

IT'S ABOUT TIME BY DAVID WAGNER



**BIGLEAF MAPLE
DOUBLE SAMARA**

June is a big gardening month. Early winter greens have been used up and cleared away while the sugar snap peas should reach maximum production. The solstice, June 21 this year, marks when the bush beans should have been planted. I like both peas and beans because they are so easy to grow from seed. The critical issue is protecting the seedlings from sneaky herbivores like pill bugs and sow bugs. These nonnative pests hide in mulch or between rocks of the raised beds. They creep out at night to devour the tender plumule just as it starts to emerge from between the cotyledons. If that tiny bit of leaf bud is lost, the whole plant is doomed.

This is a banner year for the bigleaf maple. The winged fruits, called double samaras, are being produced in greater

abundance than last year. I have been following their development on a neighborhood tree, taking pictures of one particular flower cluster every week or 10 days. I thought this was an ordinary tree but only recently noticed that instead of the usual pair of wings, more than half the flowers have triple samaras and a few with four wings are seen. It demonstrates that trees, like people, have individuality.

Snow still blocks the high country trails. Long days are ideal for low-elevation exploration. Stream fishing should be good while fishing is picking up at Diamond Lake. Watch for fawns and other animal babies; birthing season is in full swing for many.

David Wagner is a botanist who has lived in Eugene for more than 30 years. He teaches moss classes and leads nature walks. He may be reached at fernmosses@me.com

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