

## Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson  
Columbia County Master Gardener



Ah, Summer! Days so pleasant seem to mock the afflicted with their glory.

Monday, I had to drive home through the Willamette Valley, where temperatures were trying hard to hold at 100 degrees – that kind of heat is not for me! I find I've suddenly become grateful for our morning cloud cover and dependable afternoon breeze. If folks knew how nice the weather can be, it seems they would move here in droves. It's not our choice that only our really wretched weather makes the news.

Gardens are flourishing, moving quickly (if not already done) to ripeness and harvest. We will have Christmas peas from the garden this year. Yea! Tedious as was, the OCD peas outperformed every other pea bed I've had in the past – though it does take time and effort to plant 1-inch apart in rows 6-8 inches apart and get them at least a bit off the ground ASAP.

It's best to use water strategically. It's better for the garden, less work for you, and definitely better for the planet. Strategic irrigation has many components including timing, amount, method of delivery, and conservation.

It seems to be common knowledge that watering when the sun is high is a waste; what may be less clear is that there are good reasons to water in the morning, rather than the evening. Primarily, you want the surface of the ground or the top of your mulch and ALL of your plants to be dry before nightfall. Sometimes it's necessary to do a little emergency watering in the afternoon if you've been unable to irrigate for several days, but it should be limited. Late evening watering will encourage all kinds of pests and diseases, particularly slugs, snails and the awful powdery mildew that seems to explode overnight. If you use overhead

irrigation, i.e. sprinklers, please do so in the morning – which is exactly what I need to go out and get set up because we've been gone for most of three days.

Another point about timing: It does your garden no favor to water every day, especially if you don't use mulch. Shallow watering will not encourage the deep root growth that plants need to get to deeper water on hot, hot days. However, some of our favorite landscape plants have very shallow root systems. Rhododendrons and azaleas in particular get a lot of their water from feeder roots just under the surface. Therefore, it is particularly important that these plants receive a good 4 inches of bark mulch (to keep the soil surface cool) and a good soaking at least once a week to ensure that water reaches the soil beneath the mulch (which takes a lot of time by hand). I've also found that an application of light summer oil will help prevent extreme drying and sunburn, I assume, by reducing the amount of water escaping. The brown patches of sunburn will not go away ever, better to water when the leaves begin to droop. Remember next year's blooms are forming now!

I've found that most established plants will survive on less water than I want to put on them. Wandering around the yard with the wand is one of my most reassuring activities, especially if I remember to put the pruners in my pocket. But I try to restrain myself by remembering that I am also paying WOEC to run the pump to get the water to the garden – my electric bill is pretty stable from March through November and it's sure not heating that we use in summer. My hostas are looking a little tattered (partly due to experimentation with scissors by a certain five-year-old) but they bloom beautifully and fill their spaces with greenness. I'm sure they would come up and bloom if I didn't water them at all, but they're almost as much fun to water as rhubarb, with funnel-shaped leaves that take every drop right into the center of the plant.

However, three categories of plants need special attention: newly planted seeds, trees or shrubs planted this spring, and potted plants. Seedlings will keel over

and die if their roots are not damp. This means that the top inch of ground MUST be watered at least every day, this is often easier to manage in small pots, but if you want a big crop of carrots or late peas or spinach, you may be better off to pay special attention to the seed bed. You also have to be vigilant about weeds, because they will grow faster than anything you plant, and they think the water is for them. Get out those scissors. A warning about carrots (also parsley and parsnips) – these crops are very slow to emerge, will not emerge through a hard surface (cover seed lightly with planting soil or something else that won't bake solid). A marking row of radishes, which will emerge and grow like gangbusters, set about a half-inch from these slow growers will tell you where they are supposed to be.

Trees and shrubs planted this spring have not had the opportunity to develop a good root system. They require deep watering at least once a week. There are commercial products available, but setting the hose or sprinkler on a very low setting and just letting it run for an hour or two will work. How often you need to do this depends on the weather. There is still a surprising amount of water left in the deep soil so even a single really deep irrigation can allow a plant to connect with this deeper level of water and survive.

Potted plants require water every day and sometimes twice a day. This is waterwand time! Pots above the ground are getting heat through the pot, particularly if it is black, and can look real bad real fast. The dirt in these pots often pulls away from the sides as it dries, so water just runs down the sides of the pot, not doing the plant any good. This is the one time that you can, and should put a good tray underneath these plants and water until the tray is full and then some more. If the extra water from the tray is used throughout the day and it's ready for more water by afternoon you know you've hit a good strategy. Watch out for pots without drainage – these will just fill up and your plants will rot and be gone as usual.

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## Sen. Merkley will be guest speaker at Public Affairs Forum on August 30th

Senator Jeff Merkley will kick off the fall season of the Washington County Public Affairs Forum on Monday, August 30, at 11:30 a.m. Senator Merkley will be discussing the major issues facing Congress over the next year. He will also highlight his ideas for a comprehensive energy policy that will put Oregonians back to work and end our nation's dependence on foreign oil.

The lunches are open to the public. The PAF meets from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Old Spaghetti Factory, 18925 NW Tanasbourne Drive, across from the Evergreen movie theaters in Tanasbourne. Lunch is \$13; \$8 for soup and salad only; \$4 for iced tea or coffee only (\$2 extra for non-members). Seating is limited to 110

people. To reserve a seat, email 2nd VP Phil Nelson at phil@memorygardenbenches.com or call him at 503-533-0476.

Founded in 1956, the Public Affairs Forum provides a common meeting place for the interchange of ideas and to stimulate thinking on civic matters. Each week the Forum brings together community leaders, members and guests who care about what happens in Washington County, the metro region and the state of Oregon. Speakers from government, business, science, the arts and education address the Forum. Members have the opportunity to question speakers – which sometimes is the most interesting part of the program.

## 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

957 State Avenue, Vernonia  
503 429-6790  
Sunday Worship 9:45 a.m.  
Children's Church (Blast!) 10:15 a.m.  
Nursery 10:15 a.m.  
High School Youth 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday Prayer 6:00 p.m.  
Preschool: Open House soon

### 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

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.