

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
Columbia County Master Gardener



How can it possibly be mold season again already?! It's weird to be thankful for cooler damper air when we had so little real heat. Only two days at my house with temperatures in excess of 90. Getting back to the seventies feels good.

I'm afraid we've settled into the all too familiar pattern of 40-60 degree, mostly overcast days and nights. My opinion, we'll still get some nice warm days you may be able to take advantage of, but here in our valley bowl we will continue to collect overcast for at least part of most days. I don't think it will actually freeze for a while yet, but I've been wrong on that before. It can be a passive-aggressive way to reduce the number of plants I have to find places for indoors.

I heard the dreaded words "Pineapple Express" on a weather report this morning and couldn't but help a shudder. For the uninitiated, the Pineapple Express is warm moisture-laden air that streams straight across the ocean, collecting moisture all the way, and dumping it into the Pacific Northwest every few years. Depending on the timing, the resultant rainfall amounts can be devastating. Not too much chance of that when it's been so dry, but watch for rising streams and lots of run-off. The ground is far too dry to absorb much water, especially if it comes down really fast. By the time you read this, you will all know how prepared you were for the first real rain of the season, expected to arrive Sunday the 18th. Maybe passive-aggressive behavior is induced by our teasing climate, a way to help us deal with all the garden chores that simply never get done.

Gardeners across the globe watch the weather. Oregonians in general and Oregonian gardeners are obsessed with the weather. It is always a dependable

topic of conversation. This is true because the 'weather' can be so different from one place to another as your move through the landscape of your day, and as the day progresses. It's become obvious over the last couple of years, that the microclimate in my yard has changed dramatically because of the trees around us growing to a more mature height and blocking a large percentage of sun from the yard.

Trees, in general, grow really, really well here so be careful what you plant. If you live with existing conifers be aware of their eventual domination of large portions of the landscape – this may not make you a favorite neighbor on a small lot. The big firs are a lot easier to get rid of when they're small. You can also prune them into submission for a while and grow your own Christmas tree, but you *have* to commit to annual pruning. Or, look for a cultivar that can provide you with an evergreen in your landscape without taking over the neighborhood. You just have to be able to consult with your local nurseryman or do a little research to find the right variety for your conditions, then find and be able to afford an alternative.

My poor garden was extremely stressed this year. During the first hottish weather we had, we did not have irrigation water for the garden. I wrote last month about watching the onions swell visibly, even when we were packing in watering cans from the house – the response to regular irrigation has been amazing. In all these years, this is only the second time I've managed to grow a decent onion crop. The chicken has scratched several promising specimens out of the ground though – darn her!

The fertile, watered garden has inspired one of the chickens to fly over the fence resulting in significant damage to much of the garden. She uncovered most of the potatoes, which were ready to harvest anyway, but disappointing. She complete-

ly decimated my late planting of basil, which was just starting to look like plants instead of seedlings. She also has us both so frustrated at chasing her out that we don't even bother anymore. She doesn't seem to be doing much more actual damage in the garden. She may even be doing some good by eating bugs, though I'm sure she's more interested in worms. She has not been inclined to mess with the trellised cucumbers or the pole beans. However, she's discovered the gravel which leads to the road. This usually does not work out well for the bird.

Time to go pick a bath of slightly overripe pole beans. A good crop this year, I love fresh green beans cooked in a bunch of different ways, beginning with steamed just enough to get limp and served with a good sauce, or stir-fried hot and served with almonds or chopped bacon or...? If we get enough to freeze, I can look forward to a green bean-based stroganoff. Yum!

BOLI announces 2012 wage rate

Oregon's minimum wage will rise to \$8.80 per hour next year. The 30-cent increase mirrors a 3.77% increase in the Consumer Price Index since August 2010. Oregon's minimum wage rate remains at \$8.50 per hour for all hours worked in 2011. Washington, where the minimum wage is currently \$8.67 per hour, will announce its 2012 minimum wage on September 30.

"Safeguarding the wages of low-income workers is especially critical in a tough economy," said state Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. "Oregon's economy will not rebound if we allow 144,538 minimum wage earners to fall behind inflation."

Ballot Measure 25, enacted by Oregon voters in 2002, requires a minimum wage adjustment annually, based on changes in inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is directed to adjust the minimum wage for inflation every September, rounded to the nearest five cents.

"During my tenure, BOLI has fought to return nearly \$12 million to Oregonians unfairly denied their wages or faced with discrimination," Avakian continued. "Thousands of Oregon families are fighting to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads by working full-time at minimum wage jobs and this agency is committed to defending their wages."

Oregon is one of ten states, with Washington, Vermont, Ohio, Nevada, Montana, Missouri, Florida, Colorado, and Arizona, that adjusts the minimum wage annually based on inflation and the CPI. The CPI, published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, is a measure of the average change in prices over time for a fixed "market basket" of goods and services, such as food, shelter, medical care, transportation fares and other goods and services people purchase for day-to-day living.

"Oregonians recognize the rising cost of living facing every one of us, and our strong minimum wage law is essential insurance that Oregon workers and their families can maintain their purchasing power and continue to contribute to our local economies," said Avakian. "At the same time, although five out of six Oregon employers don't offer minimum wage jobs, I know that it's important to continue my dialogue with the businesses, many of them small operations, that do. Understanding their challenges will benefit our entire economy."

Revised minimum wage posters reflecting the new rate will be available for free download from BOLI's website in December. That site, which includes additional information about all of BOLI's activities, is <http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI>.

Church Directory

<p>VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH</p> <p>Carl Pense, Pastor 850 Madison Avenue, Vernonia 503 429-1103 Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m. Children's Sunday School</p>	<p>FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>PIONEER BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP</p> <p>John Cahill, Pastor 939 Bridge Street, Vernonia 503-429-1161 www.pbfalife.com Sunday School 9:45 a.m. Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m. Thursday Prayer 7:00 p.m.</p>
<p>SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST</p> <p>Larry Gibson, Pastor 2nd Ave. and Nehalem St., Vernonia 503 429-8301 Morning Worship, 11:00 a.m. Sabbath School 9:30 a.m.</p>	<p>VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH</p> <p>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</p>	<p>NEHALEM VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>ASSEMBLY OF GOD</p> <p>Wayne and Maureen Marr 662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia, 503 429-0373 Sunday School 9:45 a.m. Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.</p>	<p>VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH</p> <p>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</p>	<p>CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH</p> <p>Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator 960 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia 503 429-8841 Mass Sunday 12:00 Noon Religious Educ. Sunday 10:30 a.m.</p>		