



Country Living

Provided to you by the
OSU Extension Service Columbia County
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January 2016

Programs for you . . .

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

- Jan. 1 New Year's Holiday, Extension Service office closed
- Jan. 5 Scappoose Bay Watershed Council. 7 p.m., 57420-2 Old Portland Rd., Warren
- Jan. 7 Demonstration Garden and other MG Extension Projects Planning Meeting. 10 a.m., OSU Extension Classroom, St. Helens
- Jan. 7 Master Gardener™ Board Meeting. 10:30 a.m., OSU Extension Classroom, St. Helens
- Jan. 12 Lower Columbia Watershed Council. 7 p.m., SWCD office-35285 Millard Rd., St. Helens
- Jan. 12, 13 & 14 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/>
- Jan. 13 - Mar. 16 Ag Entrepreneurship & Business Planning Course. WSU, Hazel Dell, WA. Wednesday evenings 6 - 9pm; Cost: \$100 per farm or family - see page 7 for more details
- Jan. 18 Martin Luther King Holiday. Extension Service office closed
- Jan. 20 Soil & Water Conservation District. 7:30 p.m., SWCD office-35285 Millard Rd., St. Helens
- Jan. 28 Master Gardener™ Chapter Meeting & Graduation. 6:30 p.m. Speaker will be Neil Bell, OSU Extension Agent, "Plants and Plantings for Pollinators," St. Helens High School - Loo Witt Room, St. Helens. The public is invited. Free.
- Jan. 28 Upper Nehalem Watershed Council. 7 p.m., Vernonia Grange, <http://nehalem.org/> 503-429-0869

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

After the wind storm

The December 21st wind storm knocked down quite a few trees throughout Columbia County. Most of the trees that fell over were Douglas fir but that is the tree we have the most of anyway. In my immediate neighborhood, the trees fell almost due east. At about one o'clock in the afternoon, the storm switched from a fairly normal SW to NE winter wind pattern to one that blew directly from the west to the east. I think that is when many of the trees went down. In several places, I noticed trees that went down in groups. Most trees that fell didn't have any buffer behind them to the west. Areas adjacent to recently cut areas were more likely to go down but that is normal.

Hardwoods like oaks (mainly a south county issue) and maples shed big, weakened limb sections but weren't as prone to falling completely. Alders fell or snapped off.

After these storms, it is amazing that Douglas fir trees can stay upright at all, even in the best of times. Their root wads seem frightfully shallow and of narrow diameter. Certainly, some of the root system is left behind in the soil as the tree falls over. But the overall impression isn't comforting. My sense is that the deeper the soil, the deeper the root system. This is mostly a function of the height of the winter water table which in turn affects the depth root distribution. The higher the water table, the shallower the root wad. But of the millions of Douglas fir trees in the county, only a few actually fell.

It is possible but not easy pulling up smaller fallen trees to save them. If you have access

to a winch, that works best. In fact, it is about all that works unless the tree is really tiny. Often, it helps to remove some upper branches to reduce the weight to be winched (this does not apply if it is a conifer which really can't be top-pruned much). Pruning to balance the canopy once it is pulled upright will also help stabilize it.

The tree will need to be supported for the first year or so and pruned consistently to avoid a top heavy tree and allow for good airflow during future wind storms. But usually this procedure isn't worth the effort. Planting a new tree is better. A lot of firewood was made last week.



The future of carrots

Carrots are hot, especially in organic gardening and farming. But carrots have issues. They are notoriously poor weed competitors, they suffer from carrot rust fly maggot feeding that renders the roots unsaleable, and they get diseases that can turn the roots bitter. All reduce saleable yield. Organic tools to manage these problems are weak and/or expensive. This pushes up the cost of carrots.

A team of plant pathologists and vegetable production specialists are looking at the performance of a number of popular and experimental carrot varieties grown under organic conditions with consistent management inputs and objectives. This research will help identify some of the best performers for immediate use and could identify genetic material that may be good candidates for future breeding projects. For example, one variety has very heavy top growth that might help improve carrot weed competitiveness.

But for now, weed your carrots early and often and thin them for best yields. Cover them with row covers if you have a problem

with carrot rust fly maggot. And plant them on the best soils or beds you have.

