April 2019

Programs for you . . .

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

April 2 ........ Scappoose Bay Watershed Council 6:30 p.m. 57420 Old Portland Road, Warren.
April 4 ........ Master Gardener™ Board Meeting 10:30 a.m. OSU Extension Service, St. Helens.
April 6 ........ Caring for Your Large Pond 8:30-4pm $30, Sauvie Island Grange -registration details here.
April 9 ........ Lower Columbia River Watershed Council 7:00 p.m. Clatskanie PUD, 495 Hwy 30.
April 9 ........ “Growing Gorgeous Peonies” with Carol Adelman, 7:00 p.m. St. Helens Public Library.
April 11 ......... Gardening for Resilience Presentation by Chip Bubl, 7:00 p.m. Fern Hill Grange in Rainier.
April 13 ......... Spring Native Plant Sale, SBWC Nursery Behind Scappoose High School, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
April 20 ......... Earth Day Festival 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Heritage Park, Scappoose Activities for Adults & Kids!
April 22 ......... Farm Bureau Meeting 6:30 p.m. OSU Extension Service, St. Helens.
April 25 ......... Upper Nehalem Watershed Council – Annual Meeting 5:30 p.m. at the Vernonia Grange.
April 25 ......... Master Gardener™ Chapter Mtg 6:30 p.m. Graduation for 2018 trainees, Public Welcome! With guest speaker, Glen Andresen and his talk: "How I Grow 40 fruit trees, raspberries, marionberries, strawberries, blueberries, grapes, & currants on my 60- by 100-foot city lot."
April 27 ......... 24th Annual Master Gardener Spring Fair & Plant Sale St. Helens High School 9a.m.-3p.m.
In the garden

The importance of cider

I once heard a fascinating lecture about the evolution of tree fruit growing in The United States. The speaker was Susan Dolan, a historian with the National Parks Service. Ms. Dolan leads an effort to preserve early orchards that are on federal lands, especially those within National Parks.

She described the formal European-derived gardens of the early gentry. The orchards were usually grown behind walls and employed lots of grafted varieties and espalier pruning techniques.

Early North American farm orchards were of a different sort altogether. Land was cleared and farmers planted apple seeds rather than using named varieties grafted onto seedling rootstocks.

The seedlings grew but generally were not managed in rows of trees but rather as an irregular collection scattered across the acre or two that constituted the orchard. The trees weren’t pruned much so they developed into very large specimens. Branching generally started at about six feet high, a response to deer and livestock browsing.

The fruit was not all that edible since it had the mixed genetics common to any collection of seedling-derived trees. But that was fine since the purpose of these earliest farm orchards was to feed livestock and to make cider. Hogs, chickens, cattle and sheep all fed on windfall apples from these large trees. They in turn fertilized the orchard and kept down some insects and weeds. They were contained within the orchard by fences, ditches or hedges.

Since seedling fruit can be quite tannic and sour, the fruit weren’t often of ideal fresh eating quality. Settlers stored a portion of the late apples for cooking or baking, often as dried fruit. Trees that produced good fresh eating fruit were valued but not all that common in the orchards.

Much of the fruit was made into hard cider. This was a valuable commodity before there was clean drinking water or much of a beer/ale industry. Dolan noted that a five-acre settler orchard could produce 1,000 gallons of hard cider, enough for an extended family for a year. It was a beverage consumed by children and adults alike. Cider was a valuable economic item that was bartered and sold.

Ultimately, cider became less important in the settler economy. Demand for good fresh fruit developed in cities along the eastern seaboard. Orchards were planted in rows, shaped and pruned, and contained grafted high-quality fresh eating varieties. Much more management for a far different purpose.

The National Park Service has published a wonderful book written by Ms. Dolan entitled *A Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States*. It is a great read and has many interesting illustrations. This book is both a guide to understanding the history and context of old orchards and a tool to help public institutions preserve what remains of our horticultural heritage.

The modern hard cider world is booming. Several orchards have been planted here and there are a bunch of hard cider pubs in Portland and around the state. Home gardeners are brewing up a cider tsunami.
Columbia County Master Gardener™ Association’s
24th Annual

Spring Garden Fair

April 27, 2019
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
St. Helens High School Commons
2375 Gable Road, St. Helens, Oregon

free parking -- please carpool
free admission -- ATM on-site -- shop indoors & out

Dozens of local vendors will offer annuals, trees, perennials, shrubs, trellises, garden art, vegetables, ceramics, herbs, containers, hanging baskets and more.

Certified Master Gardeners will offer 5,000 tomatoes in over 30 varieties for only $1.50 per plant, tomato and general gardening information, raffle tickets, hourly prizes and displays.

