

Diggin' in the Dirt: Japanese Beetles

By Chip Bubl
Oregon State University
Extension Service - Columbia County
2017 OSU Extension Canning Class

Come learn how to safely preserve foods from your garden this season! Participants will practice making and canning recipes in the kitchen, and will process a jar to take home. Space is limited, so call soon to reserve your spot! Pre-registration is required. **Where:** Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District 35285 Millard Road, St. Helens, OR 97051

When (all classes 9:00 am-12:00 pm): Friday, August 18 ~ Canning Tomatoes and Salsa

Cost: \$25 per class. Scholarships are also available.

Registration: Call the OSU Extension Service: (503) 397-3462 or register on-line at: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia>.

Garden topics

This has been great weather. Many gardens have corn in full tassel. All you need to do now is keep the water going, fertilize with something like urea or blood meal along the corn row if the leaf color is too yellow-green and wait for harvest. That waiting isn't easy.

I have had several calls about blossom end rot on tomatoes. This isn't surprising given the heat recently. There is a rumor going around that tomatoes need to be under-watered to produce the best (or earliest) crops. This isn't true! All you will do is increase the blossom end rot. If the soil is short of moisture, especially in a high temperature stress situation, the plant can't move enough calcium to support both the leaves and developing fruit. The lack of adequate calcium causes the end rot. The biggest fruits are often the most affected. Liming isn't enough. The plant roots need enough water to move it around.

The recent blistering weather can affect pollination of several crops. Beans are the most likely to drop flowers. Tomatoes will also lose some flowers as temperatures neared 100° F. Even corn may show some incomplete "cob fill" due to the high temperatures. All the above mentioned crops will recover to produce more flowers and beans, tomatoes, or corn. Squash family crops are generally just fine. So are peppers. Lettuce, however, turns bitter and bolts to seed this time of year anyway. It just went faster with the extreme weather of

early August.

It is easy to have too many zucchinis, cucumbers or green beans. However, it is important to continue to remove the fruit from the plants. Otherwise, new flower, and thus fruit production, is slowed. Keep the plant picked and your plants will produce longer.

I tried the sugar solution mentioned last month on blueberries as a bird repellent. For the fruit foraging birds we have (robins, towhees, and Stellar's jays) it was a bust. No impact. Back to netting. We don't have starlings yet and they may be more dissuaded by the treatment.

As I write this, there are good weather forecasts. But sun can turn to drizzle quickly in western Oregon. For those of us growing tomatoes, this is not comforting. If rain or drizzle persists more than a day (or two at most), our tomatoes and potatoes are at risk for late blight infections. Peppers are less affected. A full-blown infection can cause the plants to look like they have been blow-torched and all the fruit is ruined. Potatoes developing in the ground can also be infected. So keep a sharp eye on the long term forecasts. If drizzle or rain forecast looks possible, consider spraying your plants with a copper fungicide (most are considered "organic") before the rain sets in.

Irrigation is so important. Despite the drizzle in April and May, total rainfall for June and July is well below normal. At this writing, we haven't had any rain in St. Helens for 48 days. Take a shovel or a post-hole digger to the soil and you will find it very dry. Subsurface moisture is largely depleted now, temperatures have been hot and plants are at crucial stages of growth. We generally get very little rain in August. Most gardens and lawns will need an inch and a quarter of water or more per week to keep going. Trees or shrubs planted this spring need even more water because their root systems are not well developed.

Japanese beetle update

If you have been following the news and this newsletter, you know about the massive infestation of Japanese beetles discovered in the Cedar Mill area straddling Washington and Multnomah Counties. The insects had been found

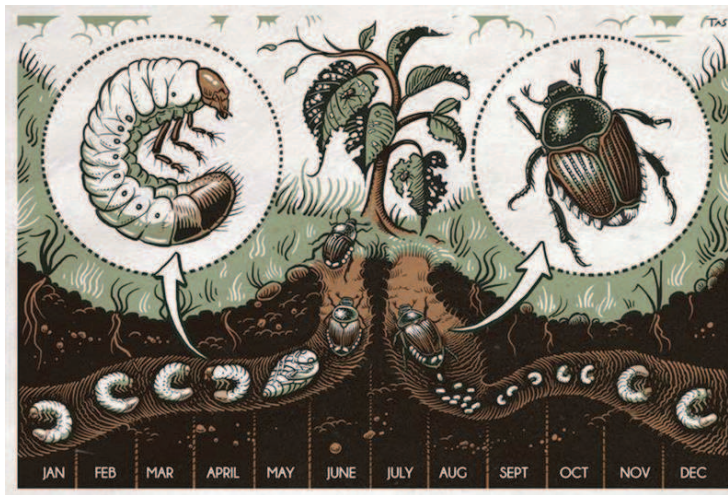


Illustration from Oregon Department of Agriculture

and eliminated in small infestations over the years but this one dwarfed all of those. Over 2,000 home yards and commercial landscapes were sprayed with an insecticide to stop their spread. It is discouraging that over 4,000 beetles have been trapped after the spraying, some outside what had thought to have been their boundary. Clearly, this a big, long-term problem.

All gardeners need to learn to identify this beetle. And don't bring back any plants dug up from anywhere near Cedar Mill, SW Portland, Tigard or Beaverton! For pictures and more information on Japanese beetles, go to the following sites: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/IPPM/JBThreatAndOpportunity.pdf>

Many Extension publications available online

Are you putting up salsa, saving seeds, or thinking about planting grapes? OSU has a large number of its publica-

tions available for free download. Just go to <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/>. Click on publications and start exploring.

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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NEXT MEETING IS
THURSDAY, AUGUST 10TH AT 6:30PM

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District
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and check us out on Facebook!



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