temperatures will occur by that date. Many people use the 50% average which usually backs the last spring temperature about 3 weeks earlier or the first fall one also about three weeks earlier. I think South County tracks with the Portland station quoted but as we go into the hills, the Hillsboro data becomes more germane.



That's the Way it Grows

Got Bees?

It's now time to order your Orchard Mason bee cocoons from suppliers. They need to ship when temperatures are low to keep them from emerging.

My little bees are hibernating away right now in my refrigerator. I can't wait for my cherry trees to start blossoming, so I can bring out my bee cocoons and watch them hatch.

Last year, I bought cocoons, along with an adorable pine house and long-lasting wooden trays for nesting. I wanted to make Mason bees a permanent part of my garden because of the amazing job of pollinating they do. I *really* want more peaches and cherries.

Mason bees are very charming and sweet. They are so gentle, I can get them to crawl onto my finger and take off from my hand. I hang my bee house on the front porch, so I can watch them. They come and go all day, bringing pollen and nectar in to feed their young. Then they gather mud to plug off egg chambers, and start all over again. Eventually, they die because they have worn out their wings.

They pollinate so well because they don't have pollen sacks, instead covering themselves with pollen while gathering. Mason bees also tend to land directly onto the stigma of a flower, pressing pollen from their abdomens right where it needs to be. The honey bee, however, usually lands on the flower petals and heads for the nectar.

I am buying more cocoons this year, so my little bee house can fill up faster. About 40% of the eggs laid are female, so I will need more pollinators to add to my little brood. The males don't pollinate. They just hang around to mate when the females emerge.

I buy from family-run Ruhl Bee Supply, in Gladstone. They have store hours, or you can shop at their online store at www.bee-outside.com/orchardmasonbees.aspx.



Get Out There With Your Pruners

It's time to prune your hybrid tea roses to keep those big blooms coming. Your roses should have been pruned already against winter damage to about waist-high (you did that in fall, didn't you?), but now

they need to be severely pruned to stimulate new growth for the spring.

First, make sure your pruners are sharpened; you don't want to mash the branches off. I prefer a bypass pruning shear over an anvil-style, which damages one side of the branch.

Here's what you prune:

- Cut out all dead or injured wood flush with the bud union. Leaving a stub to die back could invite disease.
- Take out old, thick canes that no longer produce strong growth.
- Get rid of weak, spindly, or twiggy branches. They won't grow you those big blooms, and they take up the plant's energy making more twiggy shoots.
- Prune out branches that cross through the bush's center. You want good airflow to resist fungal diseases.
- Cut back the remaining canes to the first or second outward-facing bud. The plant should be about one-third the size it was in fall.

Don't compost your rose clippings or leaves. You don't want disease hanging around your garden. Black spot can over-winter in the decaying litter left under the plants.

Buying rose Bushes

I have to confess, I've never paid over \$10 for a rose bush, and most of mine do fairly well. I don't win ribbons, but I love to go out on a summer's day and tour my rose garden to "smell the roses."

You can order roses online and from expensive catalogs, but I prefer to go to a big garden center that has a huge supply to choose from. There will be some stinkers in the bunch, but you can also find good plants.

I look for bushes with several large canes, no damage, buds and growth intact, no crossing canes, and disease resistance. Plant them well, tend them well, and you will be rewarded. And if the deer eat one, or frost kills one (because you didn't protect them), then you paid less than ten bucks and can replace it.

—Lisa M. Long

Columbia County Master Gardener™
Compost, rock and bark dust delivered; 397-2989

FEBRUARY 2014

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

- Tune up lawn mower and garden equipment before the busy season begins.
- Have soil test performed on garden plot to determine nutrient needs. Contact your local Extension office for a list of testing laboratories or view EM 8677 online: <http://bit.ly/ngufWK>.
- Select and store healthy scion wood for grafting fruit and nut trees. Wrap in damp cloth or peat moss and place in plastic bag. Store in cool place.
- Plan an herb bed, for cooking and for interest in the landscape. Among the choices are parsley, sage, chives, lavender. Choose a sunny spot for the herb bed, and plant seeds or transplants after danger of frost has passed
- Plan to add herbaceous perennial flowers to your flowering landscape this spring. Examples include candytuft, peony, penstemon, coneflower

