Take heart—spring will soon be here!
Right now our focus is on winter gardening projects and lots of garden planning. If you’re looking for something to do—keep reading.

Whether you’re new to gardening or a seasoned veteran, we all feel a sense of accomplishment when starting our veggies from seed (economical too). On page 2 you’ll learn how to produce your own transplants at home.

Just because it’s cold outside doesn’t mean you can’t tackle a few gardening projects. On page 3 you’ll see what you can accomplish now—get your soil tested, create seedling pots, etc. Lots of ideas to keep busy this winter.

Then warm up on a cold winter day by enjoying a flavorful stew made with your stored root veggies. See page 4 for a comforting recipe.

Tackle another winter project—the only tool required is a pencil. On page 7 is a garden planning worksheet—simply measure your garden space, determine what you want to grow and plot your garden. Then on page 8 is a vegetable planting worksheet to help you determine when to start your seeds indoors in your area.

So for your best garden yet, and to impress your friends and neighbors (yes I’ve said it before, gardening is competitive), now is the time to start planning! Wishing you a bountiful gardening season—and a happy new year! -Marty

“Take heart—spring will soon be here!”

- Baba Ram Dass

“Let’s warm up on a cold winter day by enjoying a flavorful stew made with our stored root veggies. See page 4 for a comforting recipe.”

- Thomas Cooper
Producing Transplants At Home

Grow your own! There are so many reasons to produce your own veggie transplants at home: the varieties and types are much more prolific and more readily available from seed; more can be grown at home with a little care and at less cost; and of course there is more satisfaction in growing your own seedlings and watching them develop into productive vegetables and flowers. The main ingredients for successful transplant production are a properly lighted, heated and ventilated environment along with a clean growing medium and the correct timing (see page 8). Depending on the type of plant, most transplants are large enough to move to the garden or flower bed 4 to 8 weeks after the initial seeding. You don’t want to start seedlings too early for they may become too tall and spindly before the weather is warm enough to move them outdoors. During the seed germination period, warmth and moisture are necessary. Once the first leaves are formed, light is required to allow the photosynthesis process to work. Then as the seedlings expand and begin to stretch, ventilation will be necessary to prevent destructive fungus diseases. You can purchase commercial potting soil or you can make your own very economically. Homemade mixes must be pasteurized to destroy fungus diseases. A good basic pasteurized soil for starting seedlings is a mixture of 1/3 pasteurized soil or finished compost, 1/3 sand or perlite and 1/3 peat moss (available at garden stores); you can use your oven to pasteurize seedling soil—put slightly moist garden soil or compost in a heat-resistant pan and cover with a lid or aluminum foil, place in a 250˚F oven with a food thermometer to ensure the mix reaches a temperature of 180˚F for a full half-hour (avoid overheating as the soil structure may be damaged). When it’s time to start your seedlings, fill your desired container with soil mix, place seeds on soil and cover with about 1/4-inch of soil mix, place the pot in a plastic bag and tie so moisture cannot escape or cover with plastic wrap. Keep the seeded container at room temperature (68-70˚F) until sprouted. Once most of the seeds are sprouted, remove the bag or cover and expose to full sunlight. Your seedlings should receive full sunlight all day, every day and should be given a weekly dose of a water-soluble fertilizer at the manufacturer’s suggested rate. When the seedlings have developed their first true leaves it is time to separate the plants. Their growth, once separated and given space, will depend on uniform watering, feeding and at least 12 hours of daily sunlight. Make sure the area has sufficient ventilation to keep foliage fungus diseases in check. About 10 days before transplanting or moving the plants outdoors, change the plant’s environment (hardening off) to give them cooler temperatures and slightly less water. When setting plants outdoors, protect them from freezing and wind at all times.

Developing a master garden plan and mapping it out can save you a lot of time, energy and money. It will give you a definite direction for your garden or landscape and will give you a detailed map so you know the location of your plants. This way you won’t dig into existing bulbs while planting new ones, and you won’t have to worry about planting small annuals too close to large perennials. It can help when rotating your garden crops each year. Plus, it brings cheer to any gardener during the too long winter months. One of the best ways to plan a garden is to make a map using grid paper and drawing it to scale. You can look up the space requirements for the vegetables you’re interested in growing on seed packets, in seed catalogs, etc. Draw the vegetables in on the map along with the planting dates - this will help you remember when and where to plant your crops. Once you’ve got all this mapped out on paper, the next step is to plan on when you’d like to start those seeds or bulbs. Since the fire is cozy and television is a minor distraction, why not plan starting things six to eight weeks before it is time for the plants to hit the ground. Your growing guide on the seed packets will give you the indoor starting information. Keep in mind your own local growing environment when doing starts indoors. Indoor starts can give you a big jump on outdoor plantings and something to work with inside while the ground thaws for spring. Pick up a pencil and turn to pages 7 & 8...off to the drawing board!

