

## Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson  
Columbia County Master Gardener



So many things to plant – so little time! This year, the cost/benefit of growing food has definitely worked out on the side vegetables. My daughter has been raking out beds and throwing seeds at them all year. I'd managed to accumulate a pretty amazing inventory of old seeds. It's incredible to see the results of careful thinning and replanting start to cover the beds with FOOD.

For some bizarre reason I was finally motivated to get a tape measure out to the vegetable garden and measure the actual area under cultivation. It turns out to be MUCH less than I thought. A miniscule 225 square feet! This includes nine vegetable garden beds. (One was converted to a sitting area amidst the flowers from which to survey the coming bounty.) Each bed rakes out to approximately 2.5 feet (32 inches) of plantable space. The beds are about 10 feet long and are oriented with the longer axis running north and south. A wide center pathway on the north side separates four beds, plus bench destination, from the remaining five beds. The whole area, including pathways and borders against the fence, is about 25 by 25 feet. All of the sudden I'm amazed at the quantity of food I've pulled out of this patch of ground over the last 25+ years!

This year's master gardener test cites part of the program's mission, which is to improve food security in our communities, and asks what ARE the most basic skills you need to grow your own food? My recommendation is to start NOW, if you are at all inclined. A simple garden of greens, some kind of brassica, potatoes, beans, squash and a yummy tomato or two can provide a significant amount of food. One fulltime able-bodied and dedicated gardener could probably keep

up with and process the harvest from my vegetable garden, providing a significant contribution to feeding a family of four. A single cherry tomato in a pot can provide serious munching from a deck or patio.

If you *can* have a garden start NOW. If you don't have dirt that you can rake out, this is the time to get a rototiller out to chew stuff up. My preference would be to shovel the tilled area into beds and paths – I would find a huge tilled landscape intimidating, but can see some advantages if you have the manpower to manage it.

Potatoes are a GREAT crop for a first year garden. All you have to do is plant seed potatoes like bulbs, cover well with mulch and keep well-watered until the plants begin to die back. One garden bed into food production and you are ready to move on to more. Six-packs of mixed greens, lettuces, or one of the brassica's (broccoli or cauliflower are probably the easiest to grow) can be spread out by soaking them well before transplanting and gently teasing the plants apart. Bush beans are easy to plant from seed, grow and harvest. Don't get carried away buying transplants, a single zucchini plant may well be all you need (or want). I've found I get better results with fewer varieties of tomato and few plants. Tomatoes can get out of hand, especially in a good sunny year!

The trickiest part of the garden season is after planting seeds. Seedlings are incredibly susceptible to drying out because they grow in the very top layer of soil, which can dry very quickly. Keeping seed beds evenly moist is critical and can be a challenge. As seedlings grow they will require less frequent watering but, at this early stage, even a few hours in the baking sun can exterminate an entire emerging crop. Waiting for carrots or parsnips to emerge can be frustrating. It seems to take *forever*, is uneven and emerging seedlings are hard to see. Planting an indicator, like radishes which practically spring up overnight, can help remind you where you planted the carrots. Persistence, careful thinning, vigilant weeding and attentive irrigation with mulching are key factors in the success of your garden

whatever the size.

In my quest for maximum food production this year, our beds are (or will be) planted thusly:

Peas: first planted, reseeded and now interplanted with a few broccoli where peas still didn't come up.

The OCD Peas (see previous article) and 'Wild Garden Kales'

Carrots and Parsnips

Potatoes

The super interplanted bed – two 6-packs of lettuce, one mixed, one romaine, two kinds of radishes, a short row of turnips, two trellis supports for cucumbers and four tomato plants (Manitoba, a 62 day heirloom; two Health Kick, a high lycopene general purpose tomato; and Jet Star).

The survivors of several mixed lettuce and greens packets, some lettuce transplanted from other beds while thinning and a few broccoli on the end.

Onions and garlic, with a few stray broccoli.

The sitting area, flowers and a short row of Violetto artichokes.

Beds 8 and 10 are my sunniest and are going to grow corn. Precocious, a dependable hybrid I've been successful with before, and Early Pink popcorn! I've never grown popcorn, but it sure sounds like fun!

Where are the beans you ask? I'm exploring the use of bush beans (Jade and Carson) as an element of perennial beds. Bingo, a "classic, Borlotto type, pole bean [with] big creamy green pods streaked in bright, pinkish red, grow 5 inches long." Sounds perfect to cover a tepee! As a shelling bean, we will only have to pick the beans when we take the tepee apart in the fall.

Here's hoping everything works out. The great thing is, there are really no mistakes. Only good food, and opportunities for compost! Enjoy!



## Fish passage grant to watershed council

Governor Ted Kulongoski awarded \$564,000, May 6, in fourteen grants to aid farmers, vintners, students, local governments and landowners in being stewards of our natural resources. The grants are funded by the Governor's Fund for the Environment, which is supported by pollution penalties. Since its inception in 2005, polluters have been ordered to pay more than \$4.5 million to the fund.

The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council received a grant for \$50,000, with a Match of \$405,260 for Elk Creek Phase II-Fish Passage Restoration, near Pittsburg, which will be used to restore coho, cutthroat and lamprey passage to 3.6 miles of refuge habitat on Elk Creek, a tributary of the East Fork Nehalem River. This is part of watershed-wide restoration efforts for the East Fork

Nehalem by the UNWC and its partners (Weyerhaeuser Corp., Columbia County, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, BLM, and USFWS). The project will replace an existing concrete box culvert with an open-bottom culvert that includes a low flow channel to restore natural stream and substrate conditions and reduce high flow velocities.

"These grants will restore streambeds throughout Oregon, improve water quality for people and wildlife, and provide a better home for several threatened and endangered species of fish, plants and wildlife," said Foundation Executive Director Jeff Trandahl. "By gaining landowner cooperation in improving fish and wildlife habitat, we're creating win-win solutions that will have lasting benefits for people and the natural resources we cherish."

## 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.