

## Can you dig it?

By Schann Nelson



What difference a month makes! There was snow on the ground a month ago and now, as the ground is beginning to warm up, spring bulbs are poking their heads up cautiously. After the cancellation of one class due to snow, the Master Gardener class is half over!

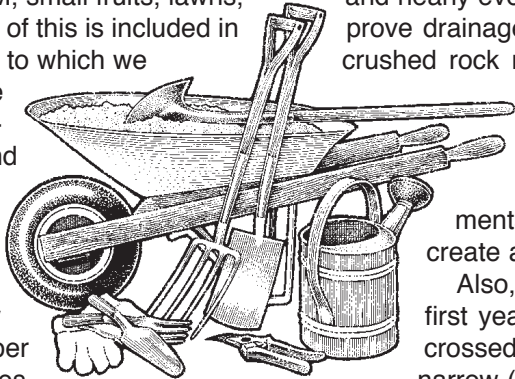
If you ever have the chance, whether you are an experienced gardener or not, taking the Master Gardener (MG) class will familiarize you with the entire plant kingdom, a large portion of the insect and pest world, and an introduction to the control of disease. A short list of the topics covered so far: botany, plant disease, entomology, IPM, small fruits, lawns, ornamentals, and vegetable gardening. All of this is included in a loose-leaf binder the size of a small city, to which we add handouts for nearly every class. The emphasis, at all times, is on finding a sustainable way to cultivate in our yards and gardens.

This means being able to identify plant problems and their causes and, only then, to search for the least toxic solution. Often solutions can be achieved by simple mechanical means such as proper sanitation or changing watering practices. Only after considering all other alternatives are we given permission to go for "the big guns" and look at chemical solutions.

I'm having a great time in class, but spending an entire day in St. Helens has sure put a big hole in my time to spend outside. Other than moving a couple of huge piles of compost that Dennis put around the fruit trees, so the bulbs underneath could emerge, and (finally) getting the trees pruned, I haven't done a darn thing. I still don't have garlic in and, I guess, after harvesting a crop every year for at least the last twenty years, I can let one year slide by. I do have a few volunteers that I will, hopefully, move around so we will have some fresh garlic.

Do you still put gravel in the bottom of your pots and planting holes to increase drainage? So did I, until one of our instructors convinced me that this is a MYTH. Believe it or not, people do scientific studies about this sort of stuff. Soil engineers have established that anytime a planting medium, such as soil, encounters an interface (such as the one created by that nice layer of gravel in the bottom of my pot) a barrier to both root growth and water movement (drainage) is created. This is because depending only on the type of soil, a certain amount of soil ABOVE the interface remains saturated. Since roots will not grow in this saturation zone, my nice layer of gravel has just made my pot smaller. Needless to say, I won't be doing that anymore.

Now is a great time to plant fruit trees and ornamentals. If you can get them in the ground soon, they can get a nice start before summer. The same principals that apply to pots apply to the size of holes to dig and soil amendments to use before planting trees. Though all of the experts USED to tell you to dig a huge hole and add all kinds of stuff, this has changed somewhat. The recommended practise is to dig twice the width, but the same depth as the plant you are putting in. It is important for the plant end up with the soil at the same level it was in the nursery.



But my yard is nothing but nasty, sticky red clay and nothing grows! Actually, this is a good thing, because your clay soil is full of nutrients. It just needs some tender loving care to create air spaces within the soil. Everybody, everywhere needs to add two inches of organic matter to their soil every year. If you have clay, and nearly everybody does around here, you also want to improve drainage. Many people have found that adding 1/4-10 crushed rock makes a huge difference. After we rebuilt our barn we had a bunch of sand aggregate left over from making concrete, so we spread it on the garden and it was a great improvement. The trick is to incorporate your amendments (compost and gravel) into the soil so you don't create an interface.

Also, it is not a good idea to prune a new tree for the first year except to remove dead or injured branches, crossed branches, or to eliminate one branch from a narrow (or co-dominant) leader.

