



Country Living

Provided to you by the

OSU Extension Service Columbia County

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August 2023

Programs for you . . .

Listen to the **Gardening Spot** on KOHI (1600 am) radio - Every Saturday, 8:05 to 8:15 a.m.

Chat with Chip: No Chat this month.

August 3rd: Columbia County Beekeepers Monthly meeting. Briane Fakler will talk on what to do in the hive during the low nectar cycle and how to prepare the bees for winter survivability. Thursday, August 3rd at 7pm meeting at the Saint Helens Extension Office or by Zoom. Please email for the zoom link. All are welcome. Columbiacountyoregonbeekeepers@gmail.com

August 15th: Saving Seed from the Garden. The talk will be at the St. Helens Library on 375 S. 18th on Tuesday, August 15th at 5:30 to 6:30p.m.. Chip Bubl will be the speaker. The talk will cover vegetables and other plants that can be saved (and those that can't), how to treat saved seeds, how to store them, and how to get them ready for sowing and planting.

Farmers Markets Opening!

Use the <https://www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org/in-person-markets> to find one near you!



Oregon State University
Extension Service
Columbia County

Chip Bubl

Chip Bubl, OSU Extension Faculty, Agriculture

Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources, Family and Community Health, 4-H Youth, Forestry, and Extension Sea Grant programs. Oregon State University, United States Department of Agriculture, and Columbia county cooperating. The Extension Service offers its programs and materials equally to all people.

In the garden

Seed saving class in St. Helens

There will be a class on seed saving. It will cover vegetables and other plants that can be saved (and those that can't), how to treat seeds, how to store them, and getting them ready for sowing and planting.

The talk will be at the St. Helens

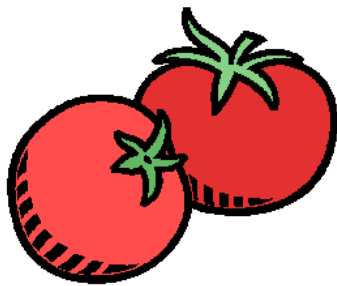
Library on 375 S. 18th at 5:30 to 6:30. I will be the speaker.



Vegetable problems that aren't due to disease or insects

Tomatoes that don't turn red: This has been a common complaint this season. It is mainly an issue of patience, with, perhaps some quirky weather thrown in. The point of every fruit, be it a pear, raspberry, or tomato, is to become attractive to critters that will eat the fruit and thus, scatter their genes (seeds) all over the place.

Tomatoes go through stages which convert starches into sugars, reduce the acidity, and turn soft, red, and yummy! It takes between 40-60 days starting with pollination and fruit set for a tomato to go through this transformation. Weather (too cold or too hot) does affect it. Recently, we have been right in the tomato "sweet spot" weather-wise, with lows in the



60s and highs in the mid-80s. So soon, you impatient gardeners, you will be getting an abundance of the vine ripened tomatoes you crave.

Disappearing new seedlings or transplants:

Early in the season, this can be due to slugs, flea beetles (especially on cabbage family plants) or young cucumber beetles (quite a few crops). But now, it more likely due to that food chomping menace, the slug, or another less predictable one, field mice. Bait for slugs should be your first step. But if that doesn't seem to stop things, figure out a safe way to place traps for the field mice. Often, just a couple of mice (starting, no doubt, to raise a family) are the culprits.

Plants bolting to seed: Plants that don't produce fruit (like tomatoes) still make seed and have a variety of ways to get them into your garden. Some vegetables have a very quick cycle like radishes and cilantro. The trick with radishes is to plant small rows and repeat every week if you love radishes. Once they "bolt" to seed, they are woody and inedible. Cilantro is another story. It has a sweet spot of temperatures (not too hot, not too cold) so they are harder to manage as we get into summer. And when summers start earlier now (90 degree temps in June), it may become harder to grow cilantro. This is one plant that you might let it bolt to seed. The bees of all types love the flowers and the seed is delicious (coriander).

A lot of cabbage family transplants bolted to seed this spring way before they produced the crop you were expecting (early broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and other transplants). The only way to manage this is to keep them continuously warm in a green house or a row cover tunnel until the too hot and too cold periods have passed.