Raffle tickets are on sale now for $1 each from many Master Gardeners and at the OSU Extension Service in St Helens.

Also 6 varieties of sweet to hot peppers For Only $1.50 per plant

Presented in cooperation with
OSU Extension Service, Columbia County
505 N. Columbia River Highway, St. Helens, Oregon 97051
(503)397-3462
From Garden to Table

The Rite of Spring

By Robert Hammond
Columbia County Master Gardener™

Life has once again returned to our little farm after the long, dreary doldrums of winter. A welcome sight of lush green dappled with all the vibrant colors of the rainbow resembling a Renoir masterpiece. The orchard, awash in pink and white, hums with the chorus of bees, clear and loud as a Baptist choir. Spring has finally arrived – overture to the well orchestrated symphony of soil and season, the rhythms of the plate. The rhythms beginning slowly at first, lento then adagio, crescendo to faster and faster tempo.

Like Rip Van Winkle awakening from a long slumber, asparagus poked its head from its winter cover becoming the first to grace our table – sweet and tender. Never has asparagus tasted so exquisite. Spring onions follow suit, trailed by buttery lettuces and spinach, spicy arugula and French breakfast radishes, a plethora of savory herbs, escarole, endive and other sallet messes. Young Purple Top turnips, baby Detroit Dark Red and Touchstone gold beets, Southern Giant Curled Mustard, Sorrento broccoli raab, Green Arrow sweet peas and Little Finger carrots will soon join the chorus.


Volce dolce; diminuendo; our symphony decrescendos into the Entr’acte. Planting for the summer season begins. Starts of Japanese eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, melons and okra mark their time in the greenhouse until the weather warms. These divas of the garden will take center stage. Corn, beans, cucumbers and squashes provide the accompaniment.

The days grow shorter ushering in the third movement of autumn when cool weather crops will take their place on stage. Winter arrives, the fourth and final movement of our well orchestrated symphony. The garden sleeps under a sky veiled in a steel gray shroud, surreal, like sepia toned picture postcards from a time long forgotten. A strange and eerie quiet falls on the land. Life in the garden comes full circle, with the promise of life returning with the aria of spring.

The rhythms continue – season by season. Our symphony of soil and season are indeed the rhythm of the plate; our overture indeed the rite of spring.

Editor’s note: Robert Hammond is a gracious Southerner who spent a number of years in Columbia County. He is a chef and an amazing gardener. Over the years, he wrote fascinating columns on a variety of topics that blended culinary history, gardening techniques, and his enthusiasm for life. He is back home in North Carolina now.
SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE

SCAPPOOSE BAY WATERSHED COUNCIL
NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

WHOLESALE PRICES!
LOCALLY SOURCED PLANTS

APRIL 13, 2019 • 9am-3pm
BEHIND SCAPPOOSE HIGH SCHOOL
on Hwy. 30 in Scappoose • Watch for signs
www.scappoosebay-wc.org
Weed of the month: Crabgrass (hairy and smooth)

Crabgrass will soon be back. The two species found here are both summer annuals, which means that their seed germinates as the soil warms in the later spring and all through summer. Crabgrass dies in the fall as the weather gets cold. In many parts of the country, there is a lot of effort made to control crabgrass in lawns. But here in Columbia County and in the rest of western Oregon, crabgrass is not generally a problem in lawns. Why, you might ask. Well, most annuals, be they grasses or broadleaves need bare spaces and sufficient moisture to get started. We have perennial lawn grasses that are at their full vigor just when crabgrass would like to germinate (late April onwards). The competition is too much for crabgrass. So here, crabgrass flourishes in landscape beds, vegetable gardens, gravel driveways, and along roadway shoulders. Anywhere there is a bit of bare ground and some moisture. Sometimes, it can be found in very damaged lawns but that is the exception rather than the rule.

There are several features that distinguish hairy crabgrass (*Digitaria sanguinalis*) from smooth crabgrass. The stem has a spreading, branching structure, bending abruptly toward the ground at a sharp angle. Hairy crabgrass starts as a seedling (of course) but as the stem and leaf structures develop and it flattens out, it roots at the stem nodes. This makes it a real pain to pull. The densely fibrous root system that develops in the crown area also makes removal difficult. The leaves are linear, hairy, and turn dark-red or maroon as they mature. There are plenty of leaves near the base of the plant and scattered loosely along the stem. Smooth crabgrass (*D ischaemum*) is neither hairy nor does it root along its stems. The flower head of both species is finger-like (or a bit like umbrella stays) and is composed of 4-7 thin spikes. A late spring plant can grow very large by mid-summer and produce as many as 150,000 seeds. The only comfort you can take from this prodigious volume of seed is that crabgrass seeds are rather short lived, generally three years or less.