I could go on for pages but won't. See you cleaning up the Linear Park on February 21st or at the Farmers Market meeting on March 2nd. Get out and incorporate good stuff into your dirt. Order seeds. Look for nifty trees to add to your landscape. Breathe and stre-e-e-etch!

## Farmer's Market in Vernonia?

A Farmers' Market in Vernonia? Interested? Have experience? Want to know more? If you don't subscribe to the "Wetried-that-once-and-it-didn't-work" philosophy and are ready for a new attempt, read on.

The Chamber of Commerce is pursuing this project as another way to bring people into town. Vernonia has four new Master Gardeners who would prefer to hold clinics here, rather than in St. Helens. Additionally, several area residents have expressed an interest in selling locally produced products. Bringing these people together could result in an ongoing Farmers' Market.

A meeting will be held Tuesday, March 2, at 6:30 p.m. in the Vernonia City Hall. Organization of the market will begin at this meeting in order to open this spring. Everyone interested is invited to join in for a discussion of all aspects of a Farmers' Market and to help get the ball rolling!

## Church Directory

### VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grant Williams, Pastor  
957 State Avenue  
Vernonia, 503 429-6790

Sunday  
Breakfast 10:00 a.m.  
Morning Worship 10:45 a.m.  
\*B.L.A.S.T. w/Nursery 11:00 a.m.  
\*Bible Learning and Scripture Training  
Youth Group 6 -8:00 p.m.  
(Jr. & Sr. High)  
Wednesday  
Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

### GRACE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

D.J. Dickey, Pastor  
Grant & North Streets  
Vernonia, 503 429-1919

Sunday Services: Adult Prayer & Children's Sunday School 9:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship 11:15 a.m.  
Evening Worship 5:00 p.m.  
Evening Service will change to 3:00 p.m. on Sept. 7,2003

Wednesday Service:  
All Family Bible Study, 7:00 p.m.

### ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Darwin Harvey, Pastor  
662 Jefferson  
Vernonia, 503 429-4615

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.  
Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.  
Bible Study, Wednesday 7:00 p.m.  
Youth & Kids, Thursday 7:00 p.m.

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

John Cahill, Pastor  
359 "A" Street  
Vernonia, 503 429-1161

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.  
Evening Worship  
Saturday, 6:00 p.m.

### NEHALEM VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH

Gary Taylor, Pastor  
500 California Ave  
Vernonia, 503 429-5378

Sunday School 10:00 a.m.  
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.  
Nursery available  
Wednesday Service 7:00 p.m.

### ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Pastoral Associate  
Juanita Dennis  
960 Missouri Avenue  
Vernonia, 503 429-8841

Mass Schedule  
Sunday 12:00 Noon

Religious Education  
Sunday 10:30 a.m.

### SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Kevin Reiner, Pastor, 543-2254  
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St.  
Vernonia, 503 429-8301

Sabbath School 9:15 a.m.  
Morning Worship, 11:00 a.m.  
Prayer Meeting, Wed. 7:00 p.m.

### ST. AUGUSTINE (CANTERBURY) EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Rev. Robert Grafe, Pastor  
375 North St. (Vernonia Grange Hall)  
Vernonia, 503 429-3700

Sunday Services 10:00 a.m.

### VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Jim Kirby, Evangelist  
410 North Street  
Vernonia, 503 429-6522

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.  
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

Every Wednesday:  
Ladies' Bible Study 9:30 a.m.  
Ladies' Worship 10:00 a.m.  
Children's Choir 3:00 p.m.  
Family Bible Study 6:30 p.m.

### VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

850 Madison Avenue  
Vernonia, 503 429-1103

Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.  
Children's Sunday School

### CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

Jeff Cheney, Branch President  
1350 E. Knott Street  
Vernonia, 503 429-7151

Sacrament Meeting, Sunday 10 a.m.  
Sunday School & Primary 11:20 a.m.  
Relief Society, Priesthood and Young Women, Sunday 12:10 p.m.

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