

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
OSU Master Gardener



The catalogues are arriving! Not to mention the magazines with luscious photos of this year's prize-winning varieties. As if this weren't enough to make you long for spring, a growing trend seems to be the inclusion of recipes. A feast for the eyes and the stomach! Or at least the anticipation of such a feast.

So far, I know I'm interested in trying the 'Purple Haze' carrot. I'd like to concentrate this growing season on better maintenance in the perennial beds (Meaning I really hope I get out and clean them up before they start growing again in the spring!). I'd like to have a more successful veggie garden this year, which shouldn't be too hard considering that it was nearly nonexistent in '05.

The plan to spray every two weeks has failed miserably. I am promising myself to get out and spray fungicide again (also before spring.) We also need to do some serious moss control on our roof – I love the moss in my lawn since it's prettier than the grass, but I don't want it ruining my roof!

Now is the time to start leeks and summer annuals indoors for transplant. If you start early, you can grow geraniums, coleus, impatiens and nearly every other annual flower by starting indoors and treating them as houseplants for a few months. The Extension bulletin recommends planting dwarf varieties, probably a good idea as most of us have limited well-lighted areas to grow in during the winter months.

Houseplants should be watched lest they become too dry or too wet (which is FAR more common – most plants should dry out between watering), don't accumulate too much dust (Most of them love a shower – though fuzzy leaved African violets are an exception), and begin fertilizing with a water soluble fertilizer when plants begin to grow again in response to the lengthening day.

As soon as the soil is well drained and workable, it will be time to plant those peas. Don't wait for seed racks to appear in the store and, for heavens sake, don't wait for me to tell you when to plant. This is your excuse for spending hours with your nose in seed and plant catalogues. Recommended pea varieties include Corvallis, Dark Green Perfection, Green Arrow, Oregon Sugar Pod, Knight, Sugar Snap, Oregon Trail and Oregon Sugar Pod II.

If you still need an excuse to go outside at least for a few minutes, it's time to propagate deciduous ornamental shrubs and trees by taking hardwood cuttings. You can also start to gather branches of quince, forsythia and flowering cherry to bring inside and force for early bloom.

I was going to present my list of ten things for those starting a garden for the first time but I haven't thought it through yet. My first suggestion is to decide where you want to locate your garden and cover it up ASAP. The site should be as well-drained as possible and have good sun exposure. Start your garden by layering the entire area NOW with up to two feet of organic material. This could include manure, old hay, chopped garden refuse and leaves. Go ahead and cover the area with organic material and mulch. Biological activity continues in the soil whenever the soil is above freezing and not under water. This development of the soil over the winter and early spring months will pay off once the hot weather arrives. Let the worms do the work! Your top layer should be as free of weed seeds as possible.

If the site is covered in weeds and/or grass, you should do something to prevent the existing vegetation from returning in the spring. No black plastic! It's not that effective and causes more problems than it solves. You may be able to slow the growth of the weeds enough to get your garden off to a good start with a thick

