

Too late to start tomatoes

by Bill Hansen

One would think, with all that has been written about tomatoes, that there would be very little left to say. But most of what I read is in general terms and does not adequately address the subject with regard to our particular climate. I will share what I have learned with you and maybe you will discover an idea or two that will be of value.

By now it's probably too late to start your tomatoes from seed indoors. If you did start some plants from seed, or purchased sets and you are ready to plant, be sure to put them out on the porch or in some other protected place outdoors for a few days (and nights) to get them used to the elements. This process is called "hardening off" and will reduce the shock of transplanting.

Before planting, some thought should be given to soil preparation and location. As you know, if you have tried to grow tomatoes here in Vernonia, harvesting enough to can is chancey due to our damp, cool climate. Therefore, anything you can do to improve these conditions is usually worth the effort.

Tomatoes do best in a sunny location and in well drained soil. If your soil is not well drained you should consider planting in hills or raised beds. This will provide for better drainage and allow the sun to raise the growing temperature by providing a greater soil surface to absorb heat. The addition of coarse gravel is also helpful, not only to improve drainage, but also because small rocks or gravel will absorb heat during the day and release that heat during the night hours. The soil temperature can be further improved by covering your hills with black plastic. To help reduce the shock of transplanting, I used a diluted solution of commercial fertilizer or manure "tea". If you have old well rotted manure available, simply mix about one-half shovel in a bucket of water, let stand overnight, and you have created manure tea. Pour about a pint of this elixir around each tomato plant when you set them out to get them off to a good start. You may wish to apply the mixture a few times early in the growing season or you can use a commercial garden mix fertilizer. But, whatever you use, make sure you don't over fertilize late in the growing season. The result of over fertilization will be large, lush

green plants full of green tomatoes. By far the most popular variety of tomato grown here in Vernonia is Early Girl. It produces a medium sized fruit that is juicy and full of flavor. But, the most important feature of Early Girl is its relatively short maturity date. That is the number of days from the time the plant is transplanted to the garden to the time the first tomatoes are ready to pick. And, never forget that the days listed on the label are based on optimum growing conditions.

Of course Early Girl is not the only variety with a short maturity date and new varieties are coming out all the time to help us enjoy the taste of fresh picked tomatoes here in the cooler Northwest climate. By now you may have decided that growing tomatoes here in Vernonia might not be worth the effort. Not true! Of course they require a little more preparation and care than most other vegetables you grow, but the results will be well worth the effort when you pick that first ripe garden fresh tomato and truly enjoy the "fruits" of your labor.

NEXT WEEK: Beans, corn and cucumbers

County maps available

An atlas of the county maps of Oregon has just been completed by the Oregon Department of Transportation in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration.

The maps in the atlas are drawn to an approximate scale of one-quarter inch to the mile, on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet. The atlas sells for \$6 each.

There is an additional charge of \$1 per order for handling and mailing.

This atlas may be purchased by writing to the Photocopy and Map Distribution Unit, Room 17, Transportation Building, Salem 97310. Checks should be made payable to the Department of Transportation.



Seniors need paper

The Vernonia Senior Center needs your recyclable newspapers. Call 429-3912 for pick up.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

Applications for the low income energy assistance program will be taken on Fridays from 10 am-2 pm at the Vernonia Senior Center. Call 429-3912 to make an appointment.

SPRING SPECIALS! SAVE!

Tune-ups	8 cyl	\$36.50
Includes	6 cyl	\$33.50
Sparkplugs, points, condenser and labor	4 cyl	\$27.50
	Electronic ign. Deduct \$5.00	

Tires	750x16 Traction Caps
Free Mounting	\$41.00
Free Mounting	700x15 Traction Caps
	\$36.00
	(with recappable trade-in)

Spring Service	\$14.25
Change oil, Lube chassis	Check all fluid levels
Includes labor, oil filter and 5 qts. 30 wt or 10-40 wt oil.	

CALL US! 755-2231

NEHALEM AUTOMOTIVE
IN Mist, OR

Under New Management

CLIFF & LINDA ZIEMER

WELCOME YOU TO

Spar Tree Restaurant

OPENING MAY 8, 1981

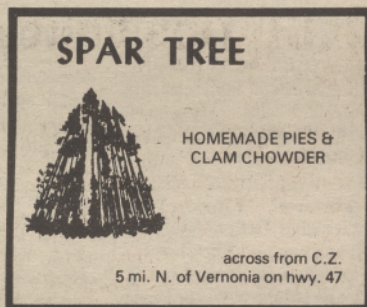
serving BREAKFAST LUNCH DINNER

FEATURING DAILY SPECIALS

Tuesday - Thursday	5 am - 7 pm
Friday and Saturday	5 am - 9 pm
Sunday	7 am - 6 pm

Closed Monday

429-6465



Hansen's Country Garden

Member, American Floral Services

★ Flowers for all occasions

Parties, banquets, receptions, weddings, funerals

★ We wire flowers anywhere in the world

★ Choice selection of green and flowering plants

★ Garden seeds and supplies

★ Bedding plants, nursery stock, shrubs in season

Order graduation flowers now to assure timely delivery

Flowers — the gift of Love

842 Madison Ave.

Downtown Vernonia

429-2355

