

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
Columbia County Master Gardener



I'm having a terrible time figuring out what to write about this month. I mean really, it's November and there are still sooooo many leaves on the trees. Even the maples haven't completely lost their leaves, not to mention the big cherry trees next to the house.

They are losing their leaves so slowly that, so far, the worms have been able to keep up with pulling them under the earth. It looks like it's been raked but I don't think it has. Or it could be that the grass is quite long, since the mower died. Fortunately, it expired just as the grass was becoming truly summer dormant and now it will be too wet to mow until spring. Yet another narrow victory over the forces of chaos.

Not that you can ever really get ahead. There's always another project you can get started on. I still have begonias in the ground that I hope to get out, and several cuttings and or repotting that needs to be done. Though there was one day this month that was a virtual flurry of bringing in the plants, it's been very mild. The ground has not frozen yet and everything just continues to turn brown and slimy. Not much fall color this year, though there is more at higher elevations. It certainly feels to me that we get closer and closer to a zone 8 than a zone 7 every year.

For example, my asparagus ferns are still outside in their pots, one is hanging and the other, a sturdier rounder structure called "Foxtail", is in a standing pot. Neither is hardy outside, unprotected, especially in a pot that is vulnerable to freezing. However, I want to minimize their time indoors. This year I'm going to let them stay outside until the foliage freezes to ground-level, though I will have to bring the hanging one down to earth and give it more shelter from the wind. I could bring them inside, after cutting them back to the

ground, where they will (hopefully) dry out and go dormant for a couple of months. OR I could put in a small amount of effort and staple a piece of my trusty frost blanket material along the sunny side of the house to create a microclimate that gives me that critical one heat zone. All of this effort to avoid the nasty mess they make all winter long as they gradually lose their needles onto whatever is under them. I'm hoping that I can start watering them some time in February and get nice foliage that will stay intact until it's time for next summer's vacation. Wish me luck!

If you want blooms indoors this winter, you can "force" many bulbs to do your bidding. A good start is with three healthy daffodil bulbs in a five-inch round pot. Cover them lightly with soil and water them in. Then store your pots in a cool, dark place until the bulbs begin to grow. Bring them into the sun when they emerge from the soil. Decorative materials can also be used as long as you maintain the water level and do the whole process in bright light.

Forcing does not feed bulbs the same way that growing in the ground does. This is especially true if you want to try the dramatic presentation of bulbs grown seemingly out of thin air from a bed of marbles or stones. There are even special glass vases for amaryllis that allow the bulb to sit just above the surface of the water beneath. Sometimes they will grow successfully in the garden strongly enough to flower again in the future, if they get lots of sun and fertilizer. The problem of course is that, after they flower, those bulbs want to grow lots of thick juicy leaves and they simply can't do that when crowded into a pot. I've had amaryllis rebloom successfully after a summer in the garden (on their schedule instead of mine) and I've had daffodils that survived in the ground to rebloom even though they are not supposed to be hardy. Exotic bulbs last for only two to five years anyway.

Most daffodils are not exotic here and, once you plant them, you will always have

them unless you mow over them or poison them. Eventually they make big clumps that have to be dug up and divided, giving you ever more daffodils to spread across the landscape. I wish I had more determination to propagate the forsythia – I think if I put it on the road side of the hedge (major undertaking) I might be able to get a wall of bright yellow in spring – extending the daffodils currently up there and accented by the blooming forsythia. Amazing if they all bloomed together.

One more caveat about daffodils – I've learned not to plant them as deeply as recommended. It's usually recommended to plant them 6-8 inches deep and I like mine better at about 4 inches. In my heavy damp clay, they bloom earlier and are easier to dig up to divide when needed. I've had to dig down over a foot to get bulbs out after several years of mulching. You will know they need to be divided when you get a big clump of foliage in the spring with only one or two blooms out of it.

Happy cleaning up – outside and in, keeping the vermin out of the house, and getting ready for the holidays.

P.S. The night I completed the draft of this column, we got a cold snap, just before we are supposed to get a big dose of rain. With a little wind and rain, the remaining leaves should fall so we all can finish our raking!

Master Gardener™ plan classes

The OSU Master Gardener™ course will be offered in St. Helens starting Monday, January 9, through March 12. Classes meet from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with an hour lunch break.

The program will be held at the OSU Columbia County Extension office in St. Helens. Cost of the series is \$75.00. Topics include vegetable gardening, insect identification, botany, plant problem diagnosis, fruits and berries, lawn

management, weed identification and management, pesticide safety and plant propagation.

Students completing the course are expected to volunteer at least 60 hours on community horticultural projects. For more information, or to register, call the extension office at 503-397-3462 or email Chip Bubl at chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu or Vicki Krenz at vicki.krenz@oregonstate.edu.

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.pbfalive.com Sunday School 9:30 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>

Westport transit link now open

Columbia County Rider Transportation and Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD) have re-established bus connections at Westport.

The service will run Monday through Friday with two trips per day. Rider pickup and drop off in Westport is located at the North side Bus stop on Hwy 30, just east of the Berry Patch restaurant.

Jay Flint, SETD's new director said, "The SETD Board of Commissioners is very pleased to announce the return of bus service along Hwy 30 from Warrenton to Westport, and to link back up with the CC Rider in Columbia County. This will bring back some much-needed service to many of our east

county residents."

"By re-opening this service, riders can again ride from Portland or Longview through Columbia County to the Oregon Coast once again. We are very excited about re-opening this service and encourage everyone to try it out," said Janet Wright, CCRider Director.

For a schedule of times, pickup points and fares, riders can call CCRider dispatch at 503-366-0159, or go to the website at www.columbiacountyrider.com. Information about the service is also available from SETD's website at: answers@ridethebus.org or by calling 503-861-7433 (RIDE). Riders can also connect with CCRider on Twitter @rider_cc.