Maintenance and Clean Up

- Repair winter damage to trees and shrubs.
- Make a cold frame or hotbed to start early vegetables or flowers.
- Fertilize rhubarb with manure or a complete fertilizer.
- Incorporate cover crops or other organic matter into soil.
- Prune and train grapes; make cuttings.
- Prune fruit trees and blueberries.
- Prune deciduous summer-blooming shrubs and trees; wait until April in high elevations of eastern and central Oregon
- Prune and train trailing blackberries (if not done prior late August); prune black raspberries
- Prune fall-bearing raspberries (late in Feb. or early March)
- Prune clematis, Virginia creeper, and other vining ornamentals.



Planting/Propagation

- Plant windowsill container gardens of carrots, lettuce, or parsley.
- Plan to add herbaceous perennial flowers to your flowering landscape this spring: astilbe, candytuft, peony, anemone.
- Good time to plant fruit trees and deciduous shrubs. Replace varieties of ornamental plants that are susceptible to disease with resistant cultivars.
- Plant asparagus if the ground is warm enough.
- Plant seed flats of cole crops (cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts), indoors or in greenhouse.
- Where soil is dry enough and workable, plant garden peas and sweet peas. Suggested varieties of garden peas include: Corvallis, Dark Green Perfection, Green Arrow, Oregon Sugar Pod, Snappy, Knight, Sugar Snap, Oregon Trail, Oregon Sugar Pod II.
- Good time to plant new roses.

Pest Monitoring and Management

- Monitor landscape plants for problems. Don't treat unless a problem is identified.
- Use delayed-dormant sprays of lime sulfur for fruit and deciduous trees and shrubs.
- Remove cankered limbs from fruit and nut trees for control of diseases such as apple anthracnose, bacterial canker of stone fruit and eastern filbert blight. Sterilize tools before each new cut.
- Control moles and gophers with traps.
- Elm leaf beetles and box-elder bugs are emerging from hibernation and may be seen indoors. They are not harmful, but can be a nuisance. Remove them with a vacuum or broom and dustpan.
- Monitor for European crane fly and treat lawns if damage has been verified.

Houseplants and Indoor Gardening

- Pasteurize soil for starting seedlings in pots or flats, or use clean, sterile commercial mixes.



The Grapevine
 News for Columbia County Master Gardeners™
www.columbiacountymastergardeners.org
February 2014



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

Good News! The days are getting longer and that means Spring is getting closer. My seed orders are arriving and I'm in the mood to start planting.

This past year Sus and I put in a 15' x 36' hoop house (with the help from friends to place the plastic). I've got some raised beds built and have plans to stretch my growing season. I didn't have a lot of time to get things started but I do have Walla Walls, shallots and spinach (which is doing really well!).

We have to start our sweet potatoes right away because it takes time to get them started. I built some raised beds for them because we found they grow much better (bigger and straighter) in the loose soil.

Busy pruning the apples and collecting scion wood for the grafting class which is February 8th - 9 AM until noon at the Extension office and February 15th 9 AM until noon in Clatskanie.

Hope your holidays went well and happy gardening!
 --Dennis Snyder

Tomato Grafting, Second Year

Last year I learned how to graft tomatoes. I made a lot of mistakes, composted several failures, and developed a few tricks along the way. Finally, I planted out five healthy survivors with a control beside each.

My experiment wasn't much more than that. As the summer progressed I notice that my grafted tomatoes recovered better when they didn't get the water they should have had due to a vacation mishap and as fall approached it seemed as if the grafted tomatoes weren't going to give up.

My grafted Indigo Rose and Amish Paste had at least a third again as many tomatoes as the controls. I also grafted an Amish Paste to a Celebrity rootstock just to see how it compared. I'd read that the disease resistance of the Celebrity hybrid is enough to improve production. That may be true where disease is more of a problem, but if my Amish Paste\Celebrity plant had any increase in production it was small and it didn't produce any later into the fall than the control.

