

Diggin' in The Dirt: Cool Night Confuse Our Gardens

By Chip Bubl
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Extension Service - Columbia County

The OSU Extension office is closed to face-to-face public contact but you can still reach us!

All of us (faculty and staff) will still be working (mostly out of the office), answering phone calls left on our answering machines, email messages (chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu), writing newspaper columns and newsletters, and working to develop programs that can reach you online. We are really committed to helping our communities in any way we can, especially in our areas of subject matter expertise (farming, gardening, forestry, food, food safety, nutrition, healthy decision-making, and youth education) and any other way we can enrich your life and/or make you safer in these challenging times. Please do not hesitate to contact us! And please, take all steps necessary to ensure that you and your loved ones are safe.

Pressure Gauge Testing:

July 1, 2020 to July 29, 2020, Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, FREE, at the Extension office in St. Helens. Contact for questions and requests for accessibility-related accommodations: by phone and a message option (503) 397-3462 or by email at Jenny.Rudolph@oregonstate.edu.

Pressure canners with a dial gauge need to be tested every year before you use them for accuracy. Canning with a gauge that is off can result in under-processing of home canned foods, which is unsafe. For complete instructions on this opportunity go to: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/events/pressure-canner-dial-gauge-testing-service>. COVID restrictions are still in place at our office which is located at 505 N. Columbia River Highway, St. Helens, OR 97051

Here are some free classes:

Free online OSU vegetable gardening class: <https://workspace.oregonstate.edu/course/master-gardener-series-vegetable-gardening>

Free online beginning OSU/Food Bank vegetable gardening class ("Seed to Supper"): <https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/our-work/programs/education/gardening/>

Cool nights confuse tomatoes

Gardeners have long known that cool nights are not good for tomato plant growth. Now we know the rest of the story. Plants have a daily rhythm just like higher species. They make sugars in the daytime through photosynthesis and respire and capture CO₂ at night.

When the evening temperatures dip below 50° F the tomato plant gets all confused. It shuts down the night-time activities and then tries to restart them during the day when it should be photosynthesizing. Confusion can persist for a long time and may significantly slow growth and fruiting. This pattern is characteristic of plants that are native to warm climates, like the tomato.

The gardener's response is to provide a warm evening environment for their tomatoes (and peppers). The biologist's response is to try to unlock the genetic mechanism for this behavior and try to modify it to improve the growth and productivity of these species. It is thought that an improvement of one or two degrees would significantly expand the geographic range of these crops. And it would make Columbia County tomato lovers happier. We all have some confused tomatoes.

How cool has it been?

Growing degree days are used to measure accumulated temperatures that support crop growth. The higher the number, the warmer it has been. Vegetable farmers generally use April 1 as a starting point and a 50° F baseline. The daily high and low temperatures are added together, divided by two and the resulting number has 50

subtracted from it. This is the number of "heat units" for that day and are added up day by day. Vernonia is experiencing the coolest summer of the last five years. It is such a shame because cool weather also is cloudy weather and many vegetables, especially the sub-tropical ones like tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, corn, cucumbers, squash, and the like are definitely not happy to be losing out on the heat and sunlight of the longest days of the year. That said, the greens have done just fine. And the forest fire danger is still low.



Those pesky earwigs

Earwigs tend to gradually increase in well-managed gardens. They must like the variety in a cultivated landscape. Earwigs are opportunists, feeding on mold, decaying vegetation, dying leaves, or even healthy leaves and flowers. They also eat other insects like aphids. Earwigs seek refuge in any tight dark place during the day and come out to feed at night. For that reason, they are often found in flowers such as dahlias. When they drop from the floral vase onto the table, they aren't much appreciated.

An old earwig remedy is to leave tightly rolled up newspapers where earwigs are creating a problem. The earwigs crawl inside to hide from the sun. In the morning, you can gather up the newspaper "logs," put them in a plastic bag, and freeze them. The logs can be reused. There are several chemicals registered on ornamentals, but you must be careful that your spraying doesn't hurt bees visiting the flowers.

May you all be safe and have a wonderful garden year. Hope to be able to see you soon. Chip

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.

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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Are You A Veteran?

You may be entitled
to benefits for
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Contact 503-366-6580 or
veteran.services@cat-team.org



Veteran's service officer
is available the 1st Tuesday of the
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