Lettuce bolts to seed if it gets too hot for too long (in their opinion) or they just age out. Bolted plants are bitter and produce a seed stalk. Some varieties *Cherokee* and *Manoa*, are slower to bolt and breeders are working on more. But it isn't easy to reset a deeply important plant function like reproducing themselves. And if we found a slow bolting lettuce, it might be difficult to get enough seed for farmers and gardeners to plant.



Kohlrabi that won't bulb: This one is a bit unusual. Generally, kohlrabi are very reliable. It is important to harvest at the right time or the "bulbs" (they are not real bulbs like onions) can turn woody.

But no "bulbs" at all? The best guess is that they were very well taken care of (all the water and fertilizer they could want) but perhaps they got too much of a good thing and/or, perhaps they



were planted too close together. The client described very lush plants with big leaves.

They could have shaded themselves enough to slow the "bulbing" trigger. Wider spacing within the row (6 to 8 inches) and between rows (18 inches) might have helped.

It is also possible that with the disrupted supply chains we have had, it wasn't kohlrabi seed at all but rather another cabbage family plant like collards that got mixed up in the seed company warehouse.

A really bad mistake is that the seed of the kohlrabi had been crossed with other cabbage family plant where they had been grown for seed and the seed company was unaware of it. This and mixing up seed in the warehouse are serious issues and if the seed was sent to a commercial grower, the company is responsible and would have to pay for the crop that didn't grow.

Tiny, gnarly, and/or misshapen carrots:

Carrots are very particular. They prefer nice, well-drained soil, consistent watering, even feeding (fertilizing), and no field mice.

When they don't consistently get the first three items, they grow in fits and starts. The carrots turn out to be forked, blunted and/or otherwise distorted. Nice soil texture is the most

difficult to fix and here, often requires raised beds in the fairly heavy clay soils we have lots of.



Consistent even watering and periodic fertilizing is up to the gardener and is not so difficult.

Carrots need to be thinned! Left growing very tight together and **not in rows with good spacing**, leads to very tiny, skinny carrots. They don't play well together since each car-

rot is shading another carrot and few are getting enough sun to build the perfect carrot. So plant in rows and thin some or plant in blocks and thin a lot.

Field mice are great fans of your carrots. They don't care if your carrots aren't perfect. To them, they are wonderful. They eat them, leaving the crown and foliage and nothing down below. Start trapping.

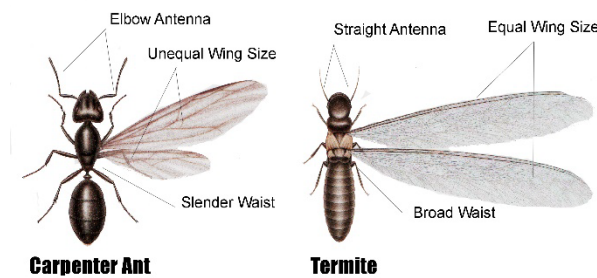
Finally, there is an insect called the carrot rust fly that lays eggs in the soil at the top of the carrot. The little maggots work their way into the ground and start nibbling on your carrots. Often, the carrots also start to rot where they have been feeding. Best control is to cover your carrot bed with row cover, which excludes the rust flies.

Mole food

What do moles eat? All the literature is clear on one point. Earthworms make up about 75% of the diet of the coast and Townsend moles that live in Columbia County. Most of the remainder of the food menu are grubs and other soil living creatures.

But do moles eat plants? The popular perception is that moles will eat some plants, especially tulips and iris. Within the scientific community, opinion is divided. One author, after examining mole stomachs, concluded that shredded vegetation found inside moles came from the "crops" (stomachs) of the earthworms they had consumed. He came down unequivocally in favor of meadow mice, which will occupy abandoned mole runways, doing all the damage.

Another author, also after looking at mole bellies, thought that moles might consume a small amount of plant material.



Carpenter Ant

Termite

I tend to side with the first author but don't discount the possibility that moles might occasionally broaden their diet to include a few selected plants. Who says that there isn't much left for science to discover!

Termites fly in August

The reproductive forms of the subterranean and dampwood termites fly this time of year to mate. Fertilized queens drop to earth, shed their wings and look for a suitable home. Suitable is the key. A dampwood termite requires continuously wet wood. If there is no dirt piled up against your house or leaking pipes in the wall or floor spaces, you don't have to worry about the dampwood termite. They can't live there. If you have a dampwood colony, correct the source of moisture and replace the damaged wood. No further treatment should be necessary.

