

Diggin' in the Dirt: Crusts Crush Carrots

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OSU Master Gardener's Spring Garden Fair: Saturday, April 29th

The OSU/Columbia County Master Gardener's™ Spring Garden Fair at St. Helens High School Commons, 2375 Gable Rd St Helens, OR, will be held on April 29th from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. The OSU Master Gardeners™ will sell roughly 5,000 tomatoes of more than 30 varieties, provide tomato and general gardening information, and have a number of educational displays. There will also be dozens of local vendors offering garden plants and other garden related products.

Watch for Vernonia's own Spring Garden Fair on Saturday, May 13!

The Vernonia Community Garden Group will be putting on the third annual Spring Garden Fair at the Vernonia High School Commons on Saturday, May 13 from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. There will be certified organic tomato plants for sale as well as other garden plants and garden related items from local and regional vendors. There will be an information table staffed with Master Gardeners™ to answer your garden questions. Note the posters going up around town and watch the *Vernonia's Voice* for more information.

Crusts crush carrots (and beets, dill, etc.)

Carrot seeds are kind of wimpy. They don't burst through the ground like radishes. Rather, they stumble to the surface over 7-14 days. Or they don't. If they don't make it to the sunlight, you have no carrots. What is going on?

Most of us try to garden on clay-based soils. When we roto-till the garden plot and plant carrot seeds, surface clay particles tend to solidify into a tough crust. That makes it hard for those carrot seeds to break through before they have used up all their stored energy. One gardening trick is to cover carrot seed with potting soil, not garden soil. Our grandparents had other solutions. They placed cut-opened burlap bags over the carrot

beds. That kept the seed evenly moist and reduced the "baking" of the clay. Once the carrots germinated, the bags were removed. Other gardeners in years past planted radishes in with carrots and those tough radish seedlings broke the crust with carrots following along behind.

A modern technique is to use floating row covers instead of burlap. It gives the same crust reduction, seems to encourage faster germination, and the emerged seedlings respond to the heat and sun bathed environment under the covers. Of course, weeds flourish as well, so be warned.

Peter Chan, a famous Portland gardener, used to plant carrots in 2-inch containers, four seeds to a container. When the plants were about two inches in size, he transplanted the "plug" from the container with the four carrots as one unit. He spaced the plugs about four inches apart within the row and with rows about six inches apart. He didn't thin and all the carrots, given the space between the plugs, seemed to do very well. Of course, he had rich and deeply worked ground that he planted into. That is another carrot secret.

Mini semi-broccoli

Brassicas, otherwise known as the cabbage family, have been a heavily bred vegetable crop family over their 3-5,000 years of domestication. Two modified broccoli types of similar characteristics are gai lan (sometimes spelled kailann, also known as Chinese broccoli) and rapini (otherwise known as Italian broccoli raab). Both feature thick, edible stems, pungent/sweet leaves and modest floral structures. They are about one-third the size of a broccoli plant.

They can be sown now in seed flats or direct seeded where you can keep them somewhat warm. Neither likes the intense heat of the mid-summer. Plant spacing is 6-10 inches within the row and rows about 12 inches apart.

They mature in about 45-60 days depending on variety. For both rapini and gai lan, there are a lot of varieties to choose from.

The vegetables are excellent in stir fry, broiled, and in pasta dishes

and soups. The harvested plants keep well in the refrigerator for some time. **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 Country 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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Vernonia Grange Celebrates Grange Month

Timberbound Concert is featured event on April 27

Carol McIntyre, Master of the Vernonia Grange 305, announced a special event to celebrate National Grange Month this April.

Grange Month highlights the Grange role in rural communities and creates opportunities for non-members to learn more about the historic organization.

Master McIntyre said Grange Month 2017 activities will include an open house. The public is invited to attend Thursday, April 27 at 6:00 pm at the Vernonia Grange. The open house includes a potluck and preludes the Timberbound concert at 7:00 pm.