All of which was just enough to make me think grafted tomatoes might be worth a little extra effort for home gardeners. Sure you can set out two tomato plants and increase production, but this way you can plant one

Calendar: At-A-Glance	
Feb. 6..	Demonstration Garden and other MG Extension Projects Planning meeting, 3:15 p.m., Extension office
Feb. 6..	Board Meeting, 3:45 p.m., Extension office
Feb. 19	Bug Crew Meeting, 6:30-8 p.m., Extension office
Feb. 23.	Chapter Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Speaker: Don Sprague, OSU Extension Classroom, St. Helens

tomato, use one cage, and have available garden space for zucchini.

This year, in order to answer questions about the benefits of various rootstocks, I'm grafting Amish Paste to the organic generative rootstock, Estamino, SuperNatural® which claims to boost yield and vigor, and the rootstock I used last year, RST-04-105-T. The experiment will be set up at the Scappoose Food Bank Garden beside the Scappoose Senior Center. I'll keep a journal so I have real data to share. If anyone wants to join me in this experiment or exchange rootstock seeds let me know.

Please drop by next summer and see how they grow.
 --Deb Brimacombe

Interested in Bumble Bees?



Wednesday, **February 19**, at 6:30 p.m. in the Extension Office classroom, Ernie Fiori will share what he has been learning about Bumble Bees, their life cycles, and how we can support and encourage them to live in our yards and gardens.

-- New Bug Crew

Dues – Due!



Thanks to those who have paid their membership dues. For those of you who have not yet sent your \$10 checks, please make them payable to CCMGA, mail to me at 265 S.13th St., St. Helens, 97051, or turn them in at chapter meetings, or drop them off at the Extension Office. Remember to let me know of any changes in your contact information for the Roster that will be published in early April. **You must pay your dues by March 31 to be included in the 2014 Roster.**

--Gail Martyn, Treasurer

The natural world

Planting forests, big or small (and the justly famous Columbia County Small Woodlands Assn. tree sale)

Many landowners in Columbia County have a mix of forest and open ground. Often, there are small areas that need to be reforested. There are several ways to acquire the appropriate trees. You can order them from any of several nurseries. Generally, you have to order in bundles of 50-100 seedlings. Call us for contact information for these nurseries.

The Columbia County Small Woodlands Association has an annual tree sale in St. Helens. You can purchase a variety of trees in very small quantities. The sale this year will be on Saturday, March 8th at the Lawrence Oil parking lot (845 N. Columbia River Highway) in St. Helens from 8:00 am- 2:00pm. They sell both forest tree seedlings, some native shrubs, and some ornamental tree seedlings. Get there **early** for the best selection. It is very well attended.

It is possible to transplant wild seedlings. Sometimes you can find them on a road right-of-way. It is always a good idea to contact the County Road Department to see that it is all right to remove the seedlings. Dig smaller trees that haven't been growing in deep shade. Trees should come from an elevation similar to the one in which they will be grown. It is best not to dig trees on a cold day or from frozen ground. Don't cause traffic problems or leave a mess.

Protect your seedlings from deer by either deer protecting tubes or by a repellent spray like Deer Away™. Protect from field mice girdling by wrapping the base of them stem with aluminum foil.

Finally, trees should be transplanted as soon as possible after digging or purchasing them. If you can't, place them in a garden bed to grow one more year and transplant the following

winter. Forest tree planting should be complete by the end of March.

Elk die from eating ornamental yew



The *Clatskanie Chief* reported that elk grazed a cemetery in Warrenton that had been planted to English yew. Six elk out of a herd of 50 died from foraging on yew limbs. This ornamental is less in favor now but has been widely planted in the past as hedges or accent specimens. Yew is highly toxic to all livestock and apparently elk as well. One of the worst cattle poisoning cases I have seen came from yew and other ornamental branches thrown over a fence for feed. About six 600 pound steers died within an hour or so of eating the material. With the elk, western yew was formerly a part of our forests but is now rare, a consequence of logging and replanting practices. Perhaps the elk once knew to avoid yews but have forgotten. However, animals are not always the best judges of what they can and can't eat. Columbia County cattle have died from licking broken car batteries. Condition (disease and nutrition) play a role in their choices. Information on the condition and ages of the elk were not given.

