

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
OSU Master Gardener



Let's hear it for PINK! A *pale* poppy, can it be the *Hungarian Breadseed*? Finally, seeds planted in the dead of winter begin to show their presence. These last two months have been full of embracing the unexpected. First, the huge clouds of palest possible pink and white rhodies appearing in the shade, enough for lavish bouquets. Then, in staggering succession, flowers in a vast array of hue, intensity, texture. The, oh so hopefully planted in February (well before the 'final frost date'), summer bulbs are beginning to put on their show. I finally have dahlias (!) in the ground and ready to burst into bloom. Dark burgundy *Canna's* are coming up, though they

probably won't bloom till next year. The little pot of *Ixia* turns out to have charming long-lasting blooms.

It's great when it finally comes together and starts to look magical. We are blessed to be able to live where we do. The post-top baskets are starting to look impressive, adding COLOR against the trees in an unexpected spot. I've finally achieved at least one cottage-style border that starts blooming with the daffodils and will keep blooming until October, or later, when the structural elements (two young trees and two large pots) appear. A soft pink double-double petunia that I HAD to get as soon as I saw it in the big box, is filling out nicely in a pot with an alyssum border. For the first time in a long time, I'm beginning to see a dim light behind the huge wall of stuff that hasn't gotten done or that made the translation from the vision inside my head to some fair semblance of reality.

I've recovered from NOT falling and breaking a hip (it was only three inches on a stiff leg, followed by a week as horizontal as possible). Thanks to so many of you for your good wishes. This getting older stuff is nonsense! Now I have to learn how to work in the yard without needing muscle relaxants for two days afterwards. Massage and physical therapy, here I come! In spite of this temporary setback, over the last two months, the entire vegetable garden (10 approx. 5x12 feet beds) has been planted at least once. The perennial beds that line the yard fence, in shade under the (sort of wild) cherries, and the front yard are full of stuff to pull out, but not overwhelming. This subtractive method of pulling 'weeds' when mature but before they go to seed, is way more fun than being on your hands and knees pulling weeds. I just yank big piles of stuff out. This year a lot is getting used as mulch since straw has been unavailable.

Lessons learned so far this year:

1. Outdated seeds are rarely worth the trouble, but you might be pleasantly surprised. (See pink, not red poppy above.)
2. Despite the packaging, I won't be buying any more annuals from Territorial. Too many were wimpy and/or didn't make it at all. You'd think the word "seed" in the company name might be a hint. Next year? Farmington Nursery is on one of my routes now, or maybe Iwasaki will give Willow and me a tour? Note to self: Try harder to get to St. Helens for the Master Gardener Sale in April! \$1.00 tomatoes!

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3. Cherish what you have now. Unexpected blessings appear and disappear constantly and without warning.

Two unexpected plants returning: The tall evening primrose (a biennial, *Oenothera*) for their first year of vegetative growth. These small plants will (hopefully) be transplanted in late fall or early spring to a more favorable, ie. sunny, location. You can stand and watch three-inch soft yellow blossoms open individually for their one evening of luring moths. I turned the soil somewhat in that area and buried seeds were brought to the surface to sprout. Sometimes this is a good thing, as with the poppies that now come up in drifts and will be used as mulch this year. Some times it is NOT a good thing. Scotch Broom seeds can lay dormant in soil for many years and come to the surface to fill an entire hillside in an impenetrable and inhospitable monoculture. My 1988 *Sunset Western Garden Book* lists nine varieties of broom, several with more than one named variety, as landscape plants, with mild warnings of aggressive behavior (except for the aforementioned *Cytisus scoparius* and a cousin *C. canriensis*). Since the development of plant gene manipulation, one hopes that new cultivars have had their reproductive mechanisms extensively limited while preserving the hardiness, texture and color. Maybe the genetics will transfer back to the 'wild'?

And back for the second year: A dark red begonia that was like a firecracker in a dark bed last year. Planted in the ground, I forgot it after it disappeared in an early frost. This lovely I'm going to dig up and plant in a plastic trough that will fit on the inside of my upstairs windows. I'm going to put in the amaryllis bulbs from last Christmas, too. Though they were disappointing last winter, it may be possible o get blooms after building up the bulbs. Any surviving coleus that I paid too much for, will also be included.

A brief word about watering: Water in the morning, if possible, or after it cools in the afternoon. Morning is better because foliage will dry during the day and be less hospitable to our wide variety of molds, fungi, blights, rusts, etc. Plants in containers are hotter and dry faster than those in the ground and need to be watered every day. Mulch heavily and water deeply to encourage roots to seek water in the cool earth and not on the blazing surface. By the time it gets cool and starts raining again, I am usually keeping my most precious bonsai, pots and baskets alive with recycled water from the kitchen. This leaves the little bit of irrigation water available for over-wintering vegetables that can feed us throughout the winter, if successful.

Free ranging garden discussions happen every Friday while I'm selling eggs at the Black Bear. I try to set up by 10 a.m. and stay until 1:00 p.m., unless the only thing I'm selling is eggs and I've sold them all. Eggs are \$3 per dozen. I'm in the shade if it's hot, in the sun when it's cold, and inside when it's freezing. Stop by and add your bit of garden lore. Questions are encouraged, but answers are varied and sometimes hard to come by.

Church Directory

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 COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grant Williams, Pastor
957 State Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-6790
Sunday Breakfast 9:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 9:45 a.m.
Children and Nursery 10:00 a.m.
Youth Group 6:00 p.m.
Preschool Tues. & Thurs. 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer 7:00 p.m.
Friday Adult Volleyball 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.

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

Marc Farmer, 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.