

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson



Gardeners, in general, always seem to be looking forward to the next season. In my case, this is because I'm happier planning what I will do, rather than actually getting out there and doing the tedious jobs that need to be completed now, such as weeding the vegetables or dead-heading the flowers, though I will talk later, just a bit, about weed management.

One of the most interesting classes in the Master Gardeners course (for me) was the lawn and turf class. Like most people, my "lawn" is just an area of the yard that gets mowed and is not something I pay a lot of attention to. However, a luscious green lawn is very important to some and has more inherent worth than I suspected. According to our instructor, American lawns average 2200 sq. ft. Since an only slightly larger lawn of 2500 sq. ft., lawn produces enough oxygen for four people for one year that's a lot of oxygen being produced by suburban lawns.

Grasses evolved side-by-side with grazing animals and each grass has a set height at which it goes to seed. For example, the plains grasses that evolved with buffalo, set seed when they are quite tall and, thus, are not suitable for lawns, while grasses evolved in the presence of sheep grow very close to the ground. If a grass plant is not grazed, it will immediately set seed. In our modern world, the lawn mower has replaced the grazer. About a quarter of the world's plants are in the grass family, including most of the food grains.

If you want a really great lawn, close consideration of what type of grass to plant and a good watering and fertilization schedule are essential. I will be discussing only grasses for lawns; grasses and turf maintenance for athletic fields and golf courses is best left to professionals. While most easily obtainable lawn seed mixtures include a large percentage of Kentucky bluegrass (which is not actually native to Kentucky, but comes from Europe). The OSU Extension Service does not recommend planting of only Kentucky bluegrass in this area because it does not survive in Western Oregon for more than three to five years. Fine fescues include creeping red, chewing and hard fescues. These are drought and shade tolerant but, depending upon variety, may develop disease problems and are not suitable for play areas or heavy traffic. Turf-type ryegrasses are extremely wear tolerant, but require fertilization to resist disease and invading species. The final type of turf grass is bentgrass. Only colonial-type bentgrasses are recommended; do not use creeping bentgrasses. Bentgrass performs well under low fertility, in moderate shade and on acid soil.

So, what's a person to do with that patch of under-performing lawn or bare earth? First, consider the site. If you have more than 50-percent shade, consider using other groundcovers, as no type of grass will grow well in this much shade. Roughstalk bluegrass (*Poa trivialis*) tolerates both wet and shady sites. Drainage is a consideration, as fine fescues and turf-type perennial ryegrasses don't like wet feet, a bentgrass or fine fescue would be a better choice. Any of the grasses recommended by the Extension Service will withstand moderate use but a better choice for a play area would be predominately perennial ryegrass. Another option is to consider the eco-lawn mixes now available, which include clovers, daisies and yarrow. These mixes are more drought tolerant and require less fertilizer and mowing. Nichols Nursery has a mowless lawn mixture that is only 30-percent grass, according to our instructor.

Lawn maintenance is essential. Mowing height should be in accordance with the type of grass. Mowing should not remove more than one-third of the leaf blade and should be done as soon as there is enough grass to cut. Deep, well-drained soil is optimal for a healthy lawn. Grass roots follow the water down. In our clay soils, particularly where construction has compacted the soil, this can be a problem leading to shallow and underdeveloped root systems. Roots need oxygen and water. Over-watering can dra-

matically increase lawn problems. Generally, the effective root zone is three times the cutting height. Infrequent, thorough watering of the root zone is best. You can measure the amount of water your sprinkler system puts out by placing short cans (cat food or tuna type) in several spots on the lawn. In general, lawns in western Oregon need one-inch of water per week all year long. When grass goes dormant during the summer months, shallow intermittent watering can be very destructive by encouraging fragile and shallow new growth that can die when watering ceases.

Fertilizer is the final component of good lawn maintenance. Lawn fertilizer should be in a 3-1-2 ratio, meaning that there are three parts of nitrogen, one part of phosphorus and two parts of potassium. Don't be fooled by bigger numbers, it's the ratio that's important. The label on the bag may say 12-4-8 or 6-2-4 or 15-5-10 but the ratio remains the same. Grass grows most actively in the spring and fall and is dormant in both summer and winter. Never apply more than one pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet per application. Avoid fertilizing during hot weather. A good program is to apply one-pound of nitrogen four times per year: early May, late June, mid-September and early November.

Because organic fertilizers take longer to provide nutrients these times should be adjusted to February, late April/early May, late August/early September and early November. Organic fertilizers will also provide helpful micronutrients and, possibly, soil organisms. More chemical fertilizer is used on American lawns that the entire country of India uses on all crops.

You can spread high quality compost with a rake. Try it!

Thatch control is much discussed, but is generally not needed in home lawns in western Oregon.

Please see page 21



Chris Burkett to sign new book at Grey Dawn

Christopher Burkett will be signing his new book, *Resplendent Light*, July 16 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., at Grey Dawn Gallery, 879 Bridge St., Vernonia.

Resplendent Light is a collection of 68 square photographs that Burkett has taken with his Hasselblad camera. Of these, 26 are new images taken over the years, but not previously printed. An essay by James Enyeart accompanies the images. The format of the book is a companion to Burkett's previous book, *Intimations of Paradise*. The trade edition retail price will be \$65.

Hand-bound book/print sets are available for pre-publication ordering now at Grey Dawn Gallery. The print size will be 11" square, then double matted. There will be three images available to choose from. The pre-publication price of \$500 will increase to \$750 when it is ready for shipping.

Church Directory

VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grant Williams, Pastor
957 State Avenue
Vernonia, 503 429-6790
Sunday Breakfast 9:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 9:45 a.m.
*B.L.A.S.T. w/Nursery 10:00 a.m.
*Bible Learning and Scripture Training
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

375 North St. (Vernonia Grange Hall)
Vernonia, 503 795-2173
Sunday Services 10:00 a.m.

VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sam Hough, 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.