Get to Know your Watershed Council

We have three great councils that help residents engage in protecting and improving our watersheds. The Scappoose Bay W.C. covers the systems that drain into Multnomah Channel; the Lower Columbia W.C. covers the drainage area along the Columbia river from Columbia City to Westport; and the Upper Nehalem W.C. covers the Upper Nehalem drainage around Vernonia/Mist. See the calendar on the front page for contact info and meeting times.



Farm and livestock notes

OSU Small Farms Conference

The OSU Small Farms Conference is an annual event held in Corvallis, this year on Saturday, February 22nd. The event will be useful to almost anyone looking to diversify crop and/or marketing options. The small Farms team goes to great lengths to put together “meaty” topics of use to the serious farmer. A number of people from Columbia County have gone in the past and have felt it was worth their time. For complete information on the conference including offerings and cost, go to <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/2014sfcannounc>

Spring-Calving Cow Herd

- **Start cows (and steers) on the high magnesium mineral supplement right away to prevent grass tetany!** Consider protein supplementation if hay is less than 10% crude protein, which is often the case in Columbia County. If cows are thin, begin energy (grain) supplementation now.

- Consider vaccinating the cows to help prevent calf scours. Talk to your vet.
- Get ready for calving season! See that all equipment and materials are ready, including obstetrical equipment, record forms or booklets, eartags, scales for obtaining birth weights, etc. Prepare a calving area where assistance can be provided easily if needed. Purchase ear tags for calves and number them ahead of time if possible. Plan for enough labor to watch/assist during the calving period.
- Move early-calving heifers and cows to pastures that are relatively small and easily accessible to facilities in case calving assistance is needed. Keep them in good condition but don't overfeed them at this time. Increase their nutrient intake after they calve.



- Keep replacement heifer calves gaining enough to reach their "target" breeding weight (65% mature weight) by spring.

- Study the performance of last year's calf crop and plan for improvement. Plan your breeding program and consider a better herd sire(s). Select herd sires which will allow you to meet your goals and be willing to pay for superior animals.

General

- Feed hay in areas where mud is less of a problem. Consider preparing a feeding area with gravel over geotextile fabric.

- Increase feed as the temperature drops, especially when the weather is cold and damp.

- Provide water at all times. Cattle need 5 to 11 gallons per head daily even in the coldest weather. Be aware of frozen pond hazards – winter isn't over yet. Keep ice "broken" so that cattle won't walk out on the pond trying to get water.

- Consider renovating and improving pastures with legumes, especially if they have poor stands of grass. Purchase seed and get equipment ready this month. *Adapted from an article by Dr. Roy Burns, University of Kentucky*

What happens in the first 24 hours affects the calf for life

You have heard the warning: “What happens in Las Vegas, stays in Las Vegas!!!” Perhaps you have not heard: “What happens in the first 24 hours, impacts the rest of a calf’s life”! Veterinary scientists monitored health events and growth performance in range beef calves to measure and correlate production factors with baby calf passive immune status. Colostrum is the first milk produced by a cow upon giving birth. Baby calves were classified with “Inadequate” or “Adequate” Passive

Immune status based on a blood sample taken at 24 hours of age. Growth performance and health of the calves was monitored from birth to weaning, and after weaning throughout the feedlot phase.

Calves that were sick or died prior to weaning had the lowest levels of passive immunity. Calves with “inadequate” passive immunity had a 5.4 times greater risk of death prior to weaning, 6.4 times greater risk of being sick during the first 28 days of life, and 3.2 times greater risk of being sick any time prior to weaning when compared to calves with “adequate” passive transfer.

