

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
OSU Master Gardener



Splat! We’ve landed solidly in the dark wet time of fall that will extend pretty much through late spring. No worries! When the sun does manage to peak out, every needle gleams with it’s own glory in our cloud forest. The few remaining bright leaves of cherry and plum emerge from under the canopy. Long white lichen, green moss and ferns appear and, when is it really clear and probably freezing, you can see forever back into the woods, and the stars are impossibly bright.

The ever-present grayness can be disheartening, at least until you get good rain gear! It’s not nearly as dark as it looks from inside once you get outside. If you can get outside for even a few minutes of work every day, the garden will be dramatically improved in the spring and you will most likely feel better as long as you can stay dry. River watching is an understandably common and obsessive activity in these parts, though I maintain that we can’t reach FLOOD levels without snow in the mountains.

If you want the children around you to enjoy the outdoors, it is essential that you keep them warm and dry from the tip of their heads clear to their toes. Boots should keep feet warm and dry. Remember, if you want to use a shovel you will need footwear with a hard in-step, such as a steel shank. Good rain gear also allows ample ventilation – it doesn’t take long to work up a sweat and soak yourself from the inside. Yuk!

With all the rain last week this is a good time to study the drainage, or lack thereof, in your yard. Beyond being unspeakably rude, simply digging a ditch into your neighbors yard is not a permanent solution. A water feature, such as a rain garden or bioswale, creates a place for water to slow down and be directed appropriately.

It’s time to plant garlic NOW if you haven’t already. Pick an area to plant that has rich soil and at least six hours per day of sun. Good crop rotation requires that the ground has not grown garlic or onions for three years. Don’t plant garlic in the same bed that it grew in this summer at least. If you don’t already have raised beds in your garden, or want to start a new bed, now is a good time to ‘build’ a bed simply by shoveling the future path onto the future bed.



Garlic has got to be one of the easiest crops to plant. Rake the top of your bed flat and wide, if it’s brand new you might want to add some soil on top. Garlic ‘seed’ is simply one clove of garlic. Larger cloves make larger heads of garlic and are less likely to disappear (rot). I pick through all the garlic I have harvested and set aside the very largest cloves as seed for next year’s crop. It keeps just fine in a small paper bag from July until time to plant.

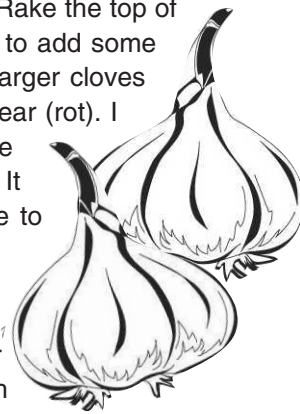
I plant garlic in an uneven grid, where each clove is equidistant from its neighbors. I space regular garlic 4-6 inches apart and elephant garlic 6-8 inches apart. After raking comes the fun part, where I press the base of each chosen clove into the soil. I use my hand to ‘measure’ the distance between cloves and try to keep it as even as possible throughout the bed. When finished, I cover the whole thing with 2 – 4 inches of loose mulch.

Though garlic can be planted in late winter or early spring, production is much better if you plant in the fall. In warmer weather the cloves can grow roots so rapidly they push themselves right up out of the ground. For some reason, crows seem to think that this protruding garlic needs to be thrown all over the garden. Pretty disheartening after all that careful spacing. Dig a bit next to any extruders and gently cover them back up or add another layer of mulching that spot.

In late January or early February, just as green tips begin to emerge from the soil, add another 2-4 inches of very rich compost. Because it is so early in the season, and there will be plenty more rain, you can use nearly fresh manure. Always try to get a layer of relatively weed-seed free mulch on top of manure to control weeds. When your garlic emerges from this layer of fertilizer, apply another 4 – 6 inches of mulch to conserve water. Keep the bed well watered until mature – usually the tips of leaves will start to turn brown, but pulling a head of garlic is the most accurate way to tell if it’s ready.

Speaking of weeds, now is the time to cut back the overgrowth in the perennial beds and mulch some more. Think how much better the yard will look with neatly trimmed mounds just waiting for snow instead of big gunky masses of slug habitat. Get a solid four inches of woodchips or barkdust on top of any exposed dirt and around the trees and shrubs now. [And when you’re done come over and do my yard!] Your reward is a greatly diminished spring weed population.

It’s a great time of year to plant or transplant landscape trees and shrubs. So put on your rain gear and boots and move the shrub that just needs a bit more sun, or shade, or drainage! Then sit back and soak up the sun while you dream how beautiful it will be in it’s new home next summer.



Master Gardener classes will be available in Vernonia next spring

For twenty-one years the Oregon State University Master Gardener™ classes for Columbia County have been held in St. Helens. This year’s classes will be held in Vernonia. The change came about because some enthusiastic Vernonia area Master Gardener graduates and community volunteers collected a list of about thirty people who were interested in classes.

Exact details (location, day and time, etc.) are still to be worked out but there will be about 10 class days with at least four teaching hours on each day. Classes will start lat-

er (most likely early March) to avoid the worst weather and will go through early May. Pay-back projects (an obligation for all Master Gardeners™) will be focused in the Vernonia area and nearby communities.

If you signed the list that circulated this summer in Vernonia, someone will contact you. If you didn’t sign that list (or aren’t sure) and are interested in the Vernonia program, call the OSU Columbia County Extension Service office at 503 397-3462, or Heather Lewis in Vernonia at 503 429-4677, for more information and to get on the mailing/email list.

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, Minister
410 North Street, Vernonia
503 429-6522
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship 11:00 a.m.
(meets in Youth & Family Center)
Home Group Meeting throughout the week at various locations

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

359 “A” Street, Vernonia
503 429-4027
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.

Happy Thanksgiving