

Diggin' in the Dirt: Garden Topics

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Food Preservation Class in St. Helens

Back by popular demand are our summer food preservation classes. These classes are great for both the beginner and experienced canner. Classes will be held in St. Helens at the Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District building.

Class size is limited to allow for hands-on involvement in the kitchen. The final class will be on Saturday, August 27, 9 am to 1 pm – Pressure Canning Low-Acid Foods. Cost to attend is \$30 per class. A small number of scholarships are available. Payment must be made in advance to hold your spot. Contact the OSU Extension Service – Columbia County office at (503) 397-3462 to register or online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia>.

OSU Master Gardener™ class to be held in Vernonia starting next February

The 2017 edition of the OSU Master Gardener™ class will be held in Vernonia starting on Tuesday, February 21, 2017 and continuing for 11 successive Tuesdays. The class will run from 9:30 am until 3:15 pm. It will be held at the new Community Health Center. Cost of the class will be \$80. For more information or to sign up, contact our office at (503) 397-3462 or email either me at chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu or Vicki Krenz at vicki.krenz@oregonstate.edu. We will need 15 students to hold the

class and the room probably won't hold more than 25.

Garden topics

Elusive yellow jackets: Wet springs usually portend lower nesting success for yellow jackets. This past spring was mixed with some very hot days followed by a period of damp and cool ones. It is possible that nest building didn't start until later than normal and that the yellow jacket population is still expanding to the in-your-face numbers more common in August. We shall see.

Vegetable insects of note: the most common vegetable insect questions that have come into the office involve the 12 spotted cucumber beetle, the cabbage butterfly (the ubiquitous white one), and the beet/chard/spinach leaf miner. The leaf miner fly lays her eggs on a beet family leaf and the teensy maggot burrows between the upper and lower surfaces of the leaf, eating out all the juicy bits. This leaves a papery, brown blotch on the leaf and, if you look carefully, little beads of insect frass (aka poop) between the upper and lower surfaces. The rest of the leaf is still good to eat with a little clipping. Row covers can keep the fly from laying her eggs if she hasn't already. Insecticides containing spinosad (some forms have an organic label) can help. The cabbage butterfly is actively laying her precious eggs on the undersides of the leaves. They hatch into a very hungry green caterpillar that can eat out large chunks of a leaf. With high numbers, there can be a lot of loss. The bacterial insecticide

Bt works if applied often enough. So does spinosad, and also row covers if the eggs aren't already present. Finally, the cucumber beetle is most damaging on young seedlings. It looks vaguely like a bright yellow ladybeetle, but with 12 spots. They are hard to manage, but feel free to squish them when you see them.

Time to plant for winter eating: Start getting your winter kale, lettuce, chard, arugula, carrots, and spinach in the ground as soon as possible. They have to grow enough before cold, wet winter days arrive to provide you with some fresh produce in the coming months.

Brown spots in lawns: Brown spots showing up in lawns are probably caused by one of the following (most likely first): dry spots caused by compacted soil, sand, septic system drain field, rocks, etc.; spring feeding of the European crane fly; mole tunneling; and red thread fungus damage.

Dead spruce tree leaders: Spruce trees are often attacked by the white pine weevil. The insect lays an egg in the base of the new leader growth and the larva feed in the cambium, causing the terminal to die. A new leader will take over in time but often they also succumb over successive seasons. This accounts for the very rounded top appearance that many Colorado blue spruce trees exhibit. Our native Sitka spruce is also a target for this insect. Controls (and there aren't many that really work) must be applied in April/May.

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 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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