

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
OSU Master Gardener



By the time you read this we will, according to the weatherman, have had some colder weather and rain. Though the forecast does not predict freezing, I wouldn't be surprised if tender vegetables were bitten by the frost bug. Definitely time to cover the tomatoes! Keep them safe from rain and cold!

While you're out, prune off excess vegetation, including small green tomatoes. This is in hopes of directing more energy of the plant to ripening fruit. Covering helps with this too by concentrating the gases released by the plant, like putting fruit in a bag. Other methods of ripening tomatoes include hanging the whole vine in a garage (or someplace big enough and dry) but this can get messy. More time consuming is to pick green fruit, wrap them in newspaper and store in a cool dry place. Be sure you wrap only unblemished fruit. Though they need to be checked often to remove rotten ones, this seems to be reliable, especially for long season tomatoes.

This year, even when the sun finally did come out (however briefly it stayed with us), the air appears to have retained enough moisture to provide all of our lovely green plants with an ample coating of mold, blight and other kinds of doom. If, like me, you didn't get out and spray your tomatoes (and potatoes) with a copper fungicide now is the time.

It's also time to apply lime to the soil. Soils in our area are generally very acid, which is great for our big trees, rhododendrons, and berries but not so good for most landscape plants and vegetable gardens. Your soil can, and probably does, have all kinds of nutrients (with the exception of selenium and magnesium) but plants can absorb them only in a very narrow pH range. Lime is cheap, doesn't have to be precisely spread and can make a big difference. The extension service says that the standard application for this area is about 10 – 12 pounds per 100 square feet of garden. This is an area 10' x 10' square, or more likely a 20' x 5' garden bed. They also recommend tilling the lime in, but since I don't till, I depend on my healthy colony of worms to distribute amendments, along with a little spading in the spring.

Judicious application of a glyphosate product, such as Roundup, works well when the weeds are the only things green. This product moves through the plant to the root with plant sugars produced in the leaves by photosynthesis. Therefore, it is more effective if applied when plant sugars are moving into roots to prepare for winter. This type of spot application of herbicide is very effective, and costs less because you don't need as much product. Reports of this timing working on tough weeds like blackberries and morning glory have been heard. If you don't want to use herbicide, you can achieve effective removal by mechanical means (with a hoe for instance) but every time you disturb the soil, you get more seeds. Hoeing your entire yard every couple of weeks could keep your waist under control though! Repeated mowing can also be effective, even on knotweed, but you apparently have to be religious about it for several years.

Now is THE time to plant or renovate lawns. One of the reasons we can grow sod and ship it all over the country is that we can plant in the fall. The goal is to get seed well established before the hard rain and cold of winter. You need to get seed in the ground NOW, and keep it evenly moist by regular irrigation. Next spring, you should have a lovely lawn.

I heard that the Oregon climatologist has predicted a rainy sea-

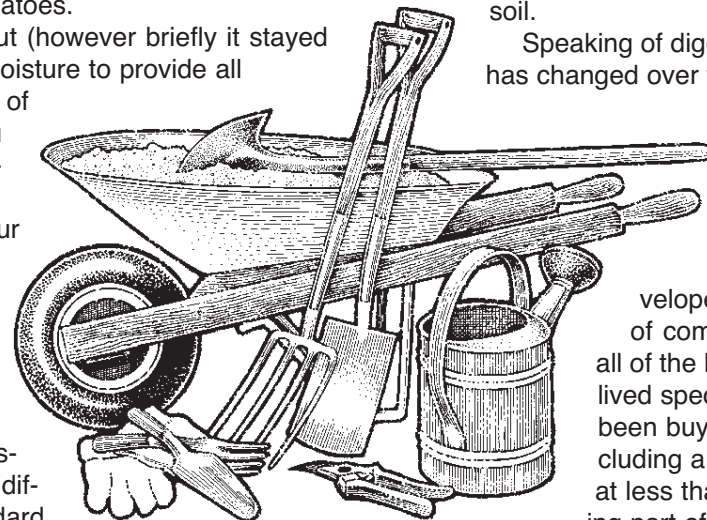
son similar to that of 1995-96. Remember that it was the combination of snow in the hills and the pineapple express that caused the flooding. Are you ready? Recent events should remind us all of the importance of planning and preparation. The first three days to two weeks, depending on the severity of the incident, you are on your own!

I've read several books on growing perennials and building perennial beds. They insist that the ground be well prepared and weed free. Well I'm here to tell you that, while it may be slower, you can build a nice perennial bed without killing everything first and investing a huge amount of time and money in soil amendments. I have two nice beds now and both are the result of deciding where I wanted them to be adding plants (sometimes directly into what was previously mowed weeds since certainly couldn't call it lawn) and mulching heavily around them. While these beds took about three years to fill in, they are now quite pretty, low maintenance and I haven't had to divide anything yet. I think if you started a bed in good soil with a lot of plants, sure it would fill in and look good the first year, but you'd be digging the stupid thing up to divide everything way too soon. Besides, it's fun to make soil.

Speaking of digging up and dividing I've been considering how my yard has changed over time, particularly as related to my level of age and level of fitness. When we first moved in over twenty years ago, one of the first things we did was rake the leaves into a row that became our first garden bed. In addition to trying to feed a family, I always tried to have some flowers too. As the garden got more established, I started adding more flowers and have developed several perennial beds and a small orchard – in spite of complaints about making the mowing more difficult. Since all of the kids have left home now, I've started to consider longer-lived species that don't have to be dug up and divided, and have been buying shrubs. I've also planted a few landscape trees, including a golden chain tree that was given to me at a plant trade at less than a foot tall. Now it's about fifteen feet tall and becoming part of the hedge.

Enjoy the remaining days of summer.

"I know of nothing so pleasant as to sit there on a summer afternoon, with the western sun flickering through the great elder-tree, and lighting up our gay parterres, where flowers and flowering shrubs are set as thick as grass in a field, a wildness of blossom, interwoven, intertwined, wreathy, garlandy, profuse beyond all profusion." —Mary Mitford



Church Directory

ST. AUGUSTINE (CANTERBURY) EPISCOPAL CHURCH

375 North St. (Vernonia Grange Hall)
Vernonia, 503 705-2173
Please call for service schedule.

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.

VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sam Hough, Evangelist
410 North Street
Vernonia, 503 429-6522
Sunday School 9:45 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 7:00 p.m.

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.

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.

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
Grant & North Streets
Vernonia, 503 429-5378
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Nursery available
Wednesday Service 7:00 p.m.

VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

850 Madison Avenue
Vernonia, 503 429-1103
Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.
Children's Sunday School

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia,
503 556-1961 for Information
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

John Aitken II, Pastor, 396-1856
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St.
Vernonia, 503 429-8301
Morning Worship, 9:15 a.m.
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