Odds and ends

With power outages, there was a lot more wood burned last week. **Wood ashes** can be used in the garden annually at the rate of about 1-2 pounds per 100 square feet of garden bed. Don't use them around acid-loving plants like blueberries, rhododendrons, azaleas, or heathers. Apply them to fruit trees, blackberries, raspberries, vegetable gardens, and around most deciduous ornamental trees and shrubs. The ash provides mainly calcium and potassium.

With the forecast for some drier days as this is written, it is worth putting on **dormant sprays**. Basically, there are two broad types. Lime-sulfur and copper based products reduce problems with fungi and bacteria. Lime sulfur is harder to find. Both work well. The copper needs a spreader-sticker for winter applications. Dormant oils control insects like overwintering scale (not a huge issue here) and some stranded aphids. It isn't too effective on the insects that fly like apple maggot flies or codling moths. Those need to be controlled when they are active from mid-May onwards. A few cautions: lime sulfur is caustic so wear eye protection when using it. Don't apply dormant oil within a month of applying sulfur. It is best to apply all dormant sprays when the temperatures are over 40 degrees. Use on apples, pears, cherries, plums, peaches, blueberries, cultivated blackberries like Marions, and raspberries.

Sort through your seeds, discarding packets that are more than 3-years old. While germination might still be ok, seedling vigor decreases faster than the germination rate. In the competition with weeds, you don't want weak seedlings. Order new seeds while the selection is the best.

It is not too soon to start **cabbage and onion family transplants**, particularly if you can protect them with a cloche or covering when they are ready to go outside in early March. Put the seedlings in a place that gets as much light as possible to keep them from becoming "leggy". Keep good spacing in the seedling trays to also reduce the "leggy" problem. Start putting them outside for several hours or more a day in the two weeks before transplanting. Bring them in at night. Start **lettuce** about a month later.

For a fun and entertaining late night, grab a flashlight and go out to your lawn or garden to spot the **feeding of European crane flies or the winter cutworm**. If you find these fairly large caterpillar-like larvae moving about, bring them to the office for a positive identification or you can also send me a picture. Both can damage lawns and both will do some damage to garden crops as well. For more information on the winter cutworm, a new and serious pest, see last month's newsletter.

Apply two inches of **mulch around blueberries** as soon as possible to control mummyberry. See article in the farm section of this newsletter.

Encourage your friends or children to vegetable garden. Start small. A 10 x 10 space can provide a lot of produce. Start with two tomato plants (a cherry type like *Sungold*, perhaps and a slicer) that are in big enough cages. Add some lettuce from transplants, some onions from sets, some kale, perhaps some green beans, peppers or other vegetables. Maybe one zucchini. Keep it simple. Help them weed and water until they get the hang of it. In the fall, add organic matter like compost and/or leaves, lime (if not already added in the spring) at 10 pounds for that space, and cover the plot with black plastic until the growing season starts again next spring.



That's the Way it Grows

Looking Forward to Spring

Winter sure has hammered the Northwest. All that wishing we did for rain during the summer...well, be careful what you wish for.

I am so happy that we got the garden covered before all this rain. I'm sure water made its way into the garden, but the heavy rains weren't able to compact the soil.

We are lucky that we didn't have trees fall over on our property. I will be getting out the pruning tools in a couple of weeks, though. Since it's too nasty to do much outside, I've spent some time studying my fruit trees from the windows. Now that the leaves are all stripped off, I can see the trees'



structure.

First off, all those suckers have got to go. My trees need buzz cuts. The cherries and plums are the worst. They seem to sprout from every possible bud and form a tangle of twigs. I will have to start the pruning process with those first, while my enthusiasm is still intact. Otherwise, I just get tired of all the trimming and leave off at the last couple of trees.

I've been trimming during the summer months a bit, so as not to encourage so much new growth by hard pruning during the winter. Hard pruning encourages new growth from dormant buds. However, I will be heading back limbs on my peach tree to prevent more breakage due to heavy fruit load, and to encourage more growth closer to the trunk. I still have to remove the stub from the limb that split open and fell during the summer. I decided to cut it back to the trunk in the winter, so the large cut would heal over and not "bleed."

