

Soil texture can be sand, silt or clay

It's a simple equation: If you want to grow better plants, you first need to understand the soil.

"The texture of a soil is its proportion of sand, silt and clay," said James Cassidy, a soils instructor at Oregon State University. "Texture determines all kinds of things like drainage, aeration, the amount of water the soil can hold, erosion potential and even the amount of nutrients that can be stored."

To become better acquainted with your soil texture, he recommends using the "hand method." Dig beneath the top layer of organic matter down to the mineral soil, about 6 to 8 inches depending on how much mulch you use. Scoop out a handful of moist soil and knead it into a ball. Add water if necessary. If it can be worked into a ribbon, you have high clay content. The clay content is roughly equivalent to the length to which you can work the ribbon. Each inch of ribbon is the equivalent to less than 10 percent of clay.

So, if you have a four-inch ribbon, the soil could be comprised of up to 40 percent clay. After wetting it excessively, if the soil feels gritty in the palm of your hand, you have sandy soil. The remainder is the silt content.

When people rave about "nice loam," it's the soil texture to which they are referring, Cassidy said.

"Loam means you have roughly equal portions of sand, silt and clay," he said. "If you have sandy loam, it has a little more sand in it.



KYM POKORNY
Your Garden

Silt loam has a little more silt in it. Clay loam has more clay in it."

Soil needs to be able to hold some water, he added, but not so much that plant roots can't breathe. A loam achieves that balance.

Clay gets a bad rap because too much of it means it holds lots of water and so the soil stays wetter, colder and is difficult to work. But don't be so quick to judge clay harshly.

"In defense of clay, clay is where the nutrients in soil are stored," Cassidy said. "Sand and silt don't store nutrients; they're just rocks."

Many Willamette Valley gardeners, though, must overcome the annual challenge of soils that are high with clay.

"The answer is to add organic matter," Cassidy said.

A key way to do this is to plant cover crops from mid-August to mid-September. Plant a mix of grasses such as annual rye grass or winter wheat and legumes such as Austrian field peas or fava beans. Cut cover crops down before they go to seed in the springtime, just as they start to flower. Let the remnants rot back into the ground, and later incorporate it back into the soil.

When preparing your plot for the first time, till it lightly with a garden fork. Cassidy advises against using rototillers in a garden.



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Rolling a ribbon of soil helps determine how much clay it contains.

Rototilling can break up large pores in the soil structure, which are key to water infiltration and drainage.

"Think minimum tillage," he said. "If the soil is a little lumpy-bumpy, just spread a layer of high quality compost over it and it will be fine."

But if tilling seems to be the only option do it when the soil is ready, not when it is convenient for you, Cassidy advised. Wait until the soil has the right amount of moisture. If you squeeze a handful of soil and it's too hard to break, it's too dry to till. If it ruptures in the hand when squeezed, it's good to till.

Add organic matter every year and in about five years, you will build up healthy soil with improved drainage — even with a clay heavy

soil.

"There are literally a billion microorganisms in a single pinch of soil and they all need to eat," said Cassidy, who teaches in OSU's College of Agricultural Sciences. "They don't photosynthesize like plants do, but they need energy and that comes from organic matter. They consume energy best in well-drained soils with organic matter."

For more information, Cassidy recommends exploring the University of California Davis's online soil maps. This tool allows you to enter the address, zip code, city or state of any location in the U.S. to bring up a map of the area and details on its soil type. You can also download a free application for iPhone and Android smartphones.

MI TOWN

This summer's hot weather has inspired the cook to "just say no" to standing over a hot stove on more than one evening. We've sampled foods from faraway places without needing a passport or standing in lines at crowded airports. It would be difficult to name our favorites because we've never been disappointed in quality or service whether we enjoy Chinese, Italian, Mexican restaurants, or the more traditional American burgers, fried chicken or barbecue.

Another of the many joys of living in MI Town includes the opportunity to get to know your neighbors who own and work in our local businesses. There's a special feeling of satisfaction when goods and services are delivered as promised, and every-



PATTY TAYLOR DUTCHER
Columnist

body involved is a winner. It was not exactly a happy and joyful day when we discovered our refrigerator was on its last legs, but when one of our local merchants replaced it quickly and efficiently, things brightened up considerably.

It's not too early to talk about one of my favorite summer happenings. This year's Polk County Fair is Thursday, Friday and Saturday (August 10-12) at the Fairgrounds on Highway 99W in Rickreall. Be sure to

check out the website and discover how you can get involved as a volunteer or exhibitor or just to enjoy the fun and many of the joys of summer. If you've never attended the Polk County Fair — this is the year to catch the enthusiasm and positive activity and enjoyment that is offered to people of all ages. There is nothing quite so tasty as corn on the cob washed down with a glass of ice-cold lemonade.

Our streets and sidewalks are busier than ever with children of all ages happily riding bikes and pulling wagons full of toys and sometimes little brothers or sisters, as they enjoy activities in the summer sunshine. Some children aren't wearing bike helmets, and that just adds more potential to

injury in addition to the skinned knees and elbows. We all need to be extra watchful for our little ones every day, and into the evenings as well. Where there are kids running and playing, there are also cats and the occasional family dog that has momentarily escaped the fenced backyard. When we're in a hurry, it's tempting to push the 20 to 25 mph speed limit in MI Town, and all of us — whether we admit to it or not — have done it.

