

Diggin' in the Dirt: Moss and Lichens on Trees

By Chip Bubl
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Extension Service - Columbia County

Master Gardener™ class signups being taken for class in St. Helens

The OSU Extension office in Columbia County will be offering the Master Gardener™ training again this spring. The classes will be held on Mondays from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm for about 10 weeks starting on February 5, 2018 at the OSU Extension office in St. Helens. Cost of the program is \$95 which includes a large resource book. Master Gardeners are responsible for providing volunteer gardening education to the community as partial payback for the

training. If interested in the program, call the Extension office at (503) 397-3462 for an information packet. Online registration is now available at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/master-gardener-volunteer-program>. We can also send you an application and you can come into our office to sign up.

Thinking of Spring: Everything you need to know about seeds

There will be a program at the St. Helens Library on Wednesday, January 24, from 6:30 until 8:00 pm on seed starting, seed selection, and seed saving. The program is free and open to all. It will include topics like hybrid versus heirloom seed, good planting tech-

niques, and seed germination problems.

Grafting workshop in February

The OSU Extension office in St. Helens will be hosting a grafting workshop tentatively scheduled for Saturday, February 10 from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Participants will be taught how to graft apple scions onto dwarf apple rootstocks. Each participant will receive five 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.

Dormant sprays and moss and lichens on trees

I have had several calls about whether the dormant sprays lime sulfur or copper will eliminate moss and lichens. The answer is that they will, but it is a slow process. Both types of sprays will kill the moss/lichens but it can take a long time for them to weather away, often up to several years. Some people pull off the mosses and lichens prior to spraying, which speeds the process.

It is worth noting that mosses and lichens do not hurt the tree. They are not parasitic, rather, they use the tree to hang on. They extract nutrients from rainwater and photosynthesize sugars from sunlight. Many birds look for insects within the lichen and moss colonies. Hummingbirds and others use mosses and lichens for nesting materials. So you can make a good argument for not worrying about moss/lichens on landscape trees that don't need a dormant spray. But don't hesitate to spray your fruit trees. Sulfur or copper dormant sprays are a key part of home orchard disease management.

Whitewash to stop sun scald

Winter sun scald occurs when tree bark is exposed to bright sunshine. The sunlight coaxes the semi-dormant bark tissues to life. Then those cambial tissues require moisture. Yet the roots and the rest of the tree are still dormant and can't move the necessary moisture.

The warmed bark dehydrates and dies. Damage is usually on the south side of the trunk and isn't noticed until spring or on into summer, then the cracked bark will start to slough away from the trunk.

Whitewashing the trunk effectively lowers bark temperatures. Old time whitewash formulas used mixtures of hydrated lime. Call if you want some old recipes. Many modern gardeners and farmers use cheap exterior white latex paint for the job, cut 50% with water.

Many Extension publications available online

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