

# Diggin' In The Dirt: What It Means For My Figs--Part II



By Kim Camarda

Part One of this article dealt with climate and zone information on a larger scale. This was to lay a foundation of understanding and discovery of micro-climates in your own garden space-- the unique "weather" of your garden. A micro-climate is basically an area where the environment is different from the surrounding area. The term may refer to a few square feet, like a cold frame or as large as many square miles, like a valley. Both are micro-climates. They can be as simple as a small boxwood hedge around a more sensitive specimen plant or as elaborate as an entire mini-forest planted along a man-made pond. They naturally occur, or you can create them. You can extend your growing season, grow a wider variety of plants and, in the end, ease the chore of tending plants that struggle when not planted in the right environment.

I planted my figs in a micro-en-

vironment, out by the heat vent on the southern side of our home. Figs fruit better with the proper heat. This spot stays a little warmer in the winter-- the cement foundation radiates the heat as it cools down at night in the off-seasons. The house shades this area from the harshest sun in summer days. This spot is between two old and leggy rhodies I decided to leave despite appearances at times, because they would protect the figs from wind while not limiting the air flow. This is a micro-environment used to protect this plant from the harshest Vernonia weather. Bees seem attracted to the color of the rhodies, too, as an added bonus.

Perennials (like trees, shrubs, and raspberries) can be harmed by daily temperature fluctuations of freezing and thawing in winter. The top six inches of my raspberry canes on the southeast side of my house die back every year and seem to need more frequent watering in summer. Meanwhile, canes on the northeast side produced most of the berries I picked last summer. They also take

less water and don't die all the way back in the milder winters. There is a large, overgrown quince that shades them slightly during the hottest and coldest parts of the season. I think I'll move the ones that need more work to the other spot. Less work and better harvest is my aim. When you buy growing stock, try to get regionally-produced berries, nuts, fruit trees and shrubs, seeds, etc.

Get out the thermometers and see what really goes on in your garden space. Find some in-depth information about the plants you like to keep. I lost Madrone trees for years until I read that they tend to suffer during transplanting (the beauty of peat pots is noted here). Recommended temperatures and growing tips can be very helpful. Often, the little plastic tags are inadequate for getting a plant to thrive. And thriving looks much better than surviving. If you aren't sure about a plant, take the pot and move it around the yard before deciding to put it in the ground. See where it really likes to live. If it starts to die, move it immediately and try to figure out why it didn't

like that spot. This can be a very helpful process. If you are buying a plant for a specific spot, this can be a time and money saver.

Another helpful indicator is watching in the winter when the snow melts, where it tends to melt first and last. This will tell you cold and warm patterns in your space. Low spots tend to be cooler and hold moisture. Where you have a lot of mud and where you get good drainage is best seen in the heavy rains.

This year's freezing temps were pretty hard on my more sensitive plants even in the micro-environments they are in. I lost an older passion flower, and a Meyer lemon tree that was 3 years old. My bay leaf laurel did not die (wonder of wonders!). My dianthus is still alive and kicking in my garage by the window and on the north side of the carport, and many primroses are starting to show color. These give me hope and remind me that the rain and mud are ultimately worth it later in the year.

## Barnyard News: Mud Monsters

By Dawn Carr



This month I would like to talk about what I have always called "Mud Monsters." We have a long rainy season around here and during this season puddles develop.

For those of us with horses, we often see a horse that is scared to death of a puddle. We know it's just a puddle, but they think it's bottomless.

Now, I want to tell you a short story that happened recently that reminded me to talk about this subject. A few weeks ago, my daughters brought home a beautiful filly named "Hemi." She did fantastic on the trailer ride home from Redmond. Didn't even know she was in the trailer. But once they got home and got the trailer opened, that filly just stood there. For an hour and a half she would not come out. Now, it's getting dark by this time and we had floodlights on. To us, it was pretty bright-- bright enough for her to come out, we thought. She would start to come down with the two front feet, got inches from touching the ground and hustled back into the trailer. I started thinking about those darn "mud monsters." I thought, well, maybe if we throw some shavings down she will see it's solid ground. We put shavings out on the gravel driveway and in 2.2 seconds she was out. Just like that. So her depth perception made her think that gravel driveway was bottomless.

I know, weird right? Not really! Here is what I have found out about depth perception in

horses. Horses, since they don't have binocular vision, have very poor depth perception. If you let the horse freely move his head it can compensate for the lack of perception. You should keep that in mind while training your horse. Humans have a 180-degree field of vision because your eyes are on the front of your head. Horses have a 130-degree field of vision because their eyes are located on the sides of the head, hence they need to move the head freely in order to compensate for blind spots.

Here are some of the blind spots a horse has to deal with: directly behind the horse, under the nose, in the middle of the back near the withers and directly in front of its forehead. Now, these blind spots directly behind and in front allow for possible spooking. Remember, horses are flight animals. The way they see is different from humans and understanding how they see the world is very beneficial in understanding their reactions.

Another thing to consider when taking your horse out into the bright or into dim-lit barns-- they take longer to adjust, so pausing for a moment will help them. Although horses take longer to adjust, their adjustment level is better than humans which allows them to see better in bright and low light. There is a really great article on the web that goes into detail. Theexaminer.com has a 5-part series on horse vision. I found it very educational. I hope this helps you and your horse to overcome those darn "mud monsters."

## VERA / VARK Prepares For Emergency Communications

By Dawn Moss



Vernonia Emergency Radio Association Vernonia Amateur Radio Club has been busy the last year updating our capabilities as finances allow. We have managed to update our local repeater with battery backup supply that should last at least a week, enabling us to remain in local communications for a longer time without the need for electricity or a trip to the repeater site to refill a generator.

Last year Washington County ARES granted us a new multi band radio, power supply, and antenna with cable. We have installed the radio and power supply into the radio cabinet at the Fire House enabling us to monitor and respond on multiple frequencies at the same time. We put it to the test during a training exercise in the fall with wonderful results. Installation of the antenna is in the works.

We are also part of a grant that will increase our digital radio communications abilities, allowing us to use D-STAR and D-Rats, a newer digital computer linking system that can be used much like texting with a computer but is sent by radio. It also will allow fast data transfer of larger files.

We hope to not be needed but we are improving our local system and our out-reaching capabilities so that "When All Else Fails, Amateur Radio Works" even better than before.

If you are interested in Amateur "Ham" Radio or would like to take a Beginner Technician Class please contact VERA Secretary Dawn Moss at KE7HHI@arrl.net or 503-608-2643.

## Testing for Census Positions

Testing for Census positions will take place at the Vernonia Library on Friday, February 12 at 1:30 PM and Friday, February 19 at 1:30 PM.

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## Attention Paddlers

Clean boats protect clean waterways

Beginning January 1st, 2010 operators of canoes, kayakas, drift boats and other manually powered boats 10 feet or longer must carry an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) prevention permit when paddling.

The cost is \$7 per year.

One permit per boat when boat is in use. Permit is transferable to other watercraft.

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