From The Toolshed: (continued from pg. 1) Wooden handles of shovels & hoes a light sanding to remove splinters/rough edges then lubricate with a good preserving oil such as linseed; keep tools sharp by using a whetstone, hand file or belt sander to maintain good edges—they’ll work more safely and quickly when edges are sharp; your tools will be ready to work come spring!
Winter Gardening Projects

Winter is a good time to get your garden soil analyzed for nutrients. Doing so now will help you plan your fertilizer program before the spring planting season (garden soil should be tested every three to five years). A soil test can solve garden mysteries such as revealing causes of scabby potatoes, yellowing plants and poor growth which are potentially caused by soil nutrient problems. Adequate phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and calcium and an appropriate pH are necessary for healthy plant growth and soil tests determine how much and what type of fertilizer or lime to apply. To find out how to take a good soil sample and where to send it for analysis (test costs vary), contact your local OSU Extension Service for information.

Winter is an excellent time to go through your saved garden seed. It’s too cold to do much outdoors so why not sort through all the leftover garden seeds you’ve been saving for years. (We gardeners are often frugal!) There is an average number of years that each type of garden seed will remain viable and grow into healthy seedlings. If your seed packets date back a decade or more—toss ‘em and purchase new seed for your spring planting. To check them before you toss ‘em, simply test their germination by placing a few seeds in a wet paper towel in a warm room. If you have sprouts in a few days, you know you have keepers. The amount of oil in seeds can determine how long a seed will remain viable. Generally, the higher the oil content, the more quickly they will decline in germination. Here are some examples of average seed life (years): bush/pole beans (3), beets (2), broccoli/cabbage (3-5), carrots (3), collard/kale (3-5), sweet corn (1), cucumbers (3), leeks/onions (2), lettuce (2), melons (3), oriental greens (3), parsley (2), parsnips (1), peas (2), peppers (2), radishes (4), rutabagas (3), squash-es (3), tomatoes (3), turnips (4), annual flowers (1-3), perennial flowers (2-4).

Make your own newspaper seed pots! Recycle your newspapers and make inexpensive, quick and easy seed pots. The pots can be planted with your seedlings when it is time to plant in your garden, thus reducing transplant shock.

- Cut or tear a sheet of newspaper in half if you are using a full spread piece. (Avoid pages with color text or pictures—color dye may be harmful to the soil/plants—regular newsprint is harmless.)
- Cut or tear the sheet of newspaper into 6 to 8-inch strips, going from left to right in the direction of the newsprint.
- Lay the strip of paper flat on a hard surface; place a cylinder-shaped object such as an empty soda can, soup can or drinking glass onto the strip so that the bottom of the cylinder is on the strip by about 4 inches, with 2 inches of the strip below the bottom of the cylinder.
- Roll the strip of paper around the cylinder until the entire piece of newspaper is wound around it (hold the end of the newspaper with your fingers to keep it from unrolling).
- Turn the cylinder upright and fold the part of the newspaper that hangs below the bottom of the can or glass over, toward the center of the cylinder; press and crease all the way around to form the base of your pot.
- When spring arrives, you’ll have plenty of pots to start your seeds.

More Projects and Only 79 Days Until Spring!