Crabgrass is most damaging in the vegetable garden, especially when it is sprouting at the same time as vegetable seeds. Crabgrass quickly establishes a substantial root system. Small crabgrass seedlings aren’t difficult to pull but once they get a little growth, they pull much harder and you often dislodge your vegetable seedlings at the same time. Early weeding around emerging seedlings, particularly 3 or so inches on each side of the row, is very important to get your seedling off to a good start. One other answer in the vegetable garden is to use more transplants. Then, your crabgrass removal efforts will be less disruptive to your crop. Mulches reduce crabgrass germination. This is very effective around transplants and adjacent to seed rows. Drip irrigation also slows crabgrass volumes since the seeds are less likely to germinate in dry zones. Continue to observe closely as new plants appear all summer long.

Boiling water is said to work on tiny plants but not at all well on bigger ones. In landscape beds, driveways, or paths, glyphosate (Roundup and other brands) works well as a spot spray to control existing plants. Avoid chemical contact with desirable plants and follow all label instructions.
Wartime and OSC(U) Extension

As Napoleon said, an army rides on its stomach. War creates a tremendous demand on food resources. Massive and sophisticated collection and transportation systems have to evolve to get the food to the frontlines.

WWI required that foodstuffs be transported across an ocean. The US government created policies that essentially gave them wartime authority over all food movement and sales. Herbert Hoover was put in charge of the Food Administration. People were asked to conserve and eat all their food (clean plates only!). There were wheat less Mondays and porkless Tuesdays. Children signed this pledge: “At the table I will not leave a scrap of food on my plate and I’ll not eat between meals but for suppertime I will wait.”

During the First World War, novel foods came into common usage including sugarless candy, dogfish, and horsemeat steaks. “Liberty” gardens were encouraged and even President Wilson grazed sheep on the White house lawns. There were some great posters put out in support of these food management efforts.

WWII brought the Victory gardens. People in rural and urban areas worked the soil to raise food for their families, friends, and neighbors. Victory gardening enabled more food to be shipped to troops around the world.

Empty lots, school fields, flower gardens, and back yards were cultivated. For an investment of $1.30 in seeds, $1.50 for fertilizer and 7-8 hours/week tending the garden, a family could have fresh vegetables for 5-6 months. LIFE magazine estimated that by 1943, 6 million Americans were planting Victory gardens. Public schools had victory gardens. By 1945, 20 million Victory gardens were producing 40% of American vegetables.

Records in the Columbia County Extension office for the WWII years, offer lots of evidence of war efforts:

Victory gardens and home canning were widely encouraged, though I could find no specific numbers.

Housewives could send tin cans with candy, fruitcakes, and the like. to GIs overseas. This processing was done at the Extension office for the sum of 3 cents per can and was overseen by Mrs. Eric Zatterberg. Women’s roles also changed dramatically reported Maude Causwell, Home Economist of the time.

The WWII era Columbia County Extension agent had many roles including:

- Increase food production by utilizing the best tools and growing techniques. Encourage Victory gardens. Encourage reuse, and recycling.
- A special agent (Ken Asbury) was hired to manage farm labor. He was in charge of allocating farm workers to the most important activities be it haying, fruit or vegetable harvest, tilling or planting throughout the county.
- Finally, the County agent was responsible for staffing an aircraft surveillance facility in Yankton and other locations that looked much like a forest fire watchtower. There seem to have been about 12 of them but their exact locations are unclear.
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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:
- Write in your garden journal throughout the growing season.
- Prepare garden soil for spring planting. Incorporate generous amounts of organic materials and other amendments, using the results of a soil analysis as a guide.
- Prepare raised beds in areas where cold soils and poor drainage are a continuing problem. Incorporate generous amounts (at least 2”) of organic materials.
- Use a soil thermometer to help you know when to plant vegetables. When the soil is consistently above 60°F, some warm season vegetables (beans, sweet corn) can be planted.

Maintenance and Clean Up:
- Allow foliage of spring-flowering bulbs to brown and die down before removing.
- Apply commercial fertilizers, manure, or compost to cane, bush (gooseberries, currants, and blueberries), and trailing berries.
- Place compost or well decomposed manure around perennial vegetables, such as asparagus and rhubarb.
- Cut back ornamental grasses to a few inches above the ground, in early spring.
- Cover transplants to protect against late spring frosts.
- Optimum time to fertilize lawns. Apply 1 lb. nitrogen per 1,000 sq.ft. of lawn. Reduce risks of run-off into local waterways by not fertilizing just prior to rain, and not over-irrigating so that water runs off of lawn and onto sidewalk or street.
- Optimum time of year to dethatch and renovate lawns. If moss was a problem, scratch surface prior to seeding with perennial ryegrass.
- Prune and shape or thin spring-blooming shrubs and trees after blossoms fade.

