

Diggin' in the Dirt: Douglas Fir and Cedar Trees Dying

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OSU Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden at the Columbia County Fair

The Columbia County Fair started on Wednesday, July 18 and runs through Sunday, July 22. For 30 years, participants in the Master Gardener program have managed a demonstration garden out at the fairgrounds. This year is no exception. The flower beds, fruit areas, roses, and other special areas, like the shade garden, are wonderful. As always, there will be Master Gardeners there to answer your questions or guide you to various areas. Plan on making a trip to the fair this year and stop by at the garden. It will be well worth your time.

Winter gardens start now

Have you always wanted to harvest vegetables from your garden through the fall and into the winter? With a little extra planning and care, you can enjoy fresh vegetables from your garden most of the year.

Early to mid-summer is the time to plant seeds for a fall and winter garden. Many cool-season crops, such as broccoli, lettuce, spinach, chard, kale, and carrots, produce well in the fall and, in mild-winter areas of the Pacific Northwest, hold through winter if protected.

A good strategy is to plant these vegetables in mid to late summer after you harvest spring crops and as space is available. To be successful, you need to plan ahead, choose varieties wisely, and

give proper care to your plants.

Choose varieties that are suited to fall and winter harvest. Some are designated specifically for fall planting, while others perform well only in the spring. Some good selections for several vegetables appropriate for fall and winter gardens include:

- Beets: Winterkeeper, Albina Verdura, plant around July 15
- Broccoli: Purple Sprouting, White Sprouting Late, Rudolph, plant in June through July
- Cabbage: Danish Ballhead, Excel, Gloria, Melissa, Zerlina, plant June or July
- Carrot: Bolero, Merida, Royal Chantenay, plant around July 15
- Kale: Winter Red, Winterbor, Siberian, plant in June or wait until late July
- Lettuce: Winter Density, Oak Leaf, Top Gun, Continuity (best under cloche), plant head lettuce to mid-July and leaf lettuce to Aug. 10
- Spinach: Bloomsdale Savoy, Tyee, Kokum, Olympia, Hybrid 424, Melody, Welder Baker, St. Helens (plant in well-drained soil), plant first half of August
- Swiss chard: Perpetual, Dora, Ruby Red, plant in June through July

To learn more about how to grow a fall and winter garden, you can view the publication "Fall and Winter Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest" at: <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/pnw548.pdf>. Open with Adobe Acrobat to get the best text view.

Douglas fir and cedar trees dying

We have received a lot of calls about Douglas fir and cedar trees turning brown. This is not a good sign when it is on more than the interior sections of otherwise green-needled tree branches (which is normal). There are two potential causes, working alone or together. The first is root rot pockets, especially for Douglas fir. We have had so many rotations of Douglas fir since the first trees were cut in the mid-1800s to provide lumber for Portland. We are now paying the price for constantly replanting one species. These root rot pockets can claim a number of trees, though some trees within an area will survive (most likely due to some subtle genetic differences). There is no prevention or cure for these root rot pockets. In those

areas, plant back something other than Douglas fir like alder, cedar, hemlock, Ponderosa pine, and/or redwoods.

A second issue is specific to Port Orford cedars. This species was brought to Columbia County by Crown Zellerbach when they owned much of the land that Weyerhaeuser now owns. This valuable tree was dying from a root disease in its natural home on the southern Oregon coast and the idea was that it would do well here. It did, for about 40 years. But now the trees are dying from a fungus related to the one that killed the trees in Curry County. There is no cure. This is sad because they are exceptionally beautiful conifers, either standing alone or sheared into a hedge.

Western red cedars and some Douglas firs started dying, not in any real pattern, in 2015, and have continued to succumb to what we think is drought stress. 2015 was an interesting year, good for farmers and gardeners if you had irrigation, bad for cedars and firs. It stopped raining in mid-March and didn't start again until December. The soil profile dried and tree roots began to weaken. Foresters believe that that set up a cycle of tree deaths that continue. This year is similar to 2015 up to this point. One of the predictions for climate change in this region is for about the same amount of rainfall in total but for it to come in stronger storms leading to runoff instead of being stored in the soil. Foresters are grappling with which trees to plant since their harvest will be 35+ years further into the climate change cycle. The Willamette Valley strain of Ponderosa pine is being considered here and has already been adopted for replanting in SW Oregon.

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. We can also test the accuracy of your pressure gauge. You can drop off your canner lid with gauge and pick it up later in the day. Sometimes it might be possible to have it tested on the spot. An inaccurate gauge can lead to canning at a lower than rec-

ommended pressure which could lead to serious food poisoning concerns.

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. There is a statewide Extension food preservation hotline that you can reach Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm starting July 16 at 1-800-354-7319. 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/>.

Free newsletter (what a deal!)

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 or emailed to you. Call (503) 397-3462 to be put on the list. Alternatively, you can find it on the web at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/> and click on newsletters.

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.

Contact information for the Extension office

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