Again, be careful what you wish for, because the huge crops of peaches that grew on my tree damaged it, and future crops.

I attribute the huge loads of peaches, plums and cherries to hatching out my mason bees right before those trees bloomed. This year, I harvested more than twice the number of cocoons from last year. I plan to hatch out groups at intervals, so the pears, blueberries and apples are well-pollinated too.

I encourage everyone to look into raising mason bees. They really are amazing pollinators, and very

sweet. Mason Bees are solitary, meaning they don't work as a group. They have no colony to protect, so are extremely gentle, and don't sting unless threatened. They sun themselves in the morning, and will walk right onto my hand.

I've found the secret to a good crop of mason bee cocoons is to provide the bees with a constant supply of clay mud. The name *mason* bee comes from the fact that they collect mud to plug their nesting tubes, separating each egg chamber from another. I add water to my stash of clay daily and stir, making a pudding-like mud for them. They stick around my bee house then, instead of looking elsewhere for better mud.

Good resources for mason bee cocoons and supplies are Ruhl Bee Supply in Wilsonville, or Crown Bees. Both can be found online. I really like the bee houses and wooden tray systems. I invested in the wooden trays, because they are reusable for years, and I don't have to peel open all those paper tubes. (I don't believe in leaving the cocoons in the tubes, as I like removing any mites or predatory larvae). Having put out both tubes and the trays, I found my bees preferred the wooden trays hands down.



I've talked to a few people who had disappointing vegetable gardens this year. My own was not-so-hot this year. I usually have green beans and tomatoes coming out my ears. This year, I barely picked enough beans for a few meals, and only a few strawberries. The peppers grew so slowly they, didn't set fruit, and the tomatoes were slow and sparse. Only my dependable, well-established bed of asparagus didn't fail me this year. I blame the deer and not buying my tomato plants from the Master Gardener's Spring Fair. Can't wait for Spring.

—Lisa M. Long

Columbia County Master Gardener™

*Free gardening ebooks at:
Smashwords.com/profile/view/LisaMarieLong*

JANUARY

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: extension.oregonstate.edu/find-us or for a list of laboratories view EM 8677 online: <http://bit.ly/ngufWK>.
- 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 wind
- 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.
- 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, seedling geraniums.
- Gather branches of quince, forsythia, and flowering cherries; bring indoors to force early bloom.





The Grapevine
 News for Columbia County Master Gardeners™
www.columbiacountymastergardeners.org
January 2016



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

Welcome to the New Year for the Master Gardeners of Columbia County! This year is starting off as a wet one and I hope it stays wet as opposed to the very dry we had last year. I am sure everyone has been getting their seed catalogs and is dreaming of what may or may not do well in your gardens this year.

I had six old maples close to my house that I had to cut down as they were slowly dying and figured it was better to cut now then let them fall later. Now I have a whole hillside to clean up and my wife is already planning on where to place rhododendrons in the maples place. I also picked up seeds for Chinese Strawberry trees and have started them to see if I can get them to grow there as well.

I hope all of you survived the torrential rains we had in December with minimal problems. My driveway washed out and now I have a thirty foot gap where my eight foot culvert used to be. I hope mine is the worst damage and everyone else had fewer issues to deal with.

I would like to thank our previous President, Wes Bevens, on his service and I am glad he chose to see the Policies and Procedures updated as I probably wouldn't have even seen any problems and it would have just limped on. They are much clearer today because of his efforts.

I hope everyone had a good Holiday Season and I look forward to this coming year and whatever it may bring.

--Chuck Petersen

Dues – Due!

It's that time of year once again! Your payment of just \$10 for dues enables CCMGA to present its great selection of speakers at our month meetings, to fund different projects in the local area such as the Demo Garden, Community Gardens in St Helens and Scappoose, to send members to Mini College and to present the hard work done by Bug Crew by presenting the bug cases.

So please send in your 2016 dues to the Treasurer. Katherine Johnson, 4832 N. Girard St., Portland, OR 97203. Thank You!