The subterranean termite is more devious. It must have moisture. But it can conduct moisture up mud tubes from the earth into your house structure. Crawl under your house once a year to look for these tubes that may travel up foundations or posts that support the floor joists. If subterranean termites are found, an insecticide will need to be used to control the colony.

Don't get sold a tent job to control termites. They are used for the drywood termite, which is not found here. It shouldn't be necessary to tent in Western Oregon.

Finally, remember that carpenter ants are a much greater risk to the home. They are less specialized about the wood they inhabit and can do a lot of damage. Have your house inspected if you think there might be problems.

August OSU Extension garden hints

Planning

- Dampwood termites begin flying late this month. Make sure your home is free of wet wood or places where wood and soil are in contact.
- All of Oregon: Optimal time for establishing a new lawn is August through Mid-September.

Maintenance and Clean Up

- Make compost of lawn clippings and garden plants that are ready to be recycled. Don't use clippings if lawn has been treated with herbicide, including "weed-and-feed" products.
- Fertilize cucumbers, summer squash, and broccoli to maintain production while you continue harvesting.
- Clean and fertilize strawberry beds.
- Use mulch to protect ornamentals and garden plants from hot weather damage. If needed, provide temporary shade, especially for recent plantings.
- Camellias need deep watering to develop flower buds for next spring.
- Prune raspberries, boysenberries, and other caneberries after harvest.
- Monitor garden irrigation closely so crops and ornamentals don't dry out.
- If a green lawn is desired, make sure lawn areas are receiving adequate water (approximately 0.5 to 1.5 inches per week from June through August). Deep watering less often is more effective than frequent shallow watering.

Planting/Propagation

- Plant winter cover crops in vacant space in the vegetable garden.
- Plant winter kale, Brussels sprouts, turnips, parsnips, parsley, and Chinese cabbage.
- Mid-summer planting of peas; use enation-virus-resistant varieties, plant fall crops of cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli.

- Plant cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, spinach, turnips, and parsnips.

Pest Monitoring and Management

- Continue monitoring peaches, plums, prunes, figs, fall-bearing raspberries and strawberries, and other plants that produce soft fruits and berries for Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD).
- Check apple maggot traps; spray tree if needed.
- Control yellowjackets and wasps with traps and lures as necessary. Keep in mind they are beneficial insects and help control pest insects in the home garden.
- Watch for corn earworm on early corn--treat as needed.
- Control caterpillars on leafy vegetables, as needed, with *Bt-k*, or by hand picking and removal.
- For mite control on ornamentals and most vegetables, hose off foliage, spray with approved miticide if necessary.
- Remove cankered limbs from fruit and nut trees for control of diseases such as apple anthracnose and bacterial canker of stone fruit. Sterilize tools before each new cut.
- Corn may need protection from earworm. Spray new silks with appropriate pesticides if necessary.
- Spray potatoes and tomatoes for early and late blight. It must be done ahead of a serious rain to be effective.

Oregon State University Extension Service encourages sustainable gardening practices. Always identify and monitor problems before acting. First consider cultural controls; then physical, biological, and chemical controls (which include insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, botanical insecticides, organic and synthetic pesticides). Always consider the least toxic approach first. For more information, contact the Columbia County Extension 503 397-3462

The semi-natural world

Why it is so hard to grow a flowering “native” meadow

No plant landscape stays static. Some landscapes change very slowly if it is in a very hot or very cold climate and/or if the location is short on water.

None of those conditions exist in Columbia County. We are basically a temperate rain forest. All kinds of plants grow with great vigor.

The creation (and maintenance) of a flowering meadow is one of the more complex landscape challenges from installation through maintenance. Most have failed, depending a bit on what and where they were planted.

The seed burden in the soil can be a serious issue. Many plants, native or non-native grow and leave seeds for future generations. They will pop up if you do any tilling of the land before planting your native plant seeds or started plants. And tilling for a new seedbed is generally required if you are planting non-woody plants.

Some use what is called a “stale” seedbed. The ground is tilled and watered. Nothing is planted but “weed” seeds will emerge and are lightly tilled to clean up the near surface. Sometimes, it is tilled and watered and then



covered with black plastic so the seeds germinate but get no light and die. If there are perennial grasses on the site, it can help reduce their populations.

But most important in my observations is that meadows with any installed plants that aren't perennial are bound to see them die in a sea of grass. Most grasses grow all winter and take the space so an annual broadleaf

plant trying to come back from seed each year is generally not at all competitive. The grasses we are talking about are non-native species that the native plants that you want never had to face before European botanical colonization. They blow in or are easily tracked onto to any area that you are working on.

