

## Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson  
OSU Master Gardener



By the time you read this, the days will be getting longer. Oh, happy solstice! Even though the dark days of winter are ahead, the actual time between sunrise and sunset will be getting longer. We, of course, will hardly ever SEE that brightly glowing ball of fire in the sky. Up here in our little valley, we will be under the clouds most of the time, even when we aren't actually getting on.

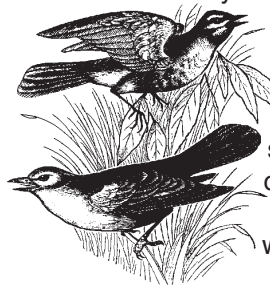
If the sun should chance to appear, it would not be a bad idea to record the angle and position of the arc of the sun across your property. Eventually, the sun will come out and you will be ready and able to mark these positions at both the winter and summer solstice, thus mapping the maximum available sun on your personal piece of earth. I'm always surprised by the difference in the range of the winter and summer sun. The back northeast corner of the house gets a few low rays for about two weeks surrounding the summer solstice. In winter, the sun is so low in the sky that no sun gets to the back side at all. We get great afternoon sun in two big windows facing southeast, and can capture a fair bit of solar heat during the day. In my yard, I have a perennial bed between two big cherry trees that gets only a tiny amount of direct sun, and that is in winter, after the leaves have fallen. The hostas, hellebores, and ferns are well adapted and very happy in this location.

This time of year, in the cold and dark, is a great time for reading. Garden writing has a long and well respected history that I would know a lot more about if I was fonder of non-fiction. Most of my gardening books are rather technical, though I am thoroughly enjoying Michael Pollans, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. Pollan takes his title from the work of University of Pennsylvania research psychologist Paul Rozin. A specialized eater, such as a koala, has its dinner preference hard-wired into its genes. Human omnivores, in addition to huge amounts of brain space devoted to taste and smell in order to identify what is edible, have evolved cultural rules across the world to determine what is "good" to eat. This the omnivores dilemma: "What, out of the vast array of food at the grocery store, should I eat?" The overwhelming diversity of foods available creates a level of anxiety exploited by food scientists and marketers to exaggerate our worries and then offer new alternatives to improve our diets. Pollan's writing is clear cut, not technical, often humorous, providing lots of material for thought as he traces three different food chains from seed to consumption.

I've also been looking at the pictures in two other books, *Color for Your Winter Yard and Garden*, by Helen Van Pelt Wilson (one of the pantheon of worshiped garden writers) and *Birdscaping Your Garden*, a Rodale publication by George Adams. Wilson gardens in the east and her winter landscapes are developed for climates where snow is always part of the winter landscape. Her work is based on developing the view YOU have from your winter window. I've used this as a guide for developing my perennial bed, coordinating the positions of plants by triangulating how (I think)

they will look within the bed in summer, and what will remain to be seen in winter. Interesting colors and textures of bark stand out nearly as well against the solid green/brown of the winter woods as they do against the snow. There are lots of winter berries, as on holly, that provide food and habitat for birds, and the addition of color and life always appreciated by the gardener.

Birdscaping is a concept for turning your backyard into a sanctuary for birds. Of course the best birdscapes are extensions of the natural landscape, and most of us do not want a landscape composed of yet more woods. The challenge then becomes one of providing birds with places to hide, to nest and to shelter themselves from extreme weather, and also to provide a steady source of food and water within a yard.



This is often my justification for leaving weeds room to grow to maturity, the seeds are always gone by spring and I love watching the tiny birds land on the slenderest stems to get the seeds.

And in celebration of the tuning of the year, a Native American story, taken from *The Solstice Evergreen* by Sheryl Ann Karas:

When the plants and trees were first made, the Great Mystery gave a gift to each species. But first he set up a contest to determine which gift would be most useful to whom.

"I want you to stay awake and keep watch over the earth for seven nights," he told them.

The young trees and plants were so excited to be trusted with such an important job that the first night they found it difficult not to stay awake. However, the second night was not so easy, and just before dawn a few fell asleep. On the third night, the trees and plants whispered among themselves in the wind trying to keep from dropping off, but it was too much work for some of them. Even more fell asleep on the fourth night.

By the time the seventh night came, the only trees and plants still awake were the cedar, the pine, the spruce, the fir, the holly and the laurel.

"What wonderful endurance you have!" exclaimed the Great Mystery. "You shall be given the gift of remaining green forever. You will be the guardians of the forest. Even in the seeming dead of winter your brother and sister creatures will find life protected in your branches."

Ever since then, all other trees and plants lose their leaves and sleep all winter while the evergreens stay awake.

## Christmas Church Services

**Vernonia Community Church**  
957 State Avenue  
Christmas Eve Service at 7:00 p.m. will celebrate the birth of Christ with singing and celebrating. All are invited.

**St. Mary's Catholic Church**  
960 Missouri Ave., Vernonia  
Mass will be held at 12 noon December 24 and December 25, and January 1, 2007.

**Vernonia Christian Church**  
410 North Street  
Candlelight service at 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

**St. Augustine (Canterbury) Episcopal Church**  
375 North Street, Vernonia (Grange Hall)  
Christmas service will be held Saturday, December 23, at 5:00 p.m.

## Attention Christian Men!

Announcing the first meeting of the **Vernonia Christian Men's Fellowship.**

Saturday, January 6th from 8:00AM to 10:00AM

Vernonia Community Learning Center. Coffee, muffins & fruit provided by The Black Bear

**Vernonia Christian Men's Fellowship\***

**Living Our Faith In Everyday Life**

If you have any questions, contact **Dean Camarda at 503-429-5160.**

\*Not affiliated with any specific church or denomination.

## Church Directory

### 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.

### 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 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.

### ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator  
960 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia  
503 429-8841

Mass Schedule  
Sunday 12:00 Noon  
Religious Education  
Sunday 10:30 a.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

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

359 "A" Street, Vernonia  
503 429-5190  
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.  
Sunday Worship Service 11:00 a.m.  
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

### ST. AUGUSTINE (CANTERBURY) EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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

### ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Wayne and Maureen Marr  
662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia,  
503 429-0373

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship 11:00 a.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 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.