

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
OSU Master Gardener



The sun is hot, the air is humid, and the ground is hard as a rock. It's Summer! My yard tends to look a little tatty around this time of year. Since I'm not a morning person and it's usually too hot to get out in the sun to work, the 'weeds' that I've left in the flower beds (the remains of the wild phlox and Queen Anne's Lace (wild carrot) are tall and mature. The birds pick the seeds from the upright skeletons of the queens lace all winter. By early spring only the barest threads of the large seed clusters will remain, every seed picked clean.

It's time to think about biological controls for insect populations if they are out of control. There are good beneficial insect controls for aphids, whiteflies, spider mites, mosquitoes and root weevils. A note of caution: Be sure to identify what pest you are treating before beginning any method of control. You don't want to accidentally reduce your population of insect predators AND you need to be sure that the treatment you want to apply is effective for that particular pest.

Both Green Lacewings (*Chrysopsa rufilabris*) and Ladybugs (*Hippodamia convergens*) are voracious predators of aphids and whiteflies. If you have spider mites, you probably already have some spider mite predators. You can tell them apart from the spider mites because they are slightly bigger and much faster than their prey. They look like small red spiders (the mites are even smaller red spider-like creatures) and suck the juice from adult mites, eat the eggs and breed twice as fast. Lacewings, ladybugs and spider-mite predators can be purchased by mail from a variety of sources, including Territorial Seed Company and Gardens Alive.

We've all heard about West Nile virus and preventing its spread to livestock and humans by eliminating mosquito breeding grounds. These include ANY standing water in tanks or tires, ponds or streams. There are several varieties of Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) as dunks (compressed disks) or powders and concentrated liquids. Some form of Bt is available to treat all the damp areas, including those you can't completely eliminate; like the last few inches of rain water in an old tire, the water under a plant that needs constant moisture or the drip next to the stock tank. Remember, even if you emptied out all the water earlier in the year, it has rained (sometimes quite hard) and you may have standing water you don't know about. This bacillus paralyzes the digestive system of leaf-eating larval stage of a variety of pests including hornworms, loopers, cabbage worms and gypsy moths. They have to consume the bacillus in order for it to be effective and the bacillus has no effect on human, bird, worm or other populations, which don't ingest it. Unfortunately, even if you use a spreader/sticker, the Bt will only last about two weeks and will have to be reapplied to remain effective, particularly on plants like cabbage and broccoli. It's supposed to last up to a month in ponds and other bodies of water.

And finally, the ever-present root weevil. These little devils are the cause of the (mostly) round, small chewed off edges of rhodies, salal, and lots of other leafy shrubs. Since they actually live in the soil and climb up at night to do their dirty work, they are very hard to treat. Predatory nematodes are the only biological control that works below the soil surface. The biggest problem is that the soil has to be warm and kept damp for the nematodes to remain active.

Territorial and Gardens Alive both have nematodes available and it would be interesting (though spendy) to do a scientific comparison of the two. Territorial sells a mix of *Steinernematid/Heterorhabditis* nematodes and sends most of the specific directions for applying along with your order. Nematodes come on a small, plastic sponge that you rinse into your watering can or pressure sprayer (the nematodes are too small to be damaged in the sprayer and you can cover more ground). Territorial says each sponge of one million nematodes will treat up to 3000 square feet. Gardens Alive, on the other hand, advertises several types for various types of applications such as lawns (north or south), houseplants, vegetables and fruit trees, ponds, etc. Is this just hype, or should you purchase a specific nematode for a particular use? I have no idea! That's why a controlled experiment would be interesting. Gardens Alive sells two sizes of sponge, 5 and 10 million nematodes respectively, BUT they say that even the ten million will treat only 200-300 square feet.

Other pests to begin dealing with as they appear: fruit flies and pantry moths (biological traps available), yellow jackets (trap

away from the area you want to protect), and fleas (apply IG Regulator to stop the breeding cycle after treating adult fleas on animals). Then there are those larger plant eaters, deer and elk. Of the many repellents on the market, Plantskydd received the highest recommendation when I took the master gardeners class. However, nothing is really effective if you are surrounded by forest. They're not stupid and they know that apples and everything else in your yard and garden taste MUCH better than what's out in the woods. Good Luck! The most innovative repellent is the motion activated Scarecrow Sprinkler, which works the same way a security light works and sprays an arc of water when activated. However, the zone of protection is fairly small (35 by 45 feet), only in the 100-degree detection zone and they are quite expensive (\$84 each at Territorial). I also worry about repeated water sprays at night that might create an even better climate for molds, mildews and blights.

Now is also a good time to evaluate how well plants are doing in their current locations. Beyond the consideration of sun, soil and water, does the plant fit where it is? Will it still fit there when mature? You can decide now that you need to move a plant and begin to look for better place to put it and begin amending the soil to create the environment for that plant. Then, when the rains come again, your hole will be ready, or at the very least you'll have a plan, and the move will be a cinch. On the other hand, it may be the case that a particular plant is doing far too well and is taking over far more than its allotted space, on its way to taking over the universe. This can be a big problem with plants you are given. Several times, I've gotten plants that I wish I had never planted in the ground. In one case, after realizing that a solid green Bishop Weed was going to take over, I decided it had to go. So, I dug up the entire bed carefully (I thought) removing all the roots of the offender. I kept pulling and digging remnants of that stupid thing for years. It had a very distinct perfume, not unpleasant, but which would send me into a fit of digging every time I smelled it because I knew that if I could smell it there was still some portion of it in that flowerbed even if I couldn't see it.

I have a plant in my yard now that I will be removing soon, though I may keep a pot of it as an example. Several years ago, my sister-in-law gave me this foliage plant for filtered shade. I've seen it in the background of garden photos, though unnamed. It's about 12-18" high, has light green leaves with a red chevron on them. and at the end of summer will send up an attractive red flower stem. After learning what it was, I dug one of them up and was relieved that it was not spreading out through the roots. I had hoped that putting it in pots might be enough to control it and it seemed that perhaps this was the case. However, I have since found at least two young plants, grown from seed probably, that I did not plant. This makes me very nervous about the intentions of this plant, in light of the nature of its near relatives.

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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.	VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH Carl Pense, Pastor 850 Madison Avenue Vernonia, 503 429-1103 Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m. Children's Sunday School 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. 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. 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.
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