

## 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 lowly gardener to determine what and when to accomplish certain tasks. 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 have ducks mostly in another area, letting them in to the garden for dinner at dusk. Our biggest problem was that the ducks would discover 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 there, and ducks are not smart about cars and trucks. As to her 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/Slugs Brochure/pdf](http://www.slugcontrol.rothamsted.ac.uk/Slugs%20Brochure/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 feed-

ing area of the garden, making it a continuous battle.

I not only made it to the master Gardeners Plant Sale but I managed to keep my blinders on ( helped by the fact that I was supposed to be here, not in St. Helens). I spent less than \$20 total 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 a 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, plus a patio tomato I planted 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 always ended up squished together.

The potatoes: Russian Banana, one of the most prolific potatoes 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 that has a delicious white meat and a very small seed cavity; a Rondo, another 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 (but NOT the tomatoes). Splitting up the six-packs into individual plants means I can work these amendments into each individual planting hole. My measuring tool is my thin trowel and I use a full scoop of ash and a small half scoop of the blood meal. The climbing peas got the same treatment, though worked throughout the soil with a rake.

Waiting for a prescription and reading the American Horticultural Society magazine I was astonished to

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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 specialized 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 still 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 talked about) has been tremendously successful. This year I've bought all my seed locally – several stores have seed racks – and generally 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.

Our 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 of inches of compost mulch (purchased unfortunately) I added a series of thin bent-over 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 sinuous self out. This did not work by itself, evidence showed. However, the addition of several largish rocks to prevent the scratching motion seems to be more effective.

Get out and enjoy the varied weather. Remember your sunscreen, stretching before and after just like any exercise and try to keep up with the lawn.

## 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.

### COVENANT CHURCH VERNONIA

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.pbfalive.com](http://www.pbfalive.com)  
Sunday School 9:30 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 9:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship 10:45 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.



*Plant & Garden Sale  
Vernonia Senior Center*

*Two Days Only!*

*June 1st & 2nd*

*From 9am to 4pm*

*Herbs, Annuals, Perennials,  
Planted pots, Baskets,  
House plants & More.*

*446 Bridge St. Vernonia*