More winter projects include constructing sturdy tomato racks (beats those flimsy wire ones); wooden tomato racks are simple to construct, sturdy, effective and will keep your tomatoes healthy and happy; use treated lumber and galvanized screws for longevity; support your tomatoes—don’t let them rot on the ground! Also, why not build a coldframe to get an early start in your garden come spring. Then there’s lots of garden planning to be done this time of year...the list goes on!
**Winter Recipe: Root Vegetable Stew**

- \( \frac{1}{4} \) cup flour
- \( \frac{1}{4} \) t. sea salt
- \( \frac{1}{4} \) t. black pepper
- \( \frac{1}{4} \) lb. lean beef round, cubed
- 3 T. olive oil, divided
- 2 large stalks celery, chopped
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup chopped celery, chopped
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup peeled carrots
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup cubed potatoes
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup cubed tomatoes
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup cubed parsnips
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup cubed turnips
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) t. dried thyme

In a medium bowl, combine flour, salt & pepper and cubed beef, toss and coat beef (reserve any leftover flour); in a large soup pot, heat 2 T. olive oil over medium heat and brown the beef on all sides, remove to a plate; add remaining tablespoon olive oil to the pan and stir in the celery, onion, carrots, rutabaga, parsnips, turnips, potatoes and mushrooms, cook 2-3 minutes; stir \( \frac{1}{4} \) cup beef broth into reserved flour until blended, add this along with remaining broth and beef cubes back into the pot; add the bay leaf and dried thyme; bring to a boil then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the beef and vegetables are tender and the stew is thickened (about 1 to 1½ hours); discard bay leaf. Serves 6. Enjoy!

This rich & hearty stew is really comforting on a cold winter day! What better way to enjoy those root vegetables you have stored away! Pairs well with hot, crusty bread.

**Fellow Gardeners:** Our gardens have finished producing bounty to donate to our local food banks. They still need our help! Please donate non-perishable items this winter! It is very much appreciated...remember to plant it forward!

**Gorge Gardeners...**

...get local weather information and forecasts (as well as wit & wisdom) at this great site:

**Hood River Weather**

http://hoodriverweather.info

**Tri-County Hazardous Waste & Recycling Program**

Upcoming **free** hazardous waste collections for households will be:

Friday February 15th, 9am-2pm at Hood River Garbage Service;
Saturday February 16th, 9am-2pm at The Dalles Disposal Service.
For more information visit: [www.tricountyyrecycle.com](http://www.tricountyyrecycle.com)

"For more information on gardening, please contact your local OSU Extension Office/Master Gardener™ Program. They have a wealth of knowledge to share! I welcome hearing from you about Garden Highlights! Please pass along any gardening tips, humor, stories or photos you would like to share with readers. Send me your pearls of wisdom!" — Marty

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"The scent of the rose remains in the hand that gives the rose!" — Marty
Do you still have apples stored in your root cellar or basement? Try this quick and easy treat!

Wash & core an apple; remove peel halfway down the apple; set apple in a custard cup; into the center of the apple, add 1 t. honey, 1 t. butter, 1 t. raisins and cinnamon to taste; push mixture into center; cover dish with waxed paper; microwave on high for 2 to 3 minutes until tender; let rest for 2 minutes. Enjoy as is or with a little cream!

**Garden Highlights**
gardenhighlights@hrecn.net

Use this calendar to record your seed starting dates, transplant dates, harvest dates, etc.

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### THRIFTY GARDENING TIPS THAT SAVE MONEY

- Choose seeds that are easy to grow and produce abundantly; spinach, leaf lettuce, summer squash and carrots are good choices for new gardeners.
- Learn to propagate plants using cuttings and pass along favorite plants to friends and family.
- Maintain a compost bin to amend your garden beds and reduce the need for fertilizers.
- Plant intensively to make the best use of your available garden space; rotate crops.
- Place dark soda bottles filled with water near heat-loving plants in early spring to absorb heat during the day and re-radiate it at night.
- Save branches pruned from lavender or rosemary plants in summer to make starts you can give away after they have grown roots.
- Expand limited garden space by planting potatoes in five-gallon buckets.
- To avoid over-fertilizing seedlings and young plants, save the water left over from steaming or boiling vegetables, transfer it to a clean spray bottle and spritz it on leaves once a week for a light foliar feeding.
- Save branches pruned from fruit trees to stake bean or pea plants.

This calendar is targeted to USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 6 & 7.

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“Let no one think that real gardening is a bucolic and meditative occupation. It is an insatiable passion, like everything else to which man gives his heart.”

-Karel Capek, *The Gardener’s Year*, 1931
With winter weather—winds, ice and heavy, wet snow—you may need to provide some “first aid” to repair your winter storm-damaged trees and shrubs. Make repairs as soon as possible for the best chance of recovery; cut damaged twigs and limbs back to the nearest strong, healthy wood or bud, make the pruning cut nearly flush with the nearest side limb and cut to the swollen area called the “collar”; do not leave a stub or snag and remove all fractured or splintered wood as these surfaces are an invitation for infection or rot to take hold.

