

Diggin' in the Dirt: Plan Your Garden

By Chip Bubl
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2017 OSU Master Gardener™ class will be held in Vernonia

The Columbia County/OSU Master Gardener™ training will be held in Vernonia on ten consecutive Tuesdays from about 9:30 am to 3:30 pm starting on February 21, 2017. If you think you might be interested, call the OSU Extension office in St. Helens at (503) 397-3462 or email either myself (chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu) or Vicki Krenz (vicki.krenz@oregonstate.edu) to get on a mailing list for the classes when the informational packets and applications are sent out. The class will be held at the Vernonia Health Center and space is somewhat limited. Cost of the class is \$80 and there are a few scholarships available.

Plan your garden

This month is an ideal time to make notes, resolutions, and plans for next year's garden. The mistakes of the past year (for me, too many tomatoes, some early direct seed failures with green beans, and not enough winter greens, etc.) should be countered with a plan that both corrects the errors of the past and allows room for new experiments. The notes, resolutions, and plans don't have to be extensive. A garden notebook is very useful as a permanent record of your intentions, varieties planted (with dates), observations, and results.

Finally, many gardeners don't realize the potential for raising "small fruits" in the garden. Gooseberries, currants, blueberries, lingonberries and the trailing blackberries like Marion and Logan berries produce lots of fruit in modest space. There are two great retail nurseries in the northwest that specialize in tree fruits, small fruits and all manner of exotic fruit. You should visit their websites to see their catalogs: One Green World www.onegreenworld.com and Rain-tree Nursery www.raintreenursery.com.

Using manure in the garden

You probably know that there is a controversy about how to use manure in the garden. The primary concern is the possible transmission of disease organisms, especially the O57 strain of E. coli. Research indicates that manure worked into a field in the fall and

planted the following spring would not be at risk for disease. One approach is to work manure into the garden (along with some lime if you haven't limed lately) in the fall before the rains start and either plant a cover crop or cover with a non-manure mulch like leaves or black plastic to preserve surface soil tilth. The October deluge this year has stopped that. But manure could still be applied to the garden surface if the ground isn't too soft. It could be left uncovered. I have also seen some people cover it with black plastic in an effort to try to keep more of the nitrogen from leaching away. If you do that, make sure the manure stays moist enough over the winter to still compost.

I still am very concerned about the use of manure tea during the growing season or fresh manure applied directly to crops for health risk reasons. Well-composted manure should be fine at any time.

So you want to send your moles to the neighbors? Here's recipe #1007

In the continuing saga of neighborhood mole herding comes this formula from Washington: Carol's Mint Mole Blaster.

You take a couple of big handfuls of mint leaves and stems. Put them in a blender with just enough liquid to blend up a wet paste. Mix the paste/slurry into a large soup pot of water and simmer for 20-30 minutes. This will make a concentrate that can be used to make six gallons of "mole blaster." Pour the diluted mix into mole holes whenever you see activity. Carol, whoever she is, says that the moles will skedaddle. It should be possible to create the same effect with peppermint extract which would help the Oregon mint growers. You need to experiment with concentrations but a little oil goes a long way.

However, as you might guess, I have my doubts. Certainly "assault by mint" will not eliminate moles. At best it will force them to dig new tunnels, some of which might be on the neighbor's property. But since Washingtonians passed a referendum that does not allow them to trap moles, they are getting kind of desperate. I envision all the neighbors engaging in similar behaviors to move moles, perhaps terminally confusing them (the moles, I think I mean). But moles have occupied the landscape for a lot longer than humans. I have little doubt as to the winner.

For information on trapping moles, visit this publication on the OSU Extension website: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu>, click on publications, click on the publications in the next window and then type in EC 987 in the search window.

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? 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 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: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/>.

Contact information for the Extension office

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Readers Lend Their Voices... *continued from page 4*

To the Editor,

I want to extend my congratulations to Margaret Magruder on her win.

Campaigning is a risk that Ms. Magruder entered into with a personal and financial commitment that took the county and me by surprise.

I knew I had a battle on my hands when she beat me in the primaries.

Her late brother Dick, her family, her name, are respected not only in our county but in Clatsop County as

well.

Margaret's many years of service on the Budget Committee, though unglamorous and tedious, gives her insight into the heavy lifting required ahead to sustain Oregon PERS while looking for dollars to provide county services and road care.

I'd like to thank my wife Susan, my mother Geneva, my brother and grown children for their most gracious and generous support.

To my team of 6 that labored

tirelessly every Tuesday night, thank you so much. Your thoughtful, helpful direction and advice brought us close to victory.

To those who wrote letters, gave financially, and helped walk the neighborhoods of Columbia County in the rain with only a donut as a reward, you're the toughest.

Columbia County: land with still waters.

Wayne Mayo, Scappoose

To the Editor,

For more than two decades Vernonia's P.E.O. chapter has been selling wreaths and hand-made items for gift-giving (some are edible!) at the Christmas Bazaar. As always, our purpose is to raise funds for scholarships for women. We are always motivated by the generosity of the many people who support this effort. Thank you, Vernonia.

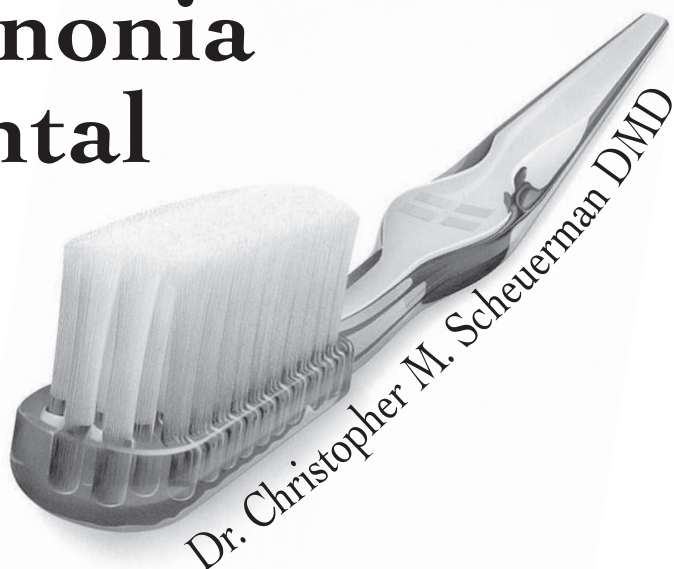
We look forward to seeing old friends and new at the Bazaar, and invite all to visit our table and enjoy all the goodies we have to offer—with our greenery and our table of treats we not only offer a nice "aroma of the holidays" but also a great "taste of Christmas."

Remember, if you have ordered a wreath, you may pick it up at the Bazaar. And it's not too late to place an order—call Mary Tolonen at (503) 429-7214. (If you can't pick it up, we can deliver your order after the Bazaar.)

So, join us for the Bazaar at the School Commons on December 3rd and 4th.... we'll see you at the "Spirit of Christmas in Vernonia!"

Audeen Wagner for P.E.O.
Vernonia

Vernonia Dental



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