

Set seeds on the right path with soil

While you're battling the winter blues, make your own seed-starting mix and plan for the gardening days ahead.

Home gardeners can start vegetable and flower seedlings indoors from four to 12 weeks before the last average spring frost in their area, which means it's time to get started. Making homemade planting medium can be more economical than buying a sterile mix at the store, said Brooke Edmunds, a horticulturist with Oregon State University's Extension Service.

A good germinating mix must be fine and uniform, yet well-aerated, loose and free of pests, diseases and weed seeds, Edmunds said. It also should be low in fertility and total soluble salts, yet capable of holding and moving moisture.

But beware, she warned. Soil straight from your backyard just won't do the job.

Typical backyard soil is too compacted, full of weed seeds and it is not pasteurized, causing seedling diseases and death. Native soil often does not drain as well as seedling mixes. And it can



KYM POKORNY
Your Garden

develop a crust that prevents seedlings from pushing through.

Edmunds' recipe for a good basic pasteurized medium for growing seedlings is a mixture of one-third pasteurized soil or compost, one-third sand, vermiculite or perlite, and one-third peat moss.

"Many people just use half peat moss and half perlite, vermiculite or sand, and this combination seems to work well, too," she said.

To pasteurize a small quantity of soil or compost in an oven, put the slightly moist soil or compost in a heat-resistant container or pan. Cover with a lid or foil. Place in a 250-degree oven; check the temperature periodically using a candy or meat thermometer. When the mix reaches 180 degrees, cook for an additional 30 minutes. Avoid overheating it, as the structure of the soil



PHOTO from Flickr by Joan

A good soil mix for germinating seeds should be fine and uniform, yet well-aerated, loose and free of pests, diseases and weed seeds.

may be damaged, rendering it useless as a seedling soil ingredient.

Mix pasteurized soil or compost with peat moss. Add sand, vermiculite or perlite. All ingredients are available at most nurseries and garden stores.

Another task to complete before the start of seed-sowing is to clean your pots,

trays and flats. After washing, rinse the containers in a solution of 1 part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water to kill remaining plant disease microorganisms that could weaken or kill your tender young seedlings.

For information about starting seeds, see Extension's publication Propagating Plants from Seeds.

MI TOWN

We've turned the page on our calendar to the bright and shiny new month of February, which brings us Groundhog Day and St. Valentine's Day — two good reasons to bring laughter and joy into those often gray winter days. I don't know if Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow or not, because my deadline was before Groundhog Day, but whether or not we get six more weeks of winter, we'll just hang in there and take whatever Mother Nature gives us. Just very thankful we haven't had to deal with all the weather problems in other sections of the USA.

Those green shoots are beginning to make their presence known in gardens and flower beds all over MI Town, which means we can look forward to tulips and crocuses and hyacinths. For those of



PATTY TAYLOR DUTCHER
Columnist

us who couldn't wait for outdoor daffodils and tulips or other springtime flowers to arrive, potted bulbs and pretty bouquets from MI Town's merchants bring so much cheer into any room. Those pesky garden weeds seem to always manage to survive the winter's chill, so these occasional rain-free days give us all an opportunity to get the garden spaces ready for planting.

How about starting off your busy Saturday with breakfast at the Monmouth Senior Center? Friendly vol-

unteers will be there bright and early, preparing eggs, pancakes, sausage and biscuits and gravy. Breakfast will be served from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. and the price is right (\$6 for adults, \$3 for children younger than 12). Hungry people of all ages are welcome. All proceeds go to the building fund.

Right now, April 15 may sound far away, but those tax forms will be due before we know it. If you need a little help trying to wade through the state and federal forms, contact Sue Teal at 503-838-5678 at the Monmouth Senior Center. AARP certified volunteers will work free with seniors as well as mid- to low-income folks, and everything is confidential. This service is on a by-appointment only basis, so please call soon.

Those who participated as both volunteers and recipients at the Polk County Connect last week tell me that it was a successful and worthy event for all. Services were provided to so many individuals and families who were connected to resources that will help to improve their lives and the lives of others. It does — indeed — take a village to provide good services to those who need help to get back on their feet and become more self-sufficient. Thank you to all who took the time to bring this worthy program back for another year.

These dark and rainy mornings and evenings make it harder to see — and be seen. Please use your car and bicycle lights and be careful out there.

PEDEE NEWS

Tuesday, Jan. 19, was a banner day for Betty Forry. She turned 103 that day. Out of the house between the raindrops they went, and off to Salem for a lovely dinner at the Olive Garden. She took a "Tour of Italy" in the company of her daughter June and grandson, Patrick. She is doing well and was delighted to receive greetings through email and snail mail.