Our native grasses also generally can't compete with European grass species. So what can you do?

One option is to use perennial broadleaf plants only and use the windows in mid-fall to winter when the new shoots haven't come

up but the grass is there, to control the grass (and visible likely non-native winter annuals and biennials) with modest to no herbaceous perennial broadleaf plant damage if they aren't yet showing new leaves.

Herbicides are often part of the site preparation process, especially for grass and perennial broadleaf weeds. It requires maybe a year or more of planning and periodic treatment to get a planting space with fewer competitive non-native species.

Glyphosate would probably deliver the best results sprayed over everything. It has no residual activity. In winter, it can take a month or more to see the results.

Second option is to utilize the grass-only herbicides to allow the broadleaf species to strengthen. This can help, depending on the grasses that show up and which grass-only herbicide you are using. Labels will list some of the controlled species but many locations have species susceptibility questions in that they have not really been tested and protocols documented in the kind of projects you are installing. But they are definitely worth a try.

Third option is kind of a long shot but yellow rattle (a native plant) is parasitic on many grasses and is considered a weed when it shows up in pastures that are supporting livestock since it thins the grass out a lot. There has been some modest use of this technique with some promising results but no real protocols yet and seed is hard to come by. Not clear how it interacts (if at all) with broadleaf plants. If interested in yellow rocket, give me a call.

Here is a link that might be helpful: https://wmswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Meadowscaping_Publication_Complete_LR.2.pdf This team has done a lot of projects and learned a lot from both successful sites and failures. Pictures: *Sustainable Overlook.org* and *Camas field by Friends of Liberty Hill*

Yes, we have weasels

Although they are rather elusive, Columbia County has two smallish weasels: the short-tailed weasel (less than 10 inches from head to tail) also called an ermine and the “least” weasel or long tailed weasel which is considerably bigger.



The short-tailed weasel is called an “ermine” because, in snow country, its fur turns completely white in winter. Not here.

Both can show up on rural properties and are rather secretive. The ermine is largely but not completely nocturnal. The least weasel is active at all hours but is most comfortable at night.



They seek deep cover for above ground nest sites. Ermines pair off for at least some period of time and small groups are often found. Groups don’t seem to be part of the larger weasel pattern.

Both use existing mole tunnel systems when hunting. They move very fast. They also hunt on the surface. The least weasel seems to be connected with mountain beaver tunnels but it is not clear whether mountain beaver are prey.

Both are carnivorous predators with voles and deer mice their major foods. The larger weasel will also target chipmunks, ground squirrels, tree squirrels, frogs, and rabbits! “Essence of weasel” (don’t ask!) was once tested as a mole repellent. It worked very

well but was never commercialized. There isn't much evidence about their willingness (or aversion) to eat moles. I don't think moles are a culinary prize for many animals

The larger weasel is the chicken predator. It can climb and wriggle through small gaps in a hen house to get a meal.

Cats do catch ermines but do not do well in a tangle with the larger weasel.



They are important species and should be given respect and not seen as vicious marauders. Pictures: least weasel on pavement: Baldwin; single sort-tailed weasel: Bauschalter.

Farm and livestock notes

The cinnabar moth reappears on tansy ragwort

Many of you have no doubt noticed that tansy ragwort has rebounded in the last four years. This livestock poisoning plant had been laid low through a combination of two biological controls, the cinnabar moth and the tansy flea beetle. Both these insects had been collected from the part of the world where tansy ragwort was native (southern France and northeastern Spain along the Mediterranean). The insects prospered, eating only tansy and a few closely related plants. When the tansy population eventually declined, so did the insects.

Unfortunately, there was plenty of tansy seed left in the soil. Log the property or graze it too hard and the tansy sprang right back. It took a lot longer for the cinnabar moths to return. They don't like wet springs and there is considerable speculation that the moths were hurt by some successive wet spring weather.

While part of this spring was wet, we did have a warm weeks in May. This may have been a critical time for the moths. Or maybe their numbers were increasing anyway. In any case, I saw a lot of moths flying in May and early June and I am getting quite a few reports that there are bunches of caterpillars on the tansy, at least in some locations. The flea beetle probably played a big role as well.

