

## Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson  
Columbia County Master Gardener



Sometimes it's not comfortable to be right. How frustrating it can be to drive over the hill and see the sky and sun, do your thing, and drive back into the clouds and cold at the end of nearly every day! They suffer, there in the valley, from nasty cold wind blasting through the entire Metro area

that I most definitely do not envy them. It is so much drier 'in the valley', the western hills have been mostly hidden in the clouds for months. It might be easy to forget how much mountain there IS between the Willamette valley and the coast. The traverse back to the Nehalem Valley coastal watershed is dramatic this time of year. Cold water-filled clouds caught on this side shedding snow and hail and sleet...trucks going by nearly every morning with snow covered logs...the river rising and falling...the rain, the rain, the rain...

Fortunately much of the power of the sun that activates photosynthesis (and causes sunburns!) has little trouble penetrating a thin cloud cover. Spring flowering bulbs were shooting up in the early sunny days, and many were damaged by the heavy rain and cold that followed. The cold slowed things down a bit. Later growth, getting increasing sun hours, should be stronger.

I was out early this Saturday morning taking the row covers off for this fine half-sunny day, so I have full reports:

The CDO [obsessive compulsive in the correct order] peas that I talked about last month (planted 1" apart, in four straight rows 6-8 inches apart) are performing better than any other peas I've ever planted. Each row had it's own carefully excavated trench

about 2" deep. I do this with a metal-tined rake, making rows parallel to the long side of the bed to maximize the little arc of the sun they will receive in the summer. After setting each seed in place [the CDO part] I poured on a bunch of perlite, raked it out to cover the seed with a good two inches of perlite while providing some mulch between rows. A light application of slug bait and anchoring the row cover finished the planting. Though this is the coldest, shadiest bed in the vegetable garden, the peas grow slowly and steadily. Neither slugs nor the first bit of weed seed seem to like the perlite. This week the other half of the bed, planted with some salad mix, showed identifiable lettuce seedlings [Red Trout?!]. Things ARE coming along.

Bed 2 of peas continues to struggle. We lost a fair percentage of the first planting. The second planting was poked into the spaces and is starting to show up. I monitor daily for slug activity, easy to do as this bed does not have a row cover. Successive applications seem to require less product to continue to be effective – a bonus as the stuff is not cheap! I try to do as much of the yard as I can with each application. So far, slug populations are well controlled with an application every two- three weeks.

We've been using up my outdated seed supply, just chucking large quantities of seeds on beds. It's starting to be fun to try and figure out what we want to pull. I LOVE using scissors as a thinning tool. Also by far the easiest way to harvest 'wild' growing edibles, especially if they appear where you want something else to be. Easier to clean and eat, less disturbing to remaining plants, doesn't bring seeds to the surface – it's just hard to keep track of the CLEAN scissors and bowl, keep them out of the sun, and get them in the house. Or maybe that's just me?

My garden finally has the narrow flower border so long envisioned. Working the asparagus, raspberries and outside garden beds had become a considerable challenge, as the aging fence with it's backwards posts

that put the electric wire on MY side of the fence, sagged into the garden. Dennis straightened up the fence and moved the electric wire to the cow's side of the fence a while back, but it took a bit to reaccept this into the yard and garden.

The fence does keep the chickens out of the yard and garden and the addition of a second, lower wire keeps the cow, and her incredibly long tongue, out of the critical narrow border. My able assistant and I moved the earth from the garden bed over a few inches to make a narrow bed next to the fence. I covered the length of it with last fall's maple leaves composted in the garden. This year it seems every single maple seed sprouted – they are everywhere! We just keep pulling them out. I "divided" a few clumps of day lilies, campanula, daffodils, and crocosmia and stuck them barely into the dirt, 4-6 inches from the fence. The hope is that we can actually grow something along the fence. All of these plants grow well enough in my yard to want dividing every few years, even along a fence line that the livestock can access – if they brave the wire! Visions of butterflies and hummingbirds and the long warm dusk...ahh.... That's what keeps me going.

Another renovation project completed: A dwarf apple in the front yard has been struggling for years with an overgrowth of lemon balm. It's the only mint I know that will spread by seed AND root and can really take over an area. I like it in the lawn where it gets mowed into submission (and adds greatly to the aromatic experience.) I had planted big ol' 'King Alfred' daffodils around the tree, which was okay until the lemon balm took over. Over the last few years, I've dug and divided the daffs twice, dug and divided the offending lemon balm, used chemical and mechanical methods to remove the remainder from inside the perimeter of embedded edging. Finally, laid out six 'Hood' strawberries and a half-dozen pansies and mulched well with nice fresh straw. "Wouldn't it be luvly!

"Enough writing! Time to go OUTSIDE!

## County Master Gardeners set date of annual Spring Garden Fair

The 15th annual Spring Garden Fair, presented by the Columbia County Master Gardener™ Association, will be held April 24, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the St. Helens High School commons, 2375 Gable Road, St. Helens.

There will be free parking, free admission, dozens of local

vendors offering annuals, trees, perennials, shrubs, trellises, garden art, vegetables, ceramics, herbs, containers, hanging basket, 7,100 tomatoes in over 45 varieties, information, raffles, prizes and displays – what more could you want in a garden fair – don't miss it.

## North Plains Garden Club sale set

Mark your calendars! This is one you won't want to miss. The North Plains annual Garden Club Plant Sale will be held May 1, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 11052 NW 309th Ave., North Plains. Take Exit 57, approximately one mile off Hwy 26, look for signs.

The club works very hard to provide a large selection of

healthy plants. Annuals, perennials, houseplants, vegetables, succulents, baskets and containers will all be available. Treat yourself to some rare finds at very affordable prices. There will also be raffle tickets (\$1 each or 6 for \$5) for a beautiful flower basket embroidered quilt.

## Church Directory

### VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

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

### SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Larry Gibson, 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### PIONEER BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

John Cahill, Pastor  
939 Bridge Street, Vernonia  
503-429-1161  
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.  
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.  
Wednesday Prayer 7:00 p.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

### 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.