

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
Columbia County Master Gardener



"May, May the merry month of May" the old song sings and if variable weather makes you merry, May would be your month for sure. From a snowy day indistinguishable from November except by the greenness, to blazing sun when the clouds clear, we have it all.

This makes it difficult for the slowly gardener to determine what and when to accomplish certain tasks. I think one of the most important things to remember is that plants can thrive on the sun's rays that penetrate a thin cloud cover (even though it may not do much for your mood, especially if you wind up with a bad sunburn) as long as it's not cold.

The list of things that can be done in May is seemingly endless, with a big payoff later in the season if accomplished. I loved Tera Wolin's (2010 Master Gardener) article on slug control. [Why IS it that our most pernicious pests come from Europe? I sure hope we gave a few back!] I've had ducks and they are voracious eaters of slugs – they also enjoy worms and, if given free access, will trample the heck out of your garden. They have no respect for young plants. However, even a short fence will control them. I like the idea and keep ducks mostly in another area, letting them dine in the garden at dusk. Our biggest problem was that the ducks would find the driveway while searching for small rocks, which led to them spying the neighbor's lush lawn. This would be OK except they have to cross the road to get to the neighbors, and ducks are not smart about cars and trucks. As to Wolin's grandmother's method of hand control, YUCK! Slug slime is one of the hardest things to get off your hands – of course she would not have had access to our modern iron phosphate, spinosad, and nematodes

(new to me but I'd like to try it) I will have to look up the article <http://www.slugcontrol.rothamsted.ac.uk/SlugsBrochure/pdf> to find if there is a specific nematode and where to get it. I can't mow all around my garden so slugs continue to migrate into the rich feeding area of the garden; it's a continuous battle.

I not only made it to the Master Gardeners Plant Sale but I managed to keep my blinders on. I spent less than \$20 and came out with six tomatoes for me and a gift tomato, 3 squash plants, 2 sprouted potatoes and a pound of seed potatoes. The tomatoes: 2 Oregon Spring for slicing, 2 San Marzano for cooking and salsa, 1 Gold Nugget short season cherry tomato, and 1 Isis Candy, a 1-1/2 inch tomato that is the sweetest I've ever tasted and worth growing even if it is a later season tomato; and a patio tomato for my Dad's new apartment lifestyle. Gone are the days of planting 12 to 14 different varieties. I never could keep track of what was what and they ended up squished together.

The potatoes: Russian Banana, one of the most prolific I've ever planted and the best tasting when completely unadorned, and seed for Yukon Golds. The squash: a Trombocino that, when staked, will produce two foot (or longer) squash with delicious white meat and a very small seed cavity; a Rondo, an Italian variety new to me that is supposed to produce round, small zucchini; and a plain old acorn for later in the season. The squash are the only thing that remains under cover, everything else is taking its chances that we are DONE with temperatures below freezing.

After seeing the results of adding a bit of woodstove ash after planting last year, I decided to get the stuff in the ground underneath the plants. I've also added a bit of blood meal for the spinach and broccoli (NOT the tomatoes). Splitting up the six-packs into individual plants lets me work these amendments into each planting hole. My measuring tool is a thin trowel and I use a full scoop of ash and a scant half scoop of blood meal. The climbing peas got the same treatment, but worked throughout the soil with a rake.

Waiting for a prescription and reading the American

Horticultural Society magazine, I was astonished to read that glyphosate (Round-up) has a lower toxicity level than organic soaps and vinegar-based herbicides. I don't have it in front of me but, according to the author, glyphosate breaks down into amino acids that are truly harmless. After all, we are all a collection of amino acids so it's unlikely that any single one could have any effect.

I've just had my first spinach salad, so I've already paid for that six pack. We have some 12-15 small romaine lettuce and at least that many broccoli purchased for less than \$2 per six-pack. Even with the purchase of seeds, plants, slug bait, fertilizer and mulch, the economics come out far in my favor, though I would garden for the taste and the joy, in any event.

I have bush peas up about 4-6 inches and climbing shelling peas coming up. Prewarming the soil and keeping the bed very warm (under those shower curtains I wrote about) has been tremendously successful. This year I've bought all my seed locally – several stores have seed racks – and generally have been pleased with the results. The prices are the same though I don't think the quantity of seed is the same as Territorial Seed Company's typically generous one, or more, ounces. Still I have a very small garden so the smaller quantities are OK.

The biggest problem has been keeping my daughters huge cat out of the garden. The darn cat had adopted the broccoli as her private bathroom so steps had to be taken. After adding a couple inches of compost mulch (purchased, unfortunately) I added a series of thin bent-over thin metal stakes, the kind used to mark various underground or field lines. Bent in half they look like croquet wickets, and I hoped they would keep her out. It didn't work by itself, from the evidence of the following morning. However, the addition of several largish rocks (my family seems incapable of going anywhere without collecting at least a few precious rocks) to prevent the scratching motion seems to be more effective.

Get out and enjoy the variable weather!

Columbia chinook season re-opens

Fishery managers from Oregon and Washington re-opened the chinook salmon season on the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam, effective May 15. Anglers will also be able to retain steelhead and sockeye.

Better than expected returns of chinook salmon prompted the decision to reopen the season, which closed April 20.

A multi-jurisdictional task force of government and tribal biologists boosted their forecast of returning chinook salmon to 210,000, up from 198,400 chinook forecast last fall.

"For the first time since 2007, we have a run update that is going to let us open a late-spring chinook season," said Chris Kern, assistant manager of ODFW's Columbia River Fisheries Program. "This also allows us to get an early start on fishing for summer

steelhead between the I-5 Bridge and Bonneville. That area doesn't usually open until June 16."

The daily bag limit will be two adult salmon/steelhead in combination, of which only one may be an adult chinook. Chinook salmon and steelhead must be adipose fin-clipped to be retained; the fin clip requirement does not apply to sockeye. Fishing from boats will be allowed from the Tongue Point/Rocky Point line near Astoria, upstream to Beacon Rock, approximately five miles downstream from Bonneville Dam. Bank fishing will be permitted all the way up to Bonneville Dam.

Above Bonneville, the season remains closed but the agencies will be reviewing the opportunity to provide additional fishing in these areas, pending updates later in May.

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.

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.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor John D. Murray
359 "A" Street, Vernonia
503 860-3860
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Ralph Young, Pastor
957 State Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-6790
Sunday Bible Classes 9:00 a.m.
Family Praise & Worship 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer 6:30 p.m.
Thursday Ladies Study 7:00 p.m.
Nursery 10:15 a.m.
Vernonia Community Preschool

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)
Various Home Group Meetings

PIONEER BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

John Cahill, Pastor
939 Bridge Street, Vernonia
503-429-1161
www.pbffalive.com
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Thursday 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.