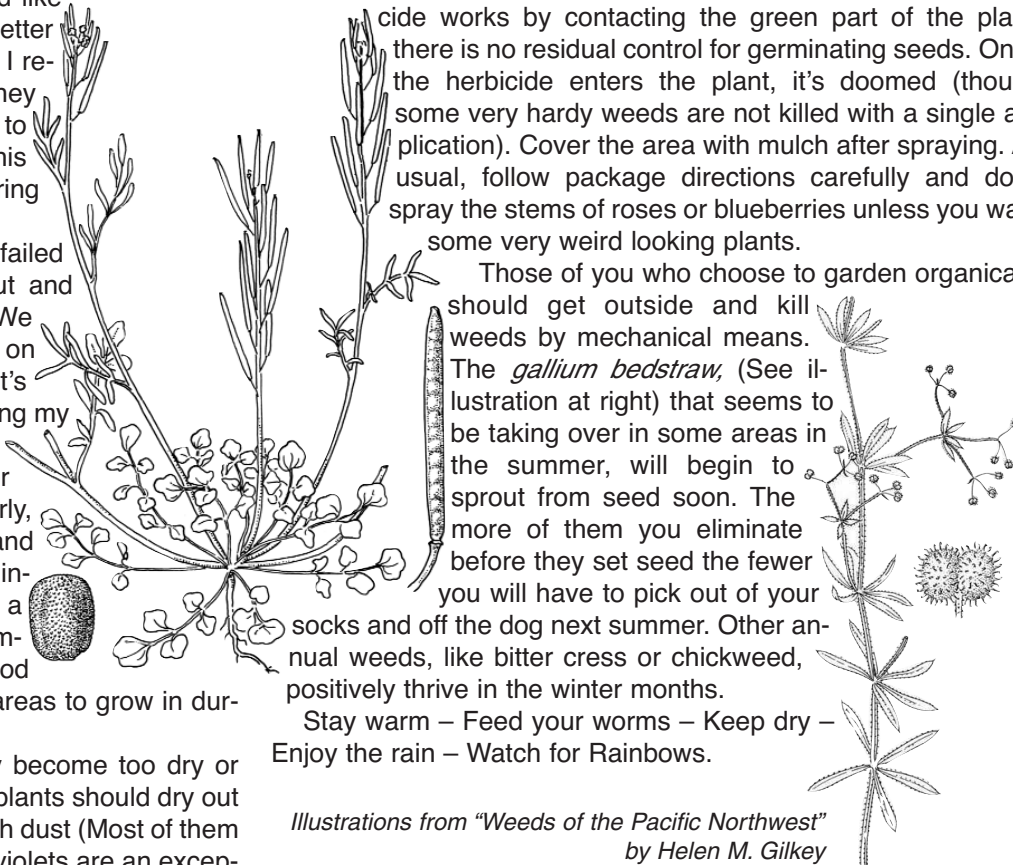
layer of newspaper or cardboard. Be prepared to continue a watchful and lethal weeding policy and start going after the roots of those thistles and curly dock. Years of this practice will eventually yield relatively weed free soil. Of course, by that time, your definition of a weed has probably changed to include fewer species than it once did. The pervasive little bitter cress, (See Illustration below left) sometimes called pop weed for its practice of shooting seeds in all directions, can be cut off with scissors and plunked into a salad.

Alternatively, I believe that using a glycosphate product (such as RoundUp) to eliminate invasive species like grass and buttercup is justified. Try to find a dry day to spray. Because the herbicide works by contacting the green part of the plant, there is no residual control for germinating seeds. Once the herbicide enters the plant, it's doomed (though some very hardy weeds are not killed with a single application). Cover the area with mulch after spraying. As usual, follow package directions carefully and don't spray the stems of roses or blueberries unless you want some very weird looking plants.

Those of you who choose to garden organically should get outside and kill weeds by mechanical means. The *gallium bedstraw*, (See illustration at right) that seems to be taking over in some areas in the summer, will begin to sprout from seed soon. The more of them you eliminate before they set seed the fewer you will have to pick out of your socks and off the dog next summer. Other annual weeds, like bitter cress or chickweed, positively thrive in the winter months.

Stay warm – Feed your worms – Keep dry – Enjoy the rain – Watch for Rainbows.

Illustrations from "Weeds of the Pacific Northwest"
by Helen M. Gilkey



Yard, Garden & Patio Show

Plant lovers and weekend warriors won't believe their eyes when doors open for the 2006 Yard, Garden & Patio Show at the Oregon Convention Center. A spectacular indoor lake and 20-foot waterfall will set the stage for the hottest new plant varieties, tools and techniques for creating beautiful outdoor living spaces. This unique attraction is the first of its kind at a Northwest gardening show and will be surrounded by four distinct gardens at the water's edge, giving showgoers an abundance of ideas they can apply in their own yards. The event also features seven Proven Winners Display Gardens, the Remarkable Green Market, Oregon Wine Pavilion, interactive seminars, Kids Digs and more.

The Yard, Garden and Patio Show will be February 24-26 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. Tickets are \$11 for adults; children 12 and under are free with paying adult. The YGP accepts all other garden show coupons. A limited number of advance-purchase tickets are available for \$8 at select retail garden centers; for a list of retailers and info on coupons and other details, visit <www.ygpshow.com>.

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.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

David Jenkins, Pastor
662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia,
503 816-1989
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening Service 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 p.m.
(in the parsonage)

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.

VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

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

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.

ST. AUGUSTINE (CANTERBURY) EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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

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.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

John Aitken II, Pastor, 396-1856
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St.
Vernonia, 503 429-8301
Morning Worship, 9:15 a.m.
Bible Study 10:30 a.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.