

Diggin' in the Dirt: Gardening Resolutions

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Grafting Workshop in February

The OSU Extension office will be hosting a grafting workshop on February 21st in Clatskanie, from 9 am-noon. The St. Helens class is filled. Participants will be taught how to graft apple scions on to dwarf apple rootstocks. Each participant will receive 5 rootstocks to work with and supplies to secure the graft. Scion varieties will be available or participants can bring their own varieties they wish to graft. Cost of the workshop is \$15. The class is limited to 20 people so early registration will assure a place. To register, or for more information, call the Extension office at 503 397-3462.

Row Covers Available Again!

The interest in row covers continues to increase. For those of you that missed the buzz, row covers are made from a gauzy fabric. They come in six-foot widths and we cut the roll in lengths of 50 or 100 feet. Row covers are used in vegetable production on farms and home

gardens.

They serve several purposes:

- Covers increase temperatures around transplants and growing plants by 4-6 degrees during the day and 3-4 degrees at night. This is valuable heat in the spring and fall.
- Seeds planted under row covers aren't seen by crows.



- Soils warm with the covers but don't crust, so seed emergence is faster and more even.
- Covers can be left with enough slack so that broccoli-sized plants can grow tall underneath them.
- Covers can keep insects out like carrot rust flies and cabbage root maggots.

However, slugs prosper under covers so slug controls are needed. Weeds also like it under cover, so persistent weeding pays.

• In 2014, we sold, in 50 or 100 foot pieces, about a mile (!) of cover. This year we are selling one ounce covers like last year. Cost is \$20 for a 6 x 100' piece or \$10 for a 50' one. The benefit of the heavier piece is that there is a little better heat retention and the fabric is stronger and less likely to rip. You cut them down further to fit your gardening needs. Call our office (503-397-3462) if you want some. It went fast in previous years.

Gardening Resolutions

Okay, I know it is a little past the start of the New Year, but a good part of gardening (and life, I suppose) is planning ahead and then acting on those plans. So here are some resolutions that may be worth considering:

Resolution 1: If a plant isn't doing well where you put it, move it or toss it! The plant may need better drainage, more sun, or something else to allow it to thrive. If you have a place where the plant might do better and you still like it, transplant it. February is an excellent month to transplant. I know rose growers who give roses three-five years to show how disease resistant they are (they don't want to spray for black spot). If they don't perform, they are replaced. Finally, trees, some shrubs, and even some herbaceous perennial flowers can outgrow their place. Large trees and shrubs generally can't be moved, so they need to be cut down. Perennials can be divided and/or moved.

Resolution 2: Use a lot more compost and/or mulch. Vegetable gardens and landscape beds benefit tremendously from regular additions of organic matter. This is especially true of the clay soils found almost everywhere in Columbia County. Top-dressings of compost in the fall can reduce the amount of winter annual weeds that start during the fall through the late spring. If you add more mulch than compost in your vegetable garden, make sure you provide some extra nitrogen to help turn the mulch into compost. If you don't, the soil micro-organisms that make compost will capture the nitrogen and your vegetables won't have enough. So feed both the vegetables and the beneficial decomposers.

Resolution 3: Learn to grow more vegetables in the early spring and the late fall. This is called season extension. It is quite reasonable to grow lettuce and other greens almost year round if you use the right techniques. Good tools include row covers, cloches (small plastic-covered tunnels in the garden), raised beds, and transplants. For home-grown transplants, nothing beats a greenhouse or equally good and quite reasonable to make from scrap materials, a cold frame. It is worth noting that tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers do not do well in a winter greenhouse here since our light intensities at that time of the year are so low.

Resolution 4: Make a special effort to grow fruits and vegetables for the Food Banks and Senior Centers. They all need and value good quality local produce.

Resolution 5: Take time to just sit in your garden, soaking up the sunshine, colors, scents, and the incredible activity of birds and insects that makes your garden such a delightful place to be.

Donate extra produce to 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. You can also be sent an email when the newsletter is posted.

Contact information for the Extension office

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NOTICE OF ELECTION OF DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS

Notice is hereby given that on Tuesday, May 19, 2015, an election will be conducted by mail for the purpose of electing board members to the following districts (positions/zones and terms) as follows:

VERNONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT 47J

Positions 2, 3 and 7 (4 year term) - Vernonia 1-5, South Mist, North Mist and a portion of Washington County

MIST-BIRKENFELD RFPD

Positions 1 and 2 (4 year terms) and Position 4 (2 year term) - South Mist, North Mist, a portion of Vernonia 5 and a portion of Clatsop County

VERNONIA RFPD

Position 2, 3 and 4 (4 year terms) - Vernonia 1-3, portions of Vernonia 4 and Vernonia 5

COLUMBIA 9-1-1 COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT - Candidates must reside in, be nominated by and elected by zone

Zone 1 (4 year term) - Clatskanie 1-3, North Clatskanie, South Clats-

kanie, South Delena, North Delena, Marshland, Quincy, Apiary

Zone 2 (4 year term) - Goble, Rainier 1, Rainier 2, West Rainier, East Rainier, Yankton, South Deer Island, North Deer Island, Prescott, Columbia City

Zone 4 (4 year term) - South McNulty, North McNulty, South Warren, North Warren, Vernonia 1-5, Chapman, South Mist, North Mist, East Chapman

Each candidate for an office listed above must file a declaration of candidacy accompanied by a filing fee of \$10.00 or a petition for nomination signed by at least 25 registered voters residing in the election district for the office, with the Elections Department of Columbia County beginning on February 7, 2015 and no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 19, 2015.

Filing forms are available on-line at the Secretary of State, Elections Division <http://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Pages/electionforms.aspx>. The forms are also available at Columbia County Elections Dept., 230 Strand St., St. Helens, OR.

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