

SPOKESMAN Opinion

GUEST COLUMN

High Desert gardening is a challenge

BY CARL VERTREES

Gardening in Central Oregon is always a challenge, but those challenges keep changing. Our 3,000-foot elevation doesn't change, and the threats for late spring frosts seem to be present every year.

My first memories of gardening go back to my childhood home in Seattle in the late days of World War II. My parents had a Victory Garden, one of many adaptations made to cope with shortages due to the war effort. We grew lettuce and onions, peas, cucumbers, zucchini; I don't remember corn. Perhaps they reasoned the summers weren't warm enough.

When Ginger and I moved to Alaska we attempted carrots and lettuce in Sitka without remarkable success. In Anchorage, the longer summer daylight hours facilitated greater success. Potatoes were easy. Our cabbages were large, but not like the cabbages of legend at the Alaska State Fair.

In Oregon we lived in Bend and Island City — outside of La Grande — before moving to Redmond in 1975. The elevation in the Grande Ronde Valley is almost as high as here, but the growing season was appreciably longer and more dependable. We could grow almost anything, including apples and pie cherries.

Here we have an exceptionally large garden. Our city lot is almost half an acre. When we had planted all the lawn we thought prudent for maintenance, we dedicated the balance of the west side to a vegetable garden.

Tomatoes are usually our stellar crop. We start three or four varieties from seed in early April, letting them languish in our living room windows until early to mid-May when we move them to our garden shed for hardening, usually putting them in the ground the last week of May. This year a cool May delayed tomato planting until June 3.

Everything else we sow directly in the ground as soil temperatures allow. The main difference in the garden calendar I attribute to global warming. In the mid-1970s we seemed to fear a killing frost shortly after Labor Day. Our response to the frost alert was to strip all of the remaining tomatoes for storage in the garage where they would ripen over the next two months.

As I write this in mid-October, we have had no frost, let alone a killing frost, and there is no frost in the two-week extended forecast. The excessive heat we had in July inhibited pollination of many plants, especially tomatoes, so our tomato crop has been late this year.

Other challenges to Central Oregon gardening: the very sandy soil needs amending with organic matter to retain the precious moisture, and a variety of critters can wipe out many verdant crops. Deer are usually the prime offenders, even in the city. Our fences are not high enough to keep them out. This year they've obliterated our beans, drastically pruned our zucchini, and nibbled their way through the rest of the yard and garden. They are not especially fond of tomatoes, but they forget, so they'll take a bite out of several and knock others off the vines as they amble through.

A few years in a row in the 1980s we had uninvited porcupines marauding our corn crop in the middle of the night around Labor Day. We've had no success with carrots and beets most recent years, because the neighborhood quails meander through the garden and devour the tender little shoots as they emerge from the soil.

Rarely have rock chucks been a problem in our garden, although one year I shot one in our spinach patch. It was not a killing shot, and the marmot escaped under the garden shed where it subsequently died.

The odor of his decaying carcass was an unpleasant reminder for several days until an uninvited raccoon drug it out in the open, so we were able to properly dispose of it. We've had skunks, too, but we haven't detected that they have caused any damage.

Despite these issues, we still take pride in our garden, enjoy its bounty, and will continue to cope with the challenges.

Life goes on.

■ Carl Vertrees has lived in north Redmond since 1975 with his wife, Ginger. He was publisher of The Spokesman from 1975 until 2001.

We still take pride in our garden, enjoy its bounty, and will continue to cope with the challenges.



Vertrees



YOUR VIEWS

Schmidt for county commissioner

We support Morgan Schmidt for county commissioner.

What is a county commissioner? County commissioners oversee services, policies, and public funds for our people, lands, and waters.

Tragically, our county has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the state. Morgan will collaborate with the experienced professionals and make behavioral health a priority and forge partnerships with local organizations and mental health care providers so our whole community can be well.

Morgan supports women of all professions and walks of life to make their own medical decisions.

Morgan will collaborate with city governments to thoughtfully build more housing that can support local businesses, families, communities, and our Central Oregon way of life. None of us want people living in tents on the street or in the forest; no one wants to "become Portland." The only way that will happen is if we do nothing.

Morgan knows that having a continuum of stable, dignified housing options makes our communities safer and saves taxpayer dollars. Morgan believes the county's role is to align with the integrity and intent of our land use system: planning for affordable, livable cities while preserving the forests, farmland, waters, and open spaces that we all love.

Deschutes County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. This has

brought benefits to our community, as well as challenges like soaring house prices, traffic jams, strained infrastructure, and unsustainable pressure on our lands, waters, and wildlife. Our lands and water are irreplaceable.

Morgan believes taxpayers deserve to have public funds managed carefully so that people get the services they need. Morgan is ready to invest wisely, while being fiscally responsible by being fiscally strategic.

