



WENDY SCHMIDT
BETWEEN THE ROWS

Eager to get going in the garden

This time of year always seems to be a great time to start planning and planting a garden. It's hard to wait to watch seedlings grow, and to be outside with hands in soil.

Almost nothing should be done outdoors, yet, for fear of Jack Frost nipping it or making an outright kill.

One plant group seems oblivious to all the worry and weather, and that is the legumes. It's time to plant peas, sweet peas and fava beans. To give them a good start, soak the seeds overnight in a little dish of water.

Plant sweet peas and snap, snow, or garden peas under a trellis, as most of these are vining in habit. Fava beans don't need a trellis, but support may be necessary later in locations where wind may be a problem.

Many people plant their potatoes around or on St. Patrick's Day. The only reason I have for doing that is tradition. Potatoes do like an early start.

Other garden plants with longer growing seasons are more productive with a head start. A nice, loose seed-starting planting mix with extra perlite added will grow great roots that are easier to separate when it's time to transplant.

Seeds of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant should be started indoors sometime in this next two weeks. A greenhouse is not necessary: a kitchen windowsill works just fine.

Potting soil in the cups should be constantly damp, but not soppy wet. It is exciting to see the weather become spring. This past winter seemed as if it would last forever.

Plan to support the La Grande Middle School children in their plant sale early in May. It is a fundraising event which helps the community.

Good luck in your garden endeavors and thanks for reading!

Wendy Schmidt is a La Grande resident who writes an occasional column about gardening topics.



Ben Mims/Los Angeles Times-TNS

Masa harina and sugar give classic cornbread a more vivid corn flavor.

Cornbread:

Fresh take on an old favorite

By **BEN MIMS**
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — One afternoon, as I was preparing a Southern meal for friends coming over for dinner, I realized I had forgotten to make the cornbread. But since I keep all the ingredients on hand at all times, I knew I wouldn't have a problem quickly baking a round. However, as I searched through my pantry, I saw that I had no cornmeal left, but in its place on the shelf, a lone bag of masa harina. "Corn for corn," I thought and decided to use it to make my cornbread.

The recipe — my grandmother's, which I have made countless times in my life — made with masa harina produced a cornbread that was distinctly different from what I was used to but was equally delicious. It had a much more pronounced corn flavor and was softer. It was one of those small experiments that turned out to be a much bigger deal in hindsight — the happenstance of its creation opened my mind to what cornbread could be.

Masa harina in cornbread isn't new, but it's still not as common as I think it should be. But to understand the ingredient's brilliance in this application, we first must define what it is and isn't. Typically, the cornmeal you and I buy in grocery stores is made with dried corn that is

ground to varying degrees of coarseness. It is usually made with dent corn, a variety of "field corn" that is covered in a hard starch exterior covering a soft starch center. (Polenta, a coarse ground cornmeal, is made with flint corn, which is mostly hard starch throughout.)

Masa harina, however, is made by first soaking the corn kernels in an alkaline solution like slaked lime or lye, which dissolves the hard outer shell and leaves behind the soft starch center. This center is then ground fine and dried to produce the masa harina. The soaking step makes the corn more easily digestible but it also has the added benefit of making the corn taste more, well, corny.

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Sprouse-Reitz's longtime La Grande home



GINNY MAMMEN
OUT AND ABOUT

Moving east to 1303-05 Adams Ave. in downtown La Grande, we learn, going back to 1888, there was a two-story frame building located here. It was identified on the Sanborn Map as Armory Hall on the second floor. Commercial space was available on the street level.

The last two businesses in this frame building were operated by a true entrepreneur by the name of Jack Childs, the harness maker with the shop on the southwest corner of Adams and Fir. Here he was operating his contracting and house-moving business while at the same time managing a large department store called the Emporium, selling everything from household goods to clothing.

When the frame building was torn down in 1900 the Emporium went out of business and Jack relocated his contracting and house-moving business. An



Fred Hill Collection

This 1948 photo shows the Sprouse-Reitz store, at right, in the Masonic Building, 1303-05 Adams Ave., in downtown La Grande.

ornate two-story blond brick building was erected in this location by the Masons, at the cost of \$20,000, to serve as their Lodge Hall on the second story and provide commercial space at the street level.

One of the earliest occupants of the new building's commercial space was Thompson & Bramwell, Jewelers, in 1902-03. Later, E.E. Kirtley had a wom-

en's clothing and dry goods store in this location. By 1920, when the Bohnenkamps needed to expand their showroom space into 1303-1305, E.E. Kirkley, the Campbell sisters Ladies Furnishings, Fisher's 5-10-15 cent store and probably several other businesses had all come and gone. Christie & Amsden Variety Store was there but "ready to deal" and move out

leaving the entire commercial space as an expansion for the Bohnenkamps.

By the early 1930s the space again became available and the popular Norton Kiddy Shop, offering clothing from newborn to age 15, moved in and stayed until mid 1942. It was then when the occupant with the most longevity moved into the building.

This was Sprouse-Reitz, which had first opened its doors in La Grande on Sept. 11, 1926, in the Roesch Building at 1408 Adams Ave. At that time it was advertised as a 5-10-15 cent store with nothing over 49 cents. Then on July 31, 1942, it moved from the Roesch Building into the newly remodeled space at 1303-05 Adams, with the franchise's red-and-gray color scheme showing up on the storefront tile and awnings as well as throughout the store. They remained here until 1974 when the Big Value Eighty Eight variety store move in.

During the 1980s this space was converted back into two commercial spaces occupied by a variety of stores including Charlie's Sports and Sights &

Sounds Home Theater. JaxDog Cafe and Books and Find Your Why Travel are currently housed in this location.

Sprouse-Reitz was founded in Tacoma, Washington, in 1909. It soon became a popular five-and-dime store that had its base in Portland. At its peak it had more than 470 stores in 11 states in the western United States. In the 1980s Sprouse-Reitz was declining in business and in March of 1994 the last store closed its doors.

Throughout the years the La Grande store had expanded into the second floor and offered many more items than the original five-and-dime. There was something for every member of the family. It offered toys, ties and socks for men; various undergarments and toiletries for women; and electric trains, dolls, mechanical toys, and games for the children. And finally for the whole family they offered the largest assortment of candy in town. Sprouse-Reitz played an important part in downtown La Grande for nearly 50 years.

Keep looking up! Enjoy!