--Kathy Johnson, 2016 Treasurer

Calendar: At-A-Glance

- || Jan. 7.... Demonstration Garden and other MG Extension Projects Planning meeting, 10 a.m., Extension office
- || Jan. 7.... Board Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Extension office
- || Jan. 28. Graduation & Chapter Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Speaker: Neil Bell, St. Helens High School – Loo Witt Room, St. Helens

Gardening at the Snyder's

A wet rainy day - perfect for looking back at this year's garden and orchard. I like to note what grew well, what didn't, to determine what to plant next year (or not).

By and large, the warm weather made for a great garden year. One disappointment was the size of my onions. I use soaker hoses to water and didn't notice that the one for the onions wasn't providing enough water.

On the plus side, we were able to take more to the Food Bank than any previous year. Also, we heard a number of complaints about the quality of corn that other gardeners were growing. We grow a variety called Marai - developed in Japan and it was outstanding. This variety is very sweet and tender and will last a long time without getting tough.

One new melon that was excellent was a honey dew called Honey Ace, from the Territorial catalogue.

The apple crop was also outstanding. Several varieties were very good. Two new varieties, Ginger Gold and Elstar. Ginger Gold is a large yellow apple that is very solid, juicy and crisp with good flavor. Elstar is reddish-orange that also tastes great. Several Heirlooms also stood out - Spitzenberg, an all-around use apple that Thomas Jefferson grew, and Karmijin de Sonnaville - not a really old apple, introduced in 1949. This one has a great sweet/tart complex balance.

We have a Fuyu persimmon that produced approximately 80+ gallons of fruit. This variety doesn't have to turn soft to be edible (non-astringent). We enjoy eating them like an apple and they dry in the dehydrator really well. A lot of fruit from a small tree and as a bonus, the birds and raccoons cleaned all the fruit we didn't get picked.

--Dennis Snyder

Farm and livestock notes

COOL is gone

You can stop reading beef packages. The law that required beef be labeled as to “Country of Origin” has been repealed by Congress. Without repeal, the World Trade Organization judgement against COOL would have led to a potential \$1 billion in tariffs applied across a range of goods going from the U.S. to Canada or Mexico, making our products less competitive in those markets.



COOL has been controversial in the cattle community. There was hope that it would increase returns for domestic beef. But evidence for that effect has been weak. Stronger drivers of net returns to cow/calf operations have been beef supply in general (low supply leading to higher prices for 2013-15), the economy (improving), and the price of alternative meats (poultry and pork are the main competition).

[Ag Entrepreneurship & Business Planning](#)

This comprehensive 10-week course is focused on helping you to create a business plan for your current OR future small farm enterprise (or value-added product). Class participants will hear from local farmers, agency professionals, and business experts on important aspects of farm business planning.

This course does not cover production practices so it's advised you have some experience in the area of your enterprise. Follow the title link for more course info or see topics covered below. Suitable participants will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis so don't delay!

Dates: January 13 – March 16
Times: Wednesday evenings 6 – 9pm
Location: Hazel Dell, WA
Cost: \$100 per farm or family

Topics covered:

Business Planning Basics
Product & Industry Research
Business Structures
Market Analysis & Consumer Trends
Direct Marketing Options
Marketing: The 5 P's
Taxes, Licenses & Payroll
Regulations
Insurance & Risk Management
Record Keeping and Budgeting

Registration instructions:

If you have any questions about the course or want to determine it's suitability for you, contact eric.lambert@wsu.edu - 360-397-6060 x 5729

Complete this [online pre-survey](#). Go to the electronic version of this newsletter for the link.

Eric will contact you when he sees your pre-survey has been completed to answer any questions, go over participant expectations and to make sure the class is a good fit.

Then he will send you a registration link where payment can be made.



Best organic mummyberry disease control in blueberries

OSU just reported test results for organic control of mummyberry. Two inches of sawdust mulch applied in November was quite good, while the biological fungicide *Actinovate* was no better than the untreated control. One-half inch of sawdust gave no control. The sawdust keeps the mummied fruit that dropped to the ground last summer from sending up the tiny mushrooms that spread this year's disease spores in the early spring. It has to be done annually in the winter. It isn't too late. For conventional growers, there are several excellent fungicides that can be used in early April.