Planting/Propagation:
- Plant gladioli, hardy transplants of alyssum, phlox, and marigolds, if weather and soil conditions permit.
- It’s a great time to start a vegetable garden. Among the vegetables you can plant, consider: Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chard, chives, endive, leeks, lettuce, peas, radishes, rhubarb, rutabagas, spinach, turnips.

Pest Monitoring and Management:
- Clean up hiding places for slugs, sowbugs, and millipedes. Bait for slugs; iron phosphate baits are safe to use around pets.
- Monitor strawberries for spittlebugs and aphids; if present; wash off with water or use insecticidal soap as a contact spray. Follow label directions.
- If necessary, spray when flower buds appear for apple scab, cherry brown rot, and blossom blight. See EC 631, Controlling Diseases and Insects in Home Orchards.
- Cut and remove weeds near the garden to remove potential sources of plant disease.
- Use floating row covers to keep insects such as beet leaf miners, cabbage maggot adult flies, and carrot rust flies away from susceptible crops.
- Help prevent damping off of seedlings by providing adequate ventilation.
- Manage weeds while they are small and actively growing with light cultivation or herbicides. Once the weed has gone to bud, herbicides are less effective.
- Spray stone fruits, such as cherries, plums, peaches, and apricots for brown rot blossom blight, if necessary.
Farm and Livestock notes
Health and behavior in herds

Herd selection starts with keeping records on marketable traits like calving or lambing percentage, rates of gain, carcass quality, and performance in the feedlot (if you can get that information). There has been a lot of work done on the more quantifiable economic traits, which has led to EPD (Expected Progeny Difference) rankings that allow the producer to make comparisons between breeds, herds, and individuals. All this feeds into sire selection decisions and the future potential of females within the herd.

Despite the understanding that health performance and behavior have major impacts on individual animal performance, both of these traits have been challenging to measure. It is clear that health performance is a complex constellation of issues and any overall health ranking is weakly heritable. That complicates the task of producing health measuring EPDs. A lot of effort is being made to isolate some genetics that can be shown to have a significant impact (either for good or bad) on progeny health performance. Same with behavior. With any luck, these tools will be available for the commercial breeder and meat producer. At present, keep good records and cull for behavior and possibly poor health performance.

If you are interested in EPDs and how they work, see this excellent publication from Virginia Tech: [https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/400/400-804/400-804.html](https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/400/400-804/400-804.html)

Managing buttercup in pastures

Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculas repens*) can be a considerable problem in Columbia County pastures. It got here from Europe and has taken the place of native (and less vigorous or problematic, buttercups. Creeping buttercup is a perennial plant that spreads by both seed and an aggressively creeping root system. It is most common in pastures that are wetter in the winter and spring.

It will effectively crowd out desirable forage grasses and clover. It is also poisonous in pasture though far less so in hay. It can cause severe digestive upsets in horses and sometimes sheep and cattle.

Good pasture management that creates a vigorous stand of grass can help hold it in check, but once it is established, herbicides may be needed. Work done on coastal pastures some years ago demonstrated that a good option for buttercup management was an old herbicide called MCPA. It is in the same chemical group as 2,4-D but is more effective on this troublesome weed. It won’t affect grass and is gentle on clover.

As with all crop protection products, read and follow the label instructions for timing, rate, grazing restrictions (if any), and all other relevant concerns.

*Illustration from www.panteek.com*
One doesn’t need a lot of space -or time- to grow fruit in the city, and this presentation offers proof! By using appropriate rootstock, espaliered apples and pears, summer pruning, efficient trellising, an innovative homemade irrigation system, compost, and remarkably pampered soil, Glen Andresen has managed to cram a lot of garden into his garden (and freezer). His presentation will concentrate on the labor-saving gardening principles and techniques he has pioneered and embraced so he doesn’t burn out as a gardener.

Since 1994, Glen Andresen has been Metro’s lead natural gardening educator. His program offers presentations and information on how to have healthy yards and gardens without the use of synthetic pesticides. He took the OSU Extension Master Gardener training in 1991 and is an avid beekeeper who has approximately 60 colonies of bees; last year his city bees produced more than 3,500 pounds of honey! He also is the host of the long-running one-hour edible gardening show, The Dirtbag, heard the second Wednesday of each month at 11 a.m. on community radio station KBOO, at 90.7 FM in Portland. Glen is a fifth generation Oregonian and holds degrees in economics and music, but still would rather play in the dirt.