

Diggin' in the Dirt: Those Pesky Earwigs

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Food Preservation Questions? OSU Extension Service Has Answers.

Are you planning to preserve food from your garden or purchased from a farm this summer? If so, call or visit the OSU Extension Service office before you start canning, freezing, or drying. Costly and potentially harmful mistakes can be made by using outdated canning recipes and instructions. You can find free publications AND pressure gauge testing at the Columbia County Extension office located at 505 N. Columbia River Highway in St. Helens (across from the Legacy Clinic). If you have questions, phone the office at (503) 397-3462. You can download for free all our food preservation publications at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation>. An additional great resource is the National Center for home Food Preservation at <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/>. In July, the OSU Extension Statewide Food Preservation Hotline (1-800-3547319) will open Monday through Friday from 9am - 2pm starting on July 13th and ending on October 16th.

Garden Updates: Soil crusting

Some seeds really have to struggle. Carrot, lettuce, dill, beet and chard all have to work to get through soils that have formed a significant crust. Given our standard clay-based soils and any rainfall or sprinkler irrigation, soil

crusting is a fact of life. So are seeds that don't ever emerge.

The enterprising gardener will plan for crusts. Sensitive seed should be sowed in furrows and covered with potting mix instead of soil. Floating row covers, which are useful in warming crops and excluding some insects, also intercept rain drops and allow the water to float softly to earth, slowing the crusting process. Our grandparents used to cover crust-sensitive seedlings with burlap bags that worked a lot like row covers except that they had to be removed quickly once the seeds break through to get some sun light.

Those pesky earwigs

Earwigs tend to gradually increase in well-managed gardens. They must like the variety in a cultivated landscape. Earwigs are opportunists, feeding on mold, decaying vegetation, dying leaves or even healthy leaves and flowers. They also eat other insects like aphids. Earwigs seek refuge in any tight dark place during the day and come out to feed at night. For that reason, they are often found in flowers such as dahlias. When they drop from the floral vase onto the table, they aren't much appreciated.

An old earwig remedy is to leave tightly rolled up newspapers where earwigs are creating a problem. The earwigs crawl inside to hide from the sun. In the morning, you can gather up the newspaper "logs", put them in a plastic bag, and freeze them. The logs can be reused. There are several chemicals registered on ornamentals, but you must be careful that your spraying

doesn't hurt bees visiting the flowers.

Snakes for pest control

Gardeners should be glad to see snakes around the garden. These much-maligned reptiles consume garden pests including slugs, grubs, mice, voles and rats.

The vast majority of snakes in Oregon are very beneficial. Some, like garter snakes, eat slugs. Others, like the sharp-tailed snake, eat slugs and grubs. Rubber boas specialize in eating mice and voles, going down their tunnels after them.

Garter snakes are the type of snake most often seen by urban and suburban gardeners. Two species of garter snakes are commonly found throughout much of Oregon, except the mountains: the abundant western terrestrial garter snake and the common garter snake. In western Oregon, a third species is also present, the northwestern garter snake.

Garter snakes generally breed in the spring and give birth to live young (they don't lay eggs) in the late summer or fall. Often, young are not seen until the following spring, after they emerge from hibernation after their first winter. Most young garter snakes don't survive into adulthood. They are killed off by predators, cars and lawnmowers.

To make your property garter snake friendly:

- Walk your lawn before you mow it to scare the snakes into hiding. Lawn mowers are deadly to snakes because they can't hear like we do. Rather, they feel vibrations.
- Provide habitat for snakes if you have room. Old plywood or corrugated metal roofing left loosely on the ground in an out of the way place on your property provides hiding and nesting places for slithering creatures. Old stumps and large rocks also make good snake habitat.

The western rattlesnake, the only species of truly venomous snake native to Oregon, feeds on mice, rats and other smaller animals. Rattlesnakes were once more commonly found on both the west and east sides of the Cascades. But they have all but been killed off on the west side.

Rattlers are rare in northwestern Oregon. They were shot out 100 years ago by early settlers. There are a few dens left, but only in really isolated places. In southern and eastern Oregon, however, rattlers are more common. Caution

should be exercised in rattlesnake country.

For more information, check out the photo-illustrated book, "Reptiles of Washington and Oregon," published by the Seattle Audubon Society and edited by Robert M. Storm and William P. Leonard. From Robert Mason, OSU Zoology Department

This could save your life

Farmers and rural residents are well acquainted with electric pumps. This is the time of year that many of us start our pumps back up for summer irrigation. A pump installer has a habit that he feels has saved his life several times. He never takes hold of any part of a pump installation until he slaps it with the back of his hand to check for electrical current. The reason is muscle contraction. If you take hold of a "hot" pipe or pump (one that's improperly grounded) an electrical charge may not allow you to let go. By testing them with the back of your hand, you may get burned knuckles, but at least you'll be alive.

Plant an extra row for the food bank, senior centers, 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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WANTED Volunteers for Jamboree

The Vernonia Friendship Jamboree and Logging Show is an annual event which welcomes visitors, residents and old friends to celebrate and showcase our community with food, music, activities and events.



*The Jamboree
Committee - your
friends and neighbors
who make this event
happen each year.*

WE NEED YOU!

Join the Committee!
We meet the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

WE NEED YOUR



We could use your help with:

- Set up/Tear down
- Traffic Control
- Logistics
- Planning
- Info Booth
- Music Coordination
- Electrical Specialist
- Vendor Coordination
- Parade Assistant
- Parade Registration

VOLUNTEER AND GET ONE OF THE YELLOW T-SHIRTS!



For more information to volunteer and help make Jamboree happen contact:
Megan at (971)254-6826 or
Volunteer@VernoniaFriendshipJamboree.com.

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