

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
OSU Master Gardener



I knew that the dark and cold had really gotten me down when I realized that the cheat sheet/list I make, so that I don't forget to report stuff, is almost entirely a list of failures. Yikes! As I review this list (after 'researching' through the new Park Seed Co. Perennial & Shade catalogue and finding all kinds of plants that I'd like to have that I'm SURE would survive), I've decided that the common theme is plain and simple ROT. Unfortunately, rot is what you get when it above freezing but below 40 – 45 degrees. The only things growing are the ever hardy micro-organisms, and even they slow their

activity. I have a hydrangea that it seems should have put on some bulk by now, but I'm afraid that the cold has killed it back to the ground. It never looked very happy. In the summer it dries out and collapses, but now it seems too wet.

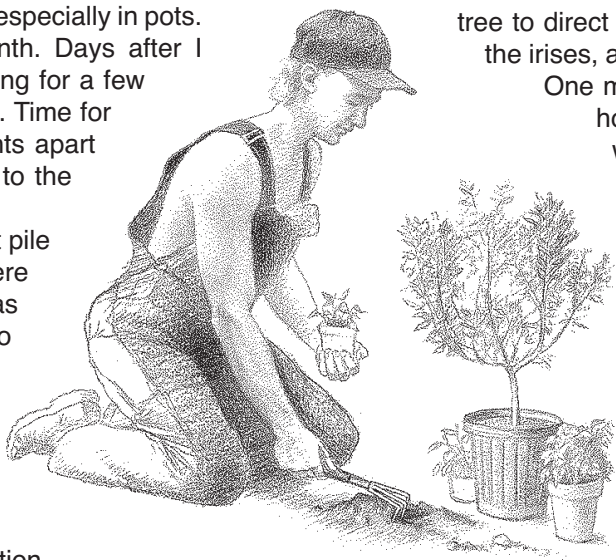
Cold weather and dampness managed to destroy all but one of the baby plants I was so pleased with last month. I'm sure if I could have set them in the sun for even a few days, more would have survived. Same goes for the lemon grass I've been trying to grow in a pot, which it is said to do readily. Apparently I have a ways to go to understand the needs of grasses, especially in pots. Another probable failure is the azalea I got last month. Days after I brought it home, it wilted and did not respond to soaking for a few hours. It appears to have an advanced case of root rot. Time for radical treatment. I think I'm going to cut the four plants apart and repot them before I'll be ready to condemn them to the compost.

I was surprised by a few tulips appearing in the giant pile that amount to last year's compost. I have no idea where they came from. We removed an old tub that we used as a goldfish pond for several years from this spot next to the house. Last year I started chucking empty pots, and used potting soil, and other garden junk in this space because it's at least a bit hidden. Now, however, I have to get in there and clean it all out. YUCK!

Those of you who ever had the pleasure of hanging out on my Dad's deck will understand my trepidation when I planted kiwis. He planted several of the fuzzy kind (*Actinidia deliciosa*), appropriately male and female, for the fruit and to shade the deck. Very quickly the vines grew the 20-feet to the deck rail in the sun. They made an idyllic green bower, that even had fruit! Then, they tried to take over the house and could only be described as aggressive. After establishing a permanent trunk the vine grew thirty or forty feet in every direction. Twice a year! It wasn't long before that extensive, frequent, pruning job became more than anybody wanted to handle. By-by Kiwi.

A. deliciosa are native to China and were first commercially produced in New Zealand. Now there are some local orchards around, and at least one local residence has several varieties (and a very shady yard). Their hardier relatives, *A. Kolomikta* and *A. argulas*, are native to Russia, and are described as "less vigorous". I was inspired by a photo of the entry to a greenhouse in Russia that was covered and shaded on the end with this incredible variegated vine. The pink, white and green variegated foliage and the ability to do well in partial shade seemed made for my yard. My other inspiration was that we got a pair of kiwis to plant when one of the girls was born. I managed to kill, but I always felt I had to have kiwis after that.

My vines took three or four years to get established; they are finally starting to take off. It took three tries to get a male to survive (the second thanks to the guarantee from Raintree). I finally planted the male at the end of one of the garden beds, in much better soil. The male has yet to blossom, so we have yet to taste the small, smooth fruit. The more highly decorative foliage doesn't seem as hardy, but it does put on a show! The colors continue to develop throughout the season. By fall they all have bronze and red overtones, though the females are less spectacular. The females survived every year, but it's taken a lot of years to get to the point where they HAD to have a sturdy trellis. So, I'm anxiously



awaiting the cedar boards for the top of the trellis, holding off pruning back the vine, and waiting for spring!

I've been working on developing small groupings of perennials that will grow in limited space, as in a large pot or trough. It's far more interesting to get some small bulb flowers in the spring, followed by the showier miniature roses. I have been adding thyme and chives and sometimes the stray daffodil. I find the combination of perennial and annual flowers, such as lobelia or alyssum (which can overwinter and sometimes self-seeds), much more interesting.

Several years ago, I wrote that the ancient *King* apple at the farm had collapsed. I cut scion wood from that tree and successfully grew a couple of small trees at one end of the garden. Thinking that I wanted to replace the tree that died, I had these grafted onto rootstock that will grow a full sized apple tree. The old farms had these huge trees to get the fruit up where the elk and deer couldn't reach them. You don't see these old trees much, with their flat bottomed crowns at lease eight-feet off the ground. The animals saw to pruning the bottom side of the crown.

Of the two trees I have, one had to develop a good root system, and somewhat odd shape, to survive the iris trying to grow around it. The other shot straight up, over six feet, and has a nice even structure of branches. I fretted all summer long about how to root prune this taller plant to insure it had a good root system before planting in a more permanent spot. In the few nice days we had last month, one of the things I did get done was to prune off the top few inches of this tree to direct energy into the branch structure. I also dug out and divided the irises, and very carefully cut the longest roots of both apple trees off.

One more year in the garden and then I'll have to find permanent homes elsewhere. This is a big tree when mature, providing a wide circle of shade, and tons of huge apples that make THE best cider.

Yet another month gone by. I can hardly wait to get the plants outside again. The jungle in my office is great, but I think we're all happier when it's outside.

P.S. I've been forgetting to report my great bird deterrent. Noni was here one day and asked if they work, reminding me that I've wanted to put this trick in my article for some time: I've taken old CDs (condition really doesn't matter) put a ribbon or string through the center and hung them in the Asian pear. They twist and flash in the lightest wind, especially if you use two CDs with the shiny part on the outside. They work really well, are recycled, and don't look bad – What more can you ask?

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.