

# Diggin' in the Dirt: Slug Patrol

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## Pruning workshop at the Fairgrounds in St. Helens – March 10th

The Columbia County Master Gardeners are putting on a pruning workshop on Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am to 11:30 am at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. Topics will include pruning fruit trees, small fruits (grapes, blueberries, trailing berries, etc.), roses, and other woody plants. There will be a brief discussion of fruit tree diseases and insects. Also included is a demonstration of pruning tool sharpening and maintenance. The event is free and open to the public. Dress for the weather and bring pruning tools if so inclined.

## Columbia County Small Woodlands Association Tree Sale March 10<sup>th</sup>

The fourteenth annual tree sale sponsored by the Columbia County Small Woodlands Association will be held at the Lawrence Oil parking lot on Highway 30 on the north edge of St. Helens on Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM. The group started out selling mainly trees for reforestation and native plantings including bundles of Douglas fir, Western Red Cedar, Oregon Ash and other native species. They still do that but have branched

out (pun intended) to include a number of ornamental varieties as well. This is a very popular sale. Get there early for the best selection. For more information, call 503 556-8800.

## Cardboard for weed control

For those of you who don't wish to use chemicals on your garden for late spring weed control, you can use cardboard. Place a single layer of cardboard (or several thicknesses of newspaper) over the garden area and cover the sheets with compost or other organic matter. Wait several months, and till it all into the garden. The rain will make the cardboard easy to till and the shading will eliminate a good portion of the quackgrass, chickweed, and other winter weeds. Some gardeners transplant starts right through un-tilled cardboard. However, you should make some holes in it with rebar to allow irrigation water to reach roots. The cardboard needs to go on right away to have the desired results.

Cardboard (or newspaper) and organic mulch can also be used on the garden paths in the summer.

## Fertilizing berries

This is a good month to fertilize Marion berries and raspberries at a rate of one-half to three-quarters of a pound of 10-20-20 or its organic equivalent per 10 feet of row. If the organic fertilizer was half as strong as the 10-20-20 based



## Slug patrol

Herbaceous perennials are showing green tips, vegetable starts can be purchased, and onion sets should be planted soon. So what time is it? It's slug time. Yes, they're back. Of course, I know they never left but at least they stayed out of sight for a while. As slugs emerge from under rocks and from cracks in the soil, the wise gardener must take action.

on the numbers on the bag, you would double the amount you apply. The rule that "a pint is a pound the world around" should help you measure what you need. Spread the fertilizer in a uniform pattern across the berry bed (usually 2-3 feet wide). Many gardeners (and farmers) fertilize the plants again when they are in flower (usually in early-mid June) with a product that is only nitrogen like urea (non-organic) or bloodmeal (organic).

Mature blueberries need about .75 to 1.0 cup of a similar fertilizer per plant at this time of year. Generally, an acidifying nitrogen source like ammonium sulfate is applied in May as well. Since blueberry roots on one side don't share the fertilizer with parts of the plant on the other side, careful and uniform spreading in a foot-wide band around the plant is very important.

Slug baits come in two basic formulations. The most common active ingredient is metaldehyde. This compound, which by itself isn't particularly attractive to slugs, is paired with something they will eat readily. Once consumed, metaldehyde causes intense mucous production and if there is any sun, slugs quickly desiccate. This compound works well as a quick "knockdown" of the slug population and depending on the bait material, may stay active for several weeks. The big concern with "meta" baits is their toxicity to pets, especially dogs. Recent formulations have tried to create repellent compounds that dogs will avoid but slugs will not.

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# On the Shelves: What's Happening at the Vernonia Library

**Library Tree**—There is something new inside the Vernonia Library—a tree!

The handmade tree is the first step in the creation of a Kids Corner that the Vernonia Library staff is working to create to make the Library more fun and interesting for their youngest readers.

The tree was designed and created by local resident Jennifer Draeger, who volunteered her time and energy. Materials for the project were purchased by the Vernonia Friends of the Library. The tree was installed by Brent Wack of Harmony Contracting, LLC, who also volunteered his time.



# Council Approves Release of Escrow Funds

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School district is scheduled to move into its new K-12 facility in the fall of 2012.

According to Superintendent Cox, who was present at the Council meeting, the School District had set aside one million dollars of the federal funds that were received for the purchase of the current school site to build the New Spencer Park, along with \$1.3 million for the deconstruction. The School District is required to replace City sports fields that were lost in the exchange of properties between the City and School District that provided some of the space for the new school construction.

The City of Vernonia is currently planning to develop additional amenities at the new park site.

Based on current estimates and a bid, the School District believes there are excess funds in the escrow account set aside for construction of the new sports fields and asked for the release of the funds to help with cash flow on the school construction project.

Jim Teirney, Executive Director of Community Action Team, the County Project Manager for flood related projects, also presented information on his review of the estimated costs for construction of the New Spencer Park and recommended Council allow the release of the funds. The Columbia County Commissioners approved the release of funds earlier in the month.

The School District requested the release of \$495,472 which leaves a balance of 125% of the estimate for the new park construction.

After several Council members raised concerns about this release of funds, Cox, Vernonia City Administrator Bill Haack, and Tierney explained that the City, County and School District have signed several Intergovernmental Agreements which guarantees the City that the School District will complete the demolition and construction of the New Spencer Park as agreed.

Council approved the release of funds by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

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