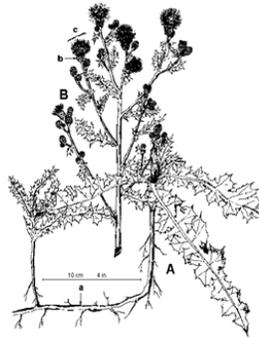
The risk of being sick in the feedlot was also three times greater for “Inadequate” compared to “Adequate” calves. Passive immune status was also indirectly associated with growth rates through its effects on calf health. Sickness during the first 28 days of life was associated with a 35 pound lower expected weaning weight. Respiratory disease in the feedlot resulted in a .09 lb lower expected average daily gain.

Passive immunity obtained from colostrum was an important factor determining the health of calves both pre- and post-weaning, and indirectly influenced calf growth rate during the same periods.

Cow calf producers can help themselves and the future owners of their calves, by properly growing replacement heifers, providing a good health program for cows and heifers, and providing natural or commercial colostrum replacers to calves that do not receive it in adequate quantities on their own. Most of the transfer of antibodies from colostrum to the calf happens in the first 6 hours. The first day sets the stage for life. *Adapted from an article by Glen Selk, University of Oklahoma.*



Controlling Canada thistle in pastures



Canada thistle is one our worst pasture weeds. It is a “wandering” herbaceous perennial plant. That means that it spreads outward from its root systems, not just through seeds. This is why you see semi-circular patches of this plant with multiple (30+) shoots.

People often think the shoots are separate plants. They are not! The shoots are connected together by common roots.

What is clear is that for every 1 pound of Canada thistle plants you have in your pasture, you lose 2 pounds of grass which isn’t growing there. Short of training your cows, ewes, and does to eat it (not easy), you need a management strategy that relies on judicious use of herbicides, good rotation grazing, and some fertilizer.

Fertilizing alone will not work. Fertilized Canada thistle grows faster, sends up more shoots, and will out-compete grass. But if you spray the thistle and fertilize, you can improve the amount of forage significantly in comparison to just fertilizing. Timing here is a challenge. Clopyralid (Stinger™ and others) or a 2,4-D/dicamba mix (Weedmaster and others) needs to be sprayed in mid-May to early June. You would then fertilize and hope that rain came to deliver the nitrogen to the roots. A better option might be to spray the thistles in September (assuming they had been cut back during hay making or clipped earlier) followed with fall fertilizing and little or no grazing until spring.

Pastures that are spring grazed intensely and then allowed to recover for 30 days will compete well with thistle, especially if you spray the weeds. Continuous grazing of a field is the worst approach and is almost guaranteed to help Canada thistle grow.

Homesteading in St. Helens: Producing Food on a Small Lot

Thursday, April 3, 7 p.m.

This program will cover producing and preserving food for your family and friends. Topics covered will include vegetable crops for small spaces, extending the gardening year, soil preparation, growing fruit in small places, foraging beyond your yard and food preservation options. Speakers are Chip Bubl, Dennis Snyder and Sue Snyder. Held at the St. Helens Public Library, 375 S. 18th St., St. Helens, 503-397-4544.

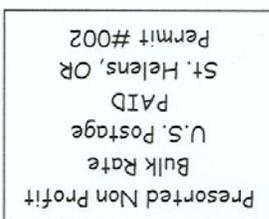
Grafting Workshops

We will have our annual grafting workshop Saturday, **February 22nd** 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. ***NOTE:** a grafting workshop will also be held in **Clatskanie on Saturday, February 15** from 9 to Noon at the Johnson Family Feed store in Clatskanie. Space is limited, so please call the feed store at 503-728-3140 to register.

2014 OSU/Columbia Master Gardener™ Class Will Be Held in Vernonia

The classes will be held in Vernonia each Thursday from about 9:30 am – 3 p.m. starting March 6th 2014; there will be about 10 class days on successive weeks. Classes will start in March to avoid the worst weather and will go through early May. Cost of the class series will still be \$75. Gardeners from all parts of the county are welcome. If you are interested in the Vernonia OSU Master Gardener program, please call the Extension office 503 397-3462 to get more information and to get on the mailing/email list.

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Oregon State University
Columbia County OSU Extension Service
505 N. Columbia River Highway
St. Helens, OR 97051