**Garden Highlights**

gardenhighlights@hrecn.net

Use this calendar to record your seed starting dates, transplant dates, harvest dates, etc.

**February 2013**

**THRIFTY GARDENING TIPS THAT SAVE MONEY**

- Share seeds and seedlings with friends and neighbors.
- Save kitchen scraps (coffee grinds, egg shells, vegetable cuttings) for compost.
- Let some plants go to seed, so you can collect and save seed, or let them seed themselves.
- Large, clear plastic containers that salad greens come in make good mini-greenhouses for starting plants both indoors and out; the “bottom” is the dome, and lids become the base, catching runoff water.
- Get your neighbors to split a load of bark mulch, soil, gravel or compost; you also save on delivery charges.
- An inexpensive way to avoid over-watering: use a five-gallon bucket that can be purchased for as little as 50 cents; drill a 1/8-inch hole in the side of the bucket near the bottom, fill it with water and let a gentle stream of water flow next to the plant that needs watering; you can also add fertilizer or other nutrients to the water in the bucket and have a controlled means of dispensing it.
- Use an old garbage can to make into a compost bin.
- Use buckets, wastebaskets or milk cartons for planters but make sure to put holes in the bottom for drainage.

This calendar is targeted to USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 6 & 7.

**Tune up your lawn mower and garden equipment before the busy season begins.**

**Make a cold frame or hotbed to start early vegetables or flowers.**

**Fertilize rhubarb with manure or a complete fertilizer.**

**Good time to plant fruit trees and deciduous shrubs.**

**Plant asparagus if the ground is warm enough.**

**Plant seed flats of Cole crops (cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts) indoors or in greenhouse.**

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“I have found, through years of practice, that people garden in order to make something grow; to interact with nature; to share, to find sanctuary, to heal, to honor the earth, to leave a mark. Through gardening, we feel whole as we make our personal work of art upon our land.”

—Julie Moir Messervy, The Inward Garden
1. Put the measurements you will be using for your garden on this graph. Plot your garden rows, leaving space for walking.
2. Follow the instructions listed on the back of seed packets or transplant tags for exact spacing instructions, as this will vary from plant to plant.
3. Plant tallest plants on the north side of your garden, medium plants in the middle, and shortest plants on the south end of the garden to ensure maximum sunlight for all your plants.
4. Your garden layout can run from east to west, but the rows of vegetables that you plant should always run from north to south for maximum sun exposure.

Developing a master garden plan and mapping it out can save you a lot of time, energy and money. It will give you a definite direction for your garden or landscape and will give you a detailed map so you know the location of your plants. This way you won’t dig into existing bulbs while planting new ones, and you won’t have to worry about planting small annuals too close to large perennials. Also, it can help when rotating your crops each year. Plus, it brings cheer to any gardener during these long winter months! Start your garden planning!

Checklist of Vegetables and Herbs for your garden layout:

- Beets
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Garlic
- Green Beans
- Green Onions
- Lettuce
- Lima Beans
- Melons
- Onions
- Parsley
- Peppers
- Potatoes
- Radishes
- Spinach
- Squash
- Winter
- Summer
- Tomatoes
- Turnips
- Other

Start your garden planning!
Garden Highlights "Vegetable Planting Worksheet" - When To Start Seeds

- Write “Date of Last Frost” (1) for your region in the space provided below.
- Using a calendar, calculate the “Planting Date” (2) by adding or subtracting (as indicated) the number of weeks listed in the “Safe Set-Out Date” column (3) from your “Date of Last Frost” date (1).
- Using a calendar, calculate the “Sow Date” (4) by subtracting the “Growth Period” (5) from the “Planting Date” (2). (Sow Date is the date to sow seed indoors or in a greenhouse for transplanting into the garden after the last frost.)

(These are general guidelines; growing times can vary greatly depending on the seed variety you select; check seed packets for exact growing and planting times.)

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<td>Condon</td>
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<td>White Salmon</td>
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(Seeds can be direct-sown in the garden soil. Other seeds will need to be started indoors or in a greenhouse, or can be purchased as small plants at planting time.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seed/Plant</th>
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<th>Growth Period # of Weeks (5)</th>
<th>Safe Set-Out Date (relative to Last Frost) (3)</th>
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