Morgan is forward-thinking, not regressive, and believes in making strategic investments that will benefit all of the residents of Deschutes County. Morgan will lead with confidence, backed by data, and driven by a vision for the future.

Jim and Debbie Barnes
Sisters

GUEST COLUMN

Recreation center worthwhile

BY RICHARD LANCE AND LEANNE K. LATTERALL

The proposed Redmond Community Recreation Center would be a great leap forward.

A 74,000-square-foot building, featuring two swimming pools, a high school size gym with overhead track, fitness equipment and rooms for exercise classes and more. Wow!

Still, it's a big ask. We've been talking to neighbors and some would like to support it, but have doubts. Here are their concerns.

IT'S TOO EXPENSIVE

We've heard rumors that with this and the new Redmond Police station going on the rolls, my taxes will go up \$1,000. Is this accurate? Too see, look at the table below:

Facility Who Pays? Bond Cost Operating Levy Cost Total Average

The Redmond Recreation Center bond would cost the average district residence \$126 per year, or \$10.50 per month, while the levy would add \$54 per year, or another \$4.50 per month.

The new police station will cost city residents about \$180 per year, or \$15 per month.

These numbers are based on the average assessed value home in the RAPRD service district, which is roughly \$225,000. This value is used by the county tax assessor to figure your taxes and is a lot less than what your house might sell for.

Redmond residents will pay around

\$276 per year or \$23 per month, for both the rec center and the police station.

Redmond Area Parks & Rec District residents living outside Redmond city limits (look at tax bill to see if you fit this group) don't pay for the police station, so their additional property taxes are roughly \$148 per year, or \$12 per month.

How did we get from \$1,000 to \$276? First, there's a big difference between how much the county thinks your house is worth, and what a realtor will tell you. Look on your annual Deschutes County tax bill — it's a lot less. Can't find it? — look at redmondrecreation.org and click on "estimated tax impact" to find out.

Want to know exactly how much the RCRC would cost you? Follow the steps on the web site listed above and you'll know.

ONLY SENIORS WOULD USE IT

Tell that to swimmers who find the existing 1978 pool overcrowded, in need of major maintenance, with water too cold or warm for comfort. Tell that to adults who would like a safe place to walk in inclement weather, or enough gym space for their basketball league games.

Likewise, persons who use exercise equipment or classes, and can't afford the private club costs.

If you want a complete picture of what the new rec center would offer, see redmondrecreation.org. We think it offers some thing for almost everyone.

LET THE PRIVATE CLUBS DO IT

Some have pointed out that fitness clubs offer workout equipment, exercise classes, etc. So why duplicate this? We see it differently.

First, clubs don't offer full-size gyms, swimming pools, rooms for a variety of classes and meetings and child care for users.

Second, given membership/user fees, clubs are more expensive. RAPRD can keep costs lower. It does this because it has three sources of funding: building the new facility is paid for by the bond, part of operating costs (staff, utilities, maintenance, etc.) is paid by the increased RAPRD operating levy and the rest of operating costs are paid by user fees (and in-district users pay less than out-of-district users).

Third, RAPRD is a not-for-profit organization. It's heart is in providing services accessible to all.

For example, it has a substantial scholarship fund which helps limited income families enroll their kids in swim lessons and other classes.

CONCLUSION

This is the third time voters have been asked to approve a new rec center. We think it would serve the recreational needs of our growing community well, and at an affordable price.

In the end, you will decide. We hope you support it.

■ Richard Lance and Leanne K. Latterall

WRITE TO US

Letters policy: We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 300 words and include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of the Spokesman.

Guest columns: Your submissions should be between 600 and 800 words and must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere.

How to submit:

- Email is preferred: news@redmondspokesman.com
- Or mail to: 361 SW Sixth Street, Redmond OR 97756

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Redmond

Mayor George Endicott: George.Endicott@redmondoregon.gov, 541-948-3219

Deschutes County

County Commission Chair Patti Adair: Patti.Adair@deschutes.org, 541-388-6567

County Commission Vice Chair Tony DeBone: Tony.DeBone@deschutes.org, 541-388-6568

County Commissioner Phil Chang: Phil.Chang@deschutes.org, 541-388-6569

Your Legislators

Rep. Jack Zika (District 53): 503-986-1453; 900 Court St. NE, H-387, Salem, OR 97301, Rep.JackZika@oregonlegislature.gov

Sen. Tim Knopp (District 27): 503-986-1727; 900

Court St. NE, S-425, Salem, OR 97301, Sen.TimKnopp@oregonlegislature.gov

State

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum: Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

Federal

President Joe Biden: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley: D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden: D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz (2nd District): D.C. office: 1239 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515; 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 N. Central Avenue Suite 112, Medford, OR 97505; Phone: 541-776-4646; fax: 541-779-0204; Ontario office: 2430 S.W. Fourth Ave., No. 2, Ontario, OR 97914; Phone: 541-709-2040. bentz.house.gov.