

## Diggin' in the Dirt: Three Questions

By Chip Bubl  
Oregon State University  
Extension Service - Columbia County

### Food preservation and food safety

Want to learn how to safely preserve produce from your garden this summer? The OSU Extension Service in Columbia County offers food preservation information and resources. Here is a list of services that we provide:

- Free Printed Publications and Safe Canning Recipes
- Online Publications and Recipes: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation>
- Free Pressure Canner Gauge Testing (call ahead before bringing in your gauge)
- Food Preservation and Food Safety Hotline from July 14 through October 17, 2014, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM Monday- Friday. 1-800-354-7319
- A list of our hands-on canning classes can be found on our website: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia> or call our office at 503 397-3462

Jenny Rudolph, MPA

OSU/Columbia County Extension Educator

### 2014 Home Food Preservation Class Series Offered in Scappoose

Have you thought about learning to preserve fruits, vegetables, fish or game this summer? Are you an experienced canner who would like an update on the latest USDA recommendations? Then plan to attend one or more of the canning classes offered by the Oregon State University Extension Service this summer. Class sessions will be held at the Scappoose Grace Lutheran Church, 51737 Columbia River Hwy, Scappoose, OR 97056. Each class will cost \$25.00 or \$90 if you sign up for all four. Some scholarships are available. Participants will receive instruction and hands-on experience with safe methods of food preservation. Class size is limited, so sign up today. Pre-registration

and pre-payment of class fees are required.

- Thursday, July 31<sup>st</sup> 3:00 to 6:00 PM – Canning Fruits and Pie Fillings
- Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup> 3:00 to 6:00 PM – Pickling and Fermenting Vegetables
- Thursday, August 14<sup>th</sup> 3:00 to 6:00 PM – Pressure Canning Meat, Fish and Vegetables
- Thursday, August 21<sup>st</sup> 3:00 to 6:00 PM – Canning Tomatoes, Sauces and Salsas

For more information and to register for classes, please call or visit the OSU Extension Service office at: 505 N. Columbia River Highway, St. Helens, OR. 503-397-3462

### Three Questions

**Number one question: What's up with all those Western tent caterpillars?** Around Rainier and toward Vernonia, trees were inundated with them. That is less true in Scappoose and St. Helens. There are a couple of general take home messages. Tent caterpillars rarely kill or even significantly damage trees unless the trees are already weak or very young. They eat through a bunch of leaves and then drop to the ground and pupate. The moths emerge from their cocoons and mate in about another 6-8 weeks and lay eggs on tree branches that provide next year's crop of caterpillars. Those limbs that had their leaves stripped off push new leaves and often it is hard to tell that tent caterpillars were even there a couple of months after they finished eating. It makes no sense to prune out the "tents" unless it was a pruning cut you wanted to make anyway.

The volume of Western tent caterpillars rises and falls in long cycles. There is nothing that you can do on your own property that will make an ounce of difference to what you see next year. Even if the whole infested area was sprayed (a very bad idea since it would be very expensive, biologically damaging, and targets an insect that does no real harm), you still wouldn't alter their ebb and flow significantly. So while they may be irritating, the best strategy is to relax and wait for the natural predators (birds, small wasps, viruses) to take their toll and subdue the wave for 8-10 years.

**Number two question: What is causing the holes in flowering plum, cherry, and laurel leaves?** The big surprise is that it is not an insect. It is one of two diseases, either cherry leaf spot or coryneum blight. Both diseases are called "shothole" fungi due to the appearance of the infected leaves. When a fungal spore infects a leaf, the plant walls it off and creates a circular dead zone around it. The walled off tissues drop out and to the ground creating that "shothole" appearance.

This disease is common in spring but not when we get to the drier weather of summer. Air circulation around the tree plays a

big role in how much disease is seen. Air-flow near the top of the tree is usually good enough that the disease isn't significant there. But look into the middle and lower part of the tree canopy and you will see that the disease is much more evident. Severe infections will drop many of the leaves off the tree.

Part of the solution to these diseases is to prune to open up the tree. Flowering plums (purple leafed) tend to get very twiggy in the middle of the tree. Remove much of that and any large branches that might impede air movement. There are some sprays that can be applied but it has to be done after you have cleared up the circulation and before you see all the holes. This year, mid-April would probably have been ideal for the first spray with other following if it a wet spring. An alternative would be to remove flowering plums. Because of our spring climate, they are not all that well adapted to this area. There seem to be a few clones that resist the disease but they are not identified as such and you can't go out and buy a shothole resistant flowering plum, at least that I have seen.

**Question three: Is there any hope for controlling slugs?** What would spring be without slugs? They are the consummate recyclers, turning your new transplants into fertilizer for the next transplant you put in its place. So, I favor the hoe. A quick chop and it is all over. That said, you have to get up early and spend some time looking for them. Put a board down for them to hide under and you can increase your efficiency. I have had good luck with the pet safe iron phosphate slug baits (Sluggo and others). But this year, my wife noticed that a towhee was harvesting the slug bait, leaving the slugs to munch the plants. A modest solution was to cover the transplants and slug bait with pieces of row cover but that is not a long-term solution. Nature is ever so resourceful.

*Plant an extra row for the food bank, senior center, or community meals programs. Cash donations to buy food are also greatly appreciated.*

*The Extension Service offers its programs and materials equally to all people.*

### Free newsletter

The Oregon State University Extension office in Columbia County publishes a monthly newsletter on gardening and farming topics (called County Living) written/edited by yours truly. All you need to do is ask for it and it will be mailed to you. Call 503 397-3462 to be put on the list. Alternatively, you can find it on the web at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/> and click on newsletters.

**Contact information for the Extension office**  
**Oregon State University Extension Service – Columbia County**  
**505 N. Columbia River Highway (across from the Legacy clinic)**  
**St. Helens, OR 97051**  
**503 397-3462**  
**Email: [chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu](mailto:chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu)**

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