

Diggin' in the Dirt: Planting Peas

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Master Gardener™ class signups being taken

The OSU Extension office in Columbia County will be offering the Master Gardener™ training again this spring. This year the class will be in St. Helens. The classes will be held on Mondays from 9:30 am – 3:30 pm for about 10 weeks starting February 1st, 2016. The classes will cover vegetable and fruit gardening, soils and fertilizers, insect and disease identification and control, weed identification and management, and lots of other topics of interest to gardeners. Cost of the program is \$80.00 which includes a large resource book. Master Gardeners™ are responsible for providing volunteer gardening education to the community as partial pay-back for the training. If interested in the program, call the Extension office at 503 397-3462 for an information packet.

Program on Plants and Plantings for Pollinators

There will be a program on choosing the right plants and designing the right plantings for pollinators. The program will be held at the Loo-Wit room of the St. Helens High School on Thursday, January 28th at 6:30 pm. The speaker is Horticulturalist Neil Bell from Oregon State University Extension Service in Marion County. With bees and other pollinators at some risk, this program will show how gardeners can support these species by the landscape plant materials they choose. The program is free and open to all.

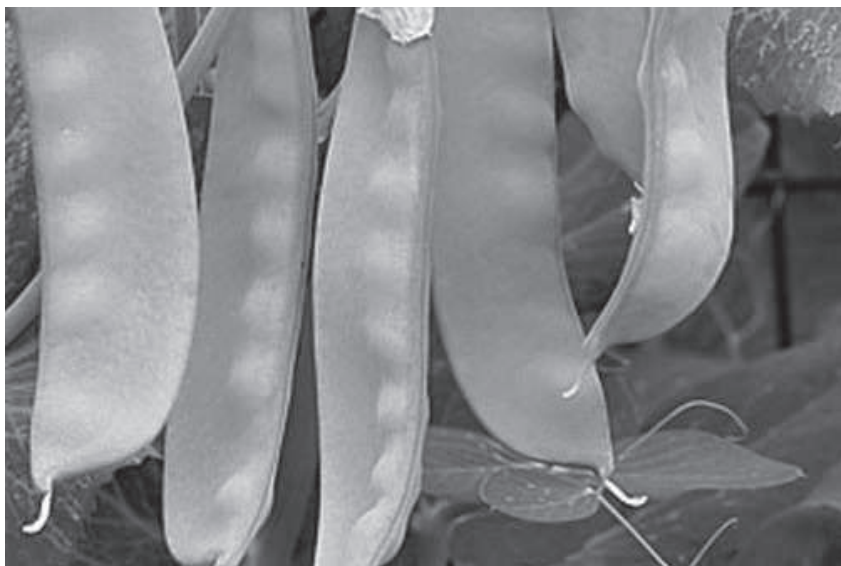
Grafting workshop in February

The OSU Extension office in St. Helens will be hosting a grafting workshop tentatively scheduled for February 13th from 9 am - 12:00 pm. 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.

Planting peas

Peas are one of the earliest crops a home gardener can sow. There are two types of peas available for home gardening - shelling peas and edible pod peas.



Oregon Sugar Pod II

Shelling peas have pods with fiber called "parchment," making the pods too tough to eat. Edible pod peas lack parchment fiber making the pod more tender.

When considering pea varieties, look at the potential height of the pea vine. Some varieties grow into tall vines that need trellising whereas others have short vines that don't need as much support.

Enation virus-resistant shelling pea varieties adapted to Pacific Northwest conditions include: Oregon Trail, Oregon Pioneer and Maestro.

Having pods without parchment, edible pod peas include the thin-walled snow peas, or Chinese pod peas and the relatively new snap pea. Both the peas and its pod are meant to be eaten intact and are delicious cooked or raw. Oregon Giant and Oregon Sugar Pod II are both enation resistant snow peas.

Snap peas have round pods with thick walls. Sugar Daddy snap peas have the added attraction of having stringless pods. Cascadia is a newer, high quality, very thick-walled and enation resistant snap pea developed at OSU. Both these are bush varieties. Sugar Snap and Super

Sugar Snap are pole varieties that are not enation resistant so they need to be planted to mature before July.

Peas can be planted as early as mid-January in the Oregon Coast and Willamette Valley regions, but waiting until later is less of a gamble. When planting in February through mid-April, cover the soil with clear plastic for a few sunny days before planting to warm the soil and speed germination. Remove the plastic to plant. It can be put back until you start to see the seedlings poking through. Floating row covers or cloches put over the seedlings for a month or so also improve early-season growth. Be sure to watch out for slugs and treat as appropriate.

For a continuous supply of peas from late spring to fall, plant more peas every few weeks. But after April 1, plant only enation virus-resistant varieties, as peas grown in warmer weather are susceptible to a disease called pea enation virus.

To ensure an adequate supply of nitrogen, the seed can be inoculated with nitrogen-fixing bacteria, purchased at a local garden store, immediately before seeding.

Peas grow best well-drained, with fertile soil. Plant them about two inches apart, even though many sources say they may be planted more closely together. If planting peas in the early spring, plant the seeds about one inch deep. But if planting peas after the soil warms and dries up (April or later), plant the seeds a bit deeper - about one-and-a-half to two inches deep.

A 30- to 50-foot row of peas will feed a family of four for the season, including enough for some freezing. Space rows of short-vined (bush) peas 36 inches apart and tall types 48 inches apart. Thinning is not necessary.

Tall peas should be grown along a fence or trellis. Short or bush varieties can be planted in rows or broadcast planted into a raised bed at a rate of about one pound per 100 square feet.

Most gardeners think that peas can't be planted in the summer. But at the coast and in the Willamette Valley, peas can be planted until Aug. 1, as long

as the varieties are enation mosaic-virus resistant. Peas planted after Aug. 1 may be damaged by fall freezes.

Food Safety or 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/>.

Take excess produce to 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 sign up for email notification of when to find the latest edition on the web at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/>.

Contact information for the Extension office

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