

## Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson  
Columbia County Master Gardener



So, back to waiting for the sun to come out long enough to have a preventive spray dry. Humpf! Not atypical weather for this time of year, but one can't help feel slightly cheated by our two days of temperatures in excess of 90 de-

grees.

Garden report: Tomatoes – none, except a few Sun Golds which all split as soon as the rain started. The only things in the garden that did well this year were the green pole beans (still producing), cucumbers planted after the early broccoli came out, and the onions planted around the garlic.

This month the garden and yard are all about clean up, reducing the spread of our various molds, mildews and blights, and planting garlic and/or over-wintering ground covers. Cleaning up and removing the dead and dying foliage increases air circulation and helps reduce slime habitat, both vegetative and moluscula. Though too early for a dormant spray, if you pick all your apples you can begin the biweekly copper spray that will greatly reduce black spot, scab and powdery mildew. I saw some fields of squash that looked like they had been frosted but, on closer examination, proved to have succumbed to a solid white coating of mildew.

A few days ago, a gardening friend told me that the best thing you can do for your garden is keep a journal. Note in your garden diary what did well and why, including where you planted it. While I firmly believe that keeping such a journal would be enormously helpful, I've never been able to manage it. I always believe I will remem-

ber where I planted stuff. In the spring I'm back reviewing these musings to try and figure it out. An organized garden journal would keep track of all the stuff I want to remember, and record the results. There are lots of printed journals, how-to-keep-a-journal book, blank books and computer programs that can help you begin your journal. Or not.

It is past time to bring in the house plants you plan to save. Geraniums root well from cuttings taken now to live in your SUNNY window and provide a bit of flavor for the winter. Growing herbs indoors is a challenge because they are all tremendous sun lovers. My two 5-foot by 4-inch south-facing window sill is filled quickly, but I'm determined to try to keep some thyme growing inside this year, too. When last year's potted basil tried to expire, I took cuttings. A basil with a hard brown trunk that shows sudden collapse and does not immediately recover with water, will survive only through its cuttings or clones. For some reason, the trunk hardens to the point where it will not transport water. Cuttings taken quickly, from above the hard trunk, will root readily in water or in soil with a bit of rooting hormone. One strong little cutting grew in its four-inch pot all summer. When first potted, watering it took some patience because the soil filled the pot. Now, nearly one half-inch of that soil that has disappeared into plant and the air. It really is miraculous!

I'm also trying to root some more of my "Escargot" begonia, since I sold the giant my previous plant had become – I simply could not imagine a place for it indoors. The great semi-annual moving of the plants has begun – though moving of furniture has to be accommodated at the same time. Groom plants carefully before bringing them inside – tiny shriveled tree frogs are just sad. I've known only one woman who managed to keep her frog alive in her bathroom plants (she had lots of light), but I don't think

most of us want to share our bathwater with a frog no matter how cute. In addition, there are a host of pests that plants can battle outside that become problems in the dry, close indoor environment. These include spider mites, white flies, scale and others that can ravage an indoor plant. Try to give plants as little shock as possible – moving on a day when the temperature and moisture are close is advantageous. Plants will need to have watering adjusted to meet the new environment.

Now is also the time to apply agricultural lime to the garden and begin the process of creating a soil climate where micronutrients are available in the spring. Whatever you do, don't leave soil completely uncovered. It will grow several fine crops of winter weeds that will be troublesome in the spring and/or get beaten to death by the rain. Rain will also leach most of the nitrogen that you painstakingly supplied to your garden in the form of manure, before it's needed next spring. If you are trying to 'hot' compost to destroy seeds you must provide some cover or it simply won't warm up enough. Fallen leaves (except for oak and walnut) or the junk from the gutters are both relatively seed free and make a fine top cover.

Another alternative is to plant a green manure crop. Fava beans, red clover and other species will grow slowly throughout the winter. When it comes time to plant they can either be tilled or chopped into the soil early in the season, where they will release the nitrogen they have fixed in a form available to plants. Later in the season, after the green manure crop is more mature, they can be pulled up wholesale, leaving a nearly perfect seedbed ready for planting. The 'used' green manure plants can then be dried and used as garden mulch. Fava beans are good to eat, a staple in some countries, if harvested at the correct time before the seed shells become to hard.

It's also time to find, clean and sharpen garden tools before they are lost. Perhaps you don't have a grandchild you are trying to encourage to garden, but I have enough trouble keeping track of my tools without the help of small hands leaving (or throwing) tools all over the yard. If you get enough dry weather, it's also a good time to paint or oil garden structures and benches.

Still time for transplanting and dividing. Be sure that you create a new home for these new or replanted items with the best drainage you can develop. There is a great difference between a plant that sits in soggy soil and freezes into solid water, and one that has that little bit of air in the soil where roots might be protected from freezing. It's drainage that makes the difference. Adding large quantities of organic matter, quarter minus rock, elevating in a pot, or using potting soil in a raised bed all increase drainage. Remember that pots need extra shelter from very cold weather, particularly cold wind, because the roots are more exposed to killing temperatures.

**Frost** – The first kiss of winter that kills the foliage of begonias, squash, tomatoes, impatiens, spider plants, etc. Hasn't happened yet at my house, but there's snow in the Cascades. Sometimes you can save a tuberous begonia if you get it out of the ground before a **Killing Freeze** – Knocks everything annual out of the picture and creates a lot of slime to deal with if you haven't sanitized yet. Typically, the ground itself will freeze at night but thaws during the day and can be quite pleasant to work, even if it is raining. Then comes the true cold of deep winter where the ground will stay frozen all day, sometimes for a few days or even a couple of weeks, and sometimes hardly at all. When 35-degrees starts to feel warm you know it's deep winter.

Try to get a few bulbs potted for winter forcing. Crowd bulbs into pots with just enough space to get soil under and around them and water in well. A pretty mulch of colored rocks is nice. Keep in the dark and above freezing, as in a pump house or garage. Make sure they stay moist until they begin to poke through the soil. Gradually move to a warmer, brighter environment, and add a bit of liquid fertilizer with your watering. There are lots of varieties of bulbs including daffodils, crocus or tulips that will force (bloom early) as long as you do not let them dry out. Nothing is more cheerful than a bright, fragrant pot of bright yellow blooms when the snow is deep outside. Depending on type, most of these bulbs can be planted outside, but may take several years to recover and bloom again.

## Church Directory

<p><b>VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH</b></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><b>FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH</b></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><b>PIONEER BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP</b></p> <p>John Cahill, Pastor 939 Bridge Street, Vernonia 503-429-1161 www.pbfalive.com Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m. Thursday Prayer 7:00 p.m.</p>
<p><b>SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST</b></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><b>VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH</b></p> <p>Ralph Young, Pastor 957 State Avenue, Vernonia 503 429-6790 Sunday Bible Classes 9:00 a.m. Family Praise &amp; 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><b>NEHALEM VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH</b></p> <p>Gary Taylor, Pastor Grant &amp; 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><b>ASSEMBLY OF GOD</b></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><b>VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH</b></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 &amp; Family Center) Various Home Group Meetings</p>	<p><b>CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS</b></p> <p>Marc Farmer, Branch President 1350 E. Knott Street, Vernonia 503 429-7151 Sacrament Meeting, Sunday 10 a.m. Sunday School &amp; Primary 11:20 a.m. Relief Society, Priesthood and Young Women, Sunday 12:10 p.m.</p>
<p><b>ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH</b></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>		