Surprising poisonous plants & livestock

I have given a number of talks on poisonous plants to livestock groups. I have been struck by how many of the worst poisonous plant cases involved cultivated plants.

One awful case involved some ornamentals, particularly yew clippings tossed over a fence to some 6 and 700# steers. Yews are highly toxic and about five steers were dead within two hours. The take-home message is don't feed landscape trimmings or even garden plants to your stock unless you really know there will be no problems.

A problem with foals in Kentucky showed how natural events could change the poison balance. That spring, there was a remarkably high fatality rate in late-term foals. It had happened before, but no one could figure out what was happening.

This time, they did. It turned out that it coincided with a large outbreak of the Eastern tent caterpillar. A common food for the tent caterpillar is black cherry. Black cherries, in turn when they are fed on, produce cyanide compounds in the leaves as a response to stress. Eventually, researchers figured out that there were so many tent caterpillars dropping fecal matter with undigested stomach contents that contained cyanide-rich cherry leaves. When pregnant mares grazed the fecal matter on grass under the trees, they got enough cyanide to kill their foals.

For you livestock owners who have gardens, don't think all the food is good for them to eat. Squash are notorious for having seed genes that make the next generation pumpkin or winter squash bitter and poisonous. Volunteer squash should always be cooked before being fed to livestock. Some years ago, a very nice pig died from uncooked squash.

More cattle feeding

It is time to plan for feeding protein supplementation in winter beef feeding. We are often forced to cut our hay late in the grass maturity cycle. This can take hay protein levels down to 5% and really reduce the digestibility. Such hay simply is not a satisfactory feed by itself for a pregnant cow, a nursing cow, a growing heifer, or any animal needing to do something more than maintain itself. If you add in the impact of cold and wet conditions, the effect of an inadequate diet on stock can be severe.



When we feed more protein, we increase the nutrients available to the rumen bacteria which in turn increase in number and do a better job of turning the hay into digestible energy and protein. Grain alone will not provide enough extra protein to jump-start those bacteria. Alfalfa hay mixed 50/50 with local hay or free-choice grass hay plus 3-4 pounds per head per day of a 16% dairy ration (a grain mix with boosted protein) will do the trick. Don't use a cattle ration with either sheep or goats as the copper content may be too high for them.

Where Do Grazing Livestock Fit?

Many speculate that diet of the future will have little meat and dairy protein and will instead be dominated by vegetables, grains, and beans. It is true that it now is relatively energy inefficient to produce beef. There is a lot of speculation that the next real run-up in energy prices will start to price red-meat protein out of the market. This underestimates the inventiveness of farmers and misunderstands the role that beef and sheep have in the agricultural world.



The best use of grazing animals is on land that is not well suited for more intensive agricultural production. Most of the hill lands in Columbia County is either good timber ground or decent pasture land. As you look around the U.S., there is a lot of land that fits that description. Much of it is not being used to its potential, in part due to the relatively low costs of feed grains. As energy costs rise, I believe there will be a transition to more intensively managed grasslands and less grain-fed finishing. Yet the ability of beef, sheep, and goats to convert "rough" forage into protein will ensure them a significant role in the diet of Americans well into the future.

Is it best to plant just one pasture grass?

A mix of grasses is often selectively grazed, with the most palatable grass removed first. This can lead to a less productive pasture. The best advice from the people who know is to plant several clovers and only one vigorous grass.



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or call 503-397-3462. Thank you!

Food Preservation

Summer is here and with it comes garden and farm fresh produce! OSU has resources to help you preserve your foods safely.

Monthly food preservation classes are held at the NEW Columbia Pacific Food Bank building on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. Check out all the offerings and register at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/columbia-pacific-food-bank-653559>

As canning season gets underway, the Food Safety and Preservation hotline from Oregon State University Extension Service is taking calls. The toll-free hotline, 800-354-7319, runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, until Oct. 13. When the hotline is closed, callers can leave a message. The hotline is staffed by certified Master Food Preserver volunteers. The volunteers fielded 1,010 calls in 2022.



Most commonly, hotline callers ask about preserving salsa, tomatoes and tuna. OSU Extension offers publications on each: [Salsa Recipes for Canning](#), [Canning Seafood](#), [Canning Tomatoes and Tomato Products](#) and [Safely Canning Foods: Pressure Canners, Pressure Cookers and Electric Pressure Cookers](#). (The online Chronicle and Chief will have these as “hot” links).

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