Photo from the interesting OSU blog on all things mummyberry:

<http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/mummyberry/>

Also see the new OSU publication [Mummy Berry Management in the Pacific Northwest](#) EM9117

Ivermectin toxicity in herding dogs

Ivermectin is widely used for control of internal and external parasites in livestock and dogs. It has generally been thought to be very safe. It is used on humans in some areas of the world to combat serious internal worms. But there is a genetic mutation in white footed herding dogs including half the Australian shepherds and most collies that will have a severe reaction to this drug and several others.

Your veterinarian can take an oral swab to send to WSU Veterinary School to get the genetics of your dog sorted out. The defective gene allows the compound to enter the brain rather than being degraded by the kidneys in dogs without this mutation. Once there, it causes seizures and other life-threatening reactions. Even with strong supportive care, many animals have died. Get the test done on your dogs and discuss with your vet about other compounds that could trigger the same response in dogs with the mutation. And don't breed dogs with the mutation.

Why does supplemental protein improve the value of low quality hay for ruminants?

These are the toughest months in the livestock year. Weather conditions are miserable and the barnyard might be very muddy. There is little or no pasture and no prospects of good pasture growth (assuming you haven't hammered the pasture too much) until February at the earliest. Your animals have to live and grow their unborn offspring mainly on hay.

How much hay they can eat and how much they get out of what they eat depend on billions of rumen bacteria. The more there are, the faster the cow or ewe digests the hay and the more they eat the more nutrition they get.

Rumen bacteria depend on adequate protein. If the hay is low in protein, they die. Not enough helpers remain to digest the hay. The animal can starve with a full trough of hay in front of it simply because the bacterial numbers are low. Feed protein and the bacteria prosper and so do the livestock. Alfalfa is a good supplement. Some 16% cattle supplements (grain plus soy or cottonseed meal) are good as well but don't feed them to sheep or goats as the copper

might be too high for them. Protein tubs are good as well. Keep rumen bacteria healthy.

Productive years in the herd

Evaluate ways to cost effectively reduce cowherd turnover. The first reason cows are usually removed from the herd is because they are not pregnant. Young cows, especially those that are two or three years of age are often the most vulnerable.

Older cows toward the end of their productive life can be vulnerable as well. There are several ways to reduce cow turnover:

- hybrid vigor (crossbred cows)
- genetics that fit resources
- proactive health programs
- proper nutrition programs during heifer development and throughout the cow's productive life

Cow depreciation is a significant expense. Cow-calf producers who aggressively manage to cost effectively reduce this expense will see an increase in their profit.

Chickens and dust baths

It's entertaining to watch chickens when they find a patch of dirt. They happily cluck while fluffing out their feathers and throwing dirt on themselves. They're taking a dust bath and enjoying every minute of their very own spa treatment.

Jim Hermes is an extension poultry specialist at [Oregon State University](#). He says chickens don't bathe in water, they roll around in dust and other fine, gritty material to get rid of parasites under their itchy feathers. The bathing area can be as simple as a dry bare spot in the yard.

"If you want to enhance that, in particular in our winters where we're fairly wet all the time, provide them a place that's under

cover," says Hermes. "A box with some fireplace ashes, which works very well, you screen out the big chunks of left-over logs and you use that as the material. Some may amend that material with diatomaceous earth."

Dust bathing helps reduce the population of parasites, but it won't eliminate them. If there's a heavy infestation on your birds, you can buy pesticides in a dusting powder to kill the bugs. Just sprinkle it in the chickens' dust bin.

A prepared container doesn't have to be fancy, just deep enough to hold in the dirt mixture. In fact, your feathered friends may decide a flower pot is the perfect spa. But if you provide a place for them to fluff around in, they may spare your plants.



"A plastic, maybe 2x2 square. All the birds will try to get in it at the same time if they're wanting to, they won't generally take turns. But just enough so their body can fit in there and they can rustle around," says Hermes. "They use their feet and they kick the material up on their back, and they lift their feathers and get it down next to the skin, which is really what they want to do."

Keep the dust box dry, scoop out droppings and foreign matter on a regular basis, and change out the contents every few weeks. [Editor's note: There are a lot of mix ingredients including coarse sand, peat moss, wood ashes and others. The use of diatomaceous earth (DE) is controversial among small flock owners with the food grade material preferred over the swimming pool product.]

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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