Founded in 1867 amidst the Civil War, the Grange was the first fraternal farm organization in the country and served as a vital community meeting place for "patrons of husbandry" for 150 years. Today the Grange is recognized as America's number one rural family organization. There are 300,000 members in 3,400 local or "Subordinate" Granges across 37 states.

The Vernonia Grange 305 was organized in 1901 by Upper Nehalem Valley pioneers. The Grange building was built in 1907 and is one of the oldest buildings remaining in the area. Vernonia Grange is deeply committed to elevating rural community as they honor their commitment to provide an inviting and affordable gathering space in order to promote the health and well-being of an aware, engaged and sustainable community. Their quest is to continue to serve as a vibrant hub for the community into the future. "Our Future is Youth."

At 7:00 pm Timberbound, following two days of delivering a Rutabaga Rhythm Workshop to Vernonia area school students, will perform an all ages concert at the Grange, sponsored by The Rhapsody Project and Vernonia Public Library. Families are invited to hear music, watch their children perform with Timberbound musicians, and share in stories about local logging and sawmill history. There will also be a slide show of historic forest living by our friend Cory Colburn from 7:20 - 8:00 pm

Then join Joe Seamons, Kate Sandgren, Gavin Duffy, Jenny Estrin with special guest Tina Dietz (aka Teeny Deets) as they sing, strum and stomp for you! We will finish the evening with a few folk dances as fellow Grange member Jim Buxton calls our cues to dance!

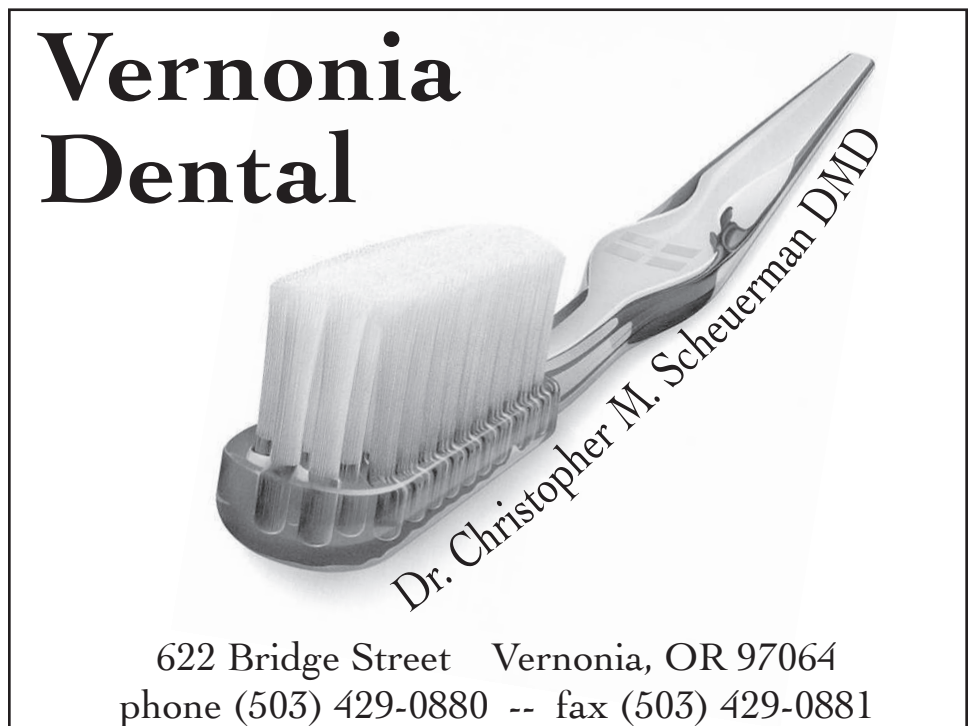
This event is made possible by funding from the Columbia County Cultural Coalition through Friends of the Vernonia Public Library. All are welcome!



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