

Can You Dig It?

The Independent's garden columnist, Schann Nelson, can tackle almost any problem facing gardeners in Northwest Oregon, but computer problems aren't included in Master Gardener training. In the absence of her column, we have turned to the Oregon State University Extension Service for this month's gardening information.

Troubleshooting less-than-perfect garden veggies

By: Carol Savonen

During the height of summer, many home gardeners have concerns about why they have less-than-perfect vegetables. They call or visit the nearest Master Gardener help desk at the local county office of the Oregon State University Extension Service with questions galore.

OSU vegetable breeder Jim Myers offers troubleshooting strategies for growing carrots, cabbage and tomatoes. Plus, he gives advice on how to grow these vegetables better next time.

Carrots: Gardeners are often dismayed when they harvest hairy or misshapen carrots. Imperfect carrots, or carrots with multiple roots – many of them twisted around each other – may come from several causes, including spacing, soil type, fertility, pests and disease.

Your carrots could be overcrowded. Next time, try thinning them to an inch apart after the leaves reach about three inches high. Did you plant them in clay soil? If you have heavy clay soil, the clay sometimes forces the roots to grow crooked. Amend clay soil in next year's carrot patch with well-broken down leaves, well-rotted compost. Carrots do well in light (sandy), fluffy soil that is not too full of amendments.

Root-knot nematodes may cause deformed carrots. You can either verify this with a soil test, then you might have to solarize (treat soil with the sun's heat using plastic sheeting in the summer), or rotate your carrots to another area next time.

Did you fertilize right before you planted your carrots? Excess nitrogen (over fertilization) can cause carrots to form multiple roots or get "hairy." If you add manure-laden compost to your soil, do so in the fall, then let it overwinter before planting carrots in the spring. Carrot roots will also become hairy in waterlogged ground.

Did you leave carrots in the ground too long? Carrots are biennials. The first growing season, they grow a taproot. Next they put out secondary roots off the taproot, and then put up the flowering stem the second year. If you planted your carrots last fall, then overwintered them in the ground, they might be sending out whitish secondary roots by now and maybe a stem. Some varieties are more prone to bolting than others.

Cabbage: Growing good cabbage with nice heads seems to be a challenge for many home gardeners. Some complain that their cabbage doesn't set heads at all. Others say the cabbage heads set, but they crack open.

Are you watering your cabbage too much? Excess irrigation after a period of

drought (little or no watering) can cause the heads to swell until they crack. Cabbages also crack when they are mature. Try watering them less and harvesting them earlier.

If your cabbage plants don't set a head at all, it may be caused by several factors, including overcrowding. Thin your plants early in the season to at least 18 inches apart.

Is your soil too dry? Are you watering deeply enough? Long infrequent watering is better than shorter surface watering for veggies like cabbage. Hot weather thwarts the formation of cabbage heads, causing them to be stunted or misshapen. Adequate watering may overcome some of the effects of heat.

Disease may also play a role in stunting cabbage growth. Pull up one of your stunted plants and examine the roots. Do they look "clubby" with large swellings, different than normal healthy roots should look? You may have club root fungal infection. If so, don't plant any of the brassica family in that spot again for seven years. Root rot is another infection that thrives in clay soil. It can kill much of a plant's root system. Rotate this area of the garden to another type of plant.

Tomatoes: Some of the problems you might encounter with your tomato plants while waiting for those juicy red fruits to develop include:

Blossom drop may be caused by dry soil and dry winds, but also by a sudden cold spell, heavy rains or too much nitrogen. Usually not all blossoms will fall off, so just be patient for the next set of flowers.

Blossom end rot, when the end of the fruit furthest away from the stem gets black, is caused by irregular watering and calcium deficiency. Water deeply and regularly. Add lime to soil in fall to increase calcium level in the soil for next year's crop. Most common in western Oregon.

Leaf rolling is most often the result of heavy pruning or root injury. Plants may lose leaves but will recover.

Sun scald: Green tomatoes can get sunburned, especially those plants with leaf spot diseases or those recently pruned.

Early and late blight are fungal diseases. Look for water-soaked looking spots on lower leaves and stems. If you see these, pick them off. Avoid overhead watering and monitor and remove diseased leaves.

The OSU Extension Service offers several resources online to learn more about making and using compost:

GROWING YOUR OWN—Recycle with Compost Pile
Gardening with Composts, Mulches and Row Covers
Improving Soils with Organic Matter

To see photos of vegetables with various diseases, visit the OSU Extension Service Online Guide to Plant Disease Control then type in the vegetable you want to know about. The OSU Master Gardeners Gardening Questions website is: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/>

Witt urges family forestland owners to attend bi-state storm recovery program

Rep. Brad Witt (D-Clatskanie) would like constituents and others with an interest in forest management, to know about an Extension Service program that will focus on recovery from last winter's windstorm and flooding damage. The day-long event is being co-sponsored by Oregon State University and Washington State University.

"This workshop should be very helpful to the many family forest landowners in Columbia and Clatsop Counties who were severely impacted by the December storms," said Witt.

It will be held Saturday, August 23, near Naselle, Washington, not far from Astoria. Instructors from across the region will cover more than 20 topics, including salvaging blow down, managing a timber

sale, maintaining and repairing forest roads, reforestation, forest health, thinning and pruning, and much more.

Gates open at 8:00 a.m. and presentations start at 9:00 a.m. Registration on the day of the event is \$30 per person and \$40 for two or more.

Interested parties may contact the OSU Extension Service in Clatsop County at 503-325-8578 or email Glen.ahrens@oregonstate.edu.

"I hope that as many people as possible will participate in this worthwhile program. The OSU Extension Service is known for its broad variety of community-based educational programs, and its ability to help Oregonians find solutions. This event is particularly timely and appropriate," said Witt.

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.

VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

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

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.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Gary S. Walter, Pastor
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St., Vernonia
503 429-8301
Morning Worship, 11:00 a.m.
Sabbath School 9:30 a.m.

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.

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. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator
960 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-8841
Mass Sunday 12:00 Noon
Religious Educ. Sunday 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 Mon. & Wed. 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer 6:00 p.m.
Tues. & Fri. Adult Volleyball 7:00 p.m.