Mike McDowell's daughter, Ginger Owens, and Ginger's husband, Bryant, drove down from Portland to celebrate her 27th birthday with



ARLENE KOVASH
Columnist

her father in Pedee on Sunday. The three had a great time eating and playing cards. Mike appreciated that Bryant came down in spite of missing two football games (one good one and one not so much, according to Paul). Mike commented at church that he feels happy to be

alive, as two years ago, he wasn't sure he'd make it through some serious cancer treatments.

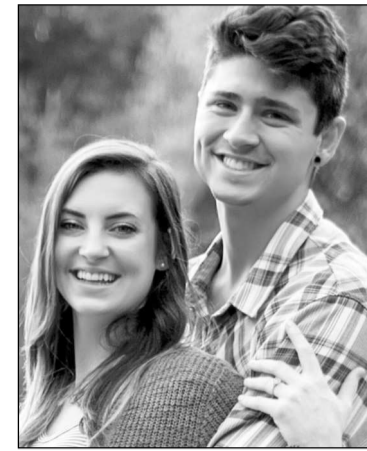
Judy Guida celebrated her husband Sam's life with a chili feed for friends and family on the first anniversary of his death on Friday. He was toasted and remembered during the evening by all present. I've heard it said that you die twice — once when you take your last breath and then when your name is said for the last time, so we intend to keep him alive for years to come. Sam's

brother John came from Houston for the event.

Last Sunday, the Kovash family had their annual Christmas party at Ixtapa Family Restaurant in Wilsonville. The 15 of us ate and exchanged gifts by drawing numbers and choosing a gift from the pile or stealing them from someone else, which is always good for a lot of laughs. Paul's brother John's family all live in the Portland suburbs, and Paul's family all live in Salem, Airlie, and Pedee, so it's a good meeting place.

ENGAGEMENTS

Vessell-Schmidt



Deaven Skye Vessell and Kyle Evan Schmidt of Salem are planning a March wedding.

The bride-to-be is the daughter of Jeff and Jena Vessell of Dallas. Her fiancé is the son of Neil and Christina Schmidt of Dallas.

Deaven is a 2013 graduate of Dallas High School. She earned an associate degree in education in 2015 from Chemeketa Community College in Salem. She is attending Western Oregon University to become a physical education teacher and get her bachelor's degree. She works at Great Harvest Bread Co. in Salem as a customer service representative.

Kyle is a 2012 graduate of Dallas High School and a 2014 graduate of Chemeketa Community College in Salem with an associate in business. He works at Costco in Salem as a customer service representative.

The wedding is set for March 13, at Green Villa Barn in Independence.

BIRTHS

Seick

Kai Freedom Seick was born to Jeremy and Suzanne Seick of Monmouth at 6:39 a.m. on Jan. 19 at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

He weighed 8 pounds, 4 ounces, and was 20.5 inches long.

Kai is the couple's first child. Grandparents are Don and Lynda Carroll of Pahoa, Hawaii and Marion and Cyndy Seick of Monmouth.

Eisele

Blake Michael George Eisele was born to Matt and Jenny Eisele of Monmouth at 11:01 a.m. on Jan. 16 at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis.

He weighed 9 pounds, 8 ounces, and was 22 inches long.

Blake joins Braden, 2. Grandparents are Jay and Brenda Lemmon of Otis, and Dennis and Jeanne Eisele of West Linn. Great-grandmother is Margie Johnson of McMinnville.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Continued from page 8A

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 10

• **Helping Hands Emergency Food Bank** — 10 a.m. to noon, Monmouth Christian Church, 959 Church St. W., Monmouth. For eligible community members; available every Wednesday. 541-404-6517.

• **Polk County Republican Women** — 11:30 a.m., Oak Knoll Golf Course, 6335 Highway 22, Independence. No-host lunch available; everyone welcome. 503-623-5759.

• **Willamette Valley Food Assistance Program Food Bank** — 1:30 to 6:30 p.m., 888 Monmouth Cutoff Road, Building E, Dallas. Weekly distribution for eligible community members. 503-831-5634.

• **Free Blood Pressure Check Clinic** — 2 to 3 p.m., West Valley Hospital (surgery admitting area), 525 SE Washington St., Dallas. 503-623-7323.

• **Monmouth Senior Center Music Jam** — 6:30 p.m., Monmouth Senior Center, 180 S. Warren St., Monmouth. Open to the public; musicians of all types welcome. 503-838-5678.

• **Brew and BS: The Old Testament** — 7 p.m., St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 1486 SW Levens St., Dallas. A lecture series on the Old Testament. Bring brew of choice — coffee, tea, chai, beer, wine, cider. 435-503-4304.

• **Dallas American Legion Post No. 20** — 7 p.m., Academy Building, Room 108, 182 SW Academy St., Dallas. 503-831-3971.

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