This evening Sol Seed will entertain at Main Street Park in Monmouth. You'll enjoy an evening of Reggae music from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Bring your picnic basket or buy goodies from local vendors, and have a wonderful evening.

PEDEE NEWS

Congratulations to Nic Heller, who passed both state and national EMT tests and received his state license this last week. He is a firefighter in Pedee and would ultimately like to be a professional firefighter. He took two terms at Chemeketa in preparation for the tests.

And congratulations to Brandon Simons, who made the dean's honor roll at Western Oregon University this last term. Brandon is a sophomore majoring in business.

Heidi Russell's birthday was a few weeks ago and as a gift, she and youngest daughter Amaya spent a week with her sister, Kelsey Ferry, who lives with her family in Excelsior, Minn. They had a wonderful time visiting, shopping at the Mall of America in Minneapolis



ARLENE KOVASH
Columnist

(largest mall in the U.S.), and swimming in Lake Minnetonka. On several days there were steady downpours with non-stop lightning and thunder for several hours — something we don't experience here!

Jim Fessler, 80, a neighbor of several years (in the country sense — anyone within 10 miles of you), died as a result of strokes on July 13. He was a man of many interests, including gardening, fishing, hunting, and traveling. Until recently he and his wife Laura lived across the road from Dave and Suzanne

Burbank, where they generously gifted them with beautiful berries from their large garden and berry patch from time to time.

Also, Vicky Lyday Woods lost her husband Leo a few months ago. Vicky grew up in the area and moved at one point to Las Vegas where she met Leo and where they lived. She spent much time here, taking care of her parents, Junior and Pat Lyday, during their last years, and it was nice to get to know them better.

Last Friday, Chip and Linda North were happy to have Anna, their German exchange student of two years ago, visit with her parents, Achim and Bettina Tiefrunk and sister Marie. Because Anna was taken with American pie, the Norths hosted a pie social

at the Dallas park for her family and asked all to bring a favorite pie to share with them. Some feast! It might have not been a well-balanced lunch but it sure was good.

On Friday, there will be a "Kids and Bigs" barbecue and concert in the Pedee Church amphitheater. At 5:30 there will be face painting, snow cones, popcorn, and hotdogs. Then at 6:30 there will be a kids' concert with Tom Glogau, and at 7:30 a concert with Ron Miller. Tom is super fun and will put on a great kids show, and Ron's acoustic guitar music is amazing. Bring a side dish if you are coming for the barbecue, and a lawn chair if you are just coming for the concert. This will be a fun summertime event you won't want to miss.

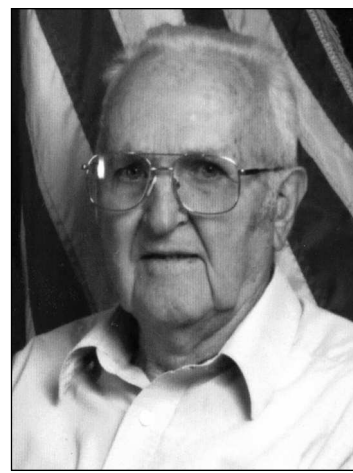
MILESTONE

100 Years - Virgil Trick

100! Happy Birthday Virgil Trick!

Virgil was born on August 7th, 1917 in Salem. His Oregon driver's license has only four digits, but don't worry he doesn't drive anymore! He proudly served with the Army Air Force in World War II. Virgil and Wynona Trick celebrated 68 years of marriage together raising four daughters on their farm near Dallas.

His family and friends wish him congratulations and a very happy birthday!



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Continued from page 9A

TUESDAY, AUG. 8

• **Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) Club** — 6 to 7 p.m. weigh-in, 7 to 8 p.m. meeting, First Christian Church basement, 1079 SE Jefferson St., Dallas. Meetings offer programs and activities aimed at losing weight. Open to anyone. First meeting is free.

• **Ovureaters Anonymous** — Noon to 1 p.m., Salem Health West Valley, 525 SE Washington St., Dallas. Support group meets in the quiet room/chapel immediately inside the emergency entrance on Clay Street. Dee Ann White, 971-718-6444.

• **Independence Riverview Market** — 2 to 7 p.m., Riverview Park and Amphitheater, 50 C St., Independence. 503-910-8193.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 9

• **Respite care** — 1 to 3 p.m., 182 SW Academy St., Suite 216, Dallas. Free child care for parents who need time to run errands, pay bills, etc. Free. Open for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. 503-877-8473 to reserve space. Diapers are provided.

• **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., Salem Health West Valley (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.

• **Pickleball** — 9 a.m. to noon, Roger Jordan Community Park. Meets on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon and Sundays and Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. Karen Freeman, 503-871-4172.

• **Music in the Park** — 6:30 p.m., Main Street Park, Monmouth. Cascade Crescendo, jamgrass. Free. www.ci.monmouth.or.us.

Schmidt 66th Anniversary

Lyle Schmidt and Eldora Buhler exchanged wedding vows

Aug. 3, 1951, at the Dallas Mennonite Brethren Church.

The couple have lived in Dallas all their lives. During the 1950s, they started their family of five children: Lionel, Suzanne, Kevin, Carey and Sheldon Schmidt. Lyle worked at Oregon Fruit Products in Salem, retiring in 1995.

Eldora worked for DeGraff Church Furniture in Dallas, then sold real estate for Century 21. Lyle and Eldora live in Dallas. They have 12 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.



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