

May 2022



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Board members 2022

President: Nancy Glick, 541-330-6260, nglick@bendcable.com

Vice Pres: Janet Dart, 818-486-1583, janetdart@gmail.com
 Jan Even, 541-280-5238, even.jan@gmail.com

Secretary: Marilyn Clark, 541-419-4625, piperdoug64@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Tim Schindele, 541-526-1490, TJSFishes@bendbroadband.com

State Rep: Jan Barron, 907-227-9547

Alt. State Rep: Evie Cox, 949-677-0767, eviecox1@icloud.com

Historian: Mimi Thomas, 503-320-4178, mormormimit@gmail.com

Membership Coordinator: Jolene Dodge, 541-771-7882, ajdodge@yahoo.com

Communication Liaison: Rocky Bessette, 541-548-0789, rockyb820@gmail.com

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President's message



Most of us know about the traditional three sisters planting: corn, to provide support for pole beans to climb and squash beneath to shade the soil - a living mulch. It's a cooperative arrangement that provides cooperative support for all three plants & a successful harvest for us.

Crop rotation is an idea that has been used for years to keep the soil healthy, to control disease and to keep nutrients from being depleted.

The May 3rd Sustainable Gardener radio broadcast on "Gardening: Get Good at It" reminded me that many traditional methods provide a transition from one year to the next. The learning of parents, shared with their children who pass the knowledge on to their children. As Teyve in Fiddler on the Roof says, "Tradition!"

Here in the Central Oregon chapter of the Master Gardeners, we've had some 'crop rotation' on our board: as members become comfortable with the procedures and policies of the Chapter, they've moved to new positions that might be more aligned with their skills and interests. Traditionally, a Vice President, after working beside the President for a few years, is comfortable moving into the President's role, providing the opening for someone to join the board as Vice President.

Since Janet Dart will be following our tradition and becoming President in 2023, her current position as Vice President of Master Gardener Education will be available for another Master Gardener.

The Vice President of MG Education has been a creative role - planning events where the MG community can learn new skills, brush up on past training, meet new members, and enjoy a social event with old friends, like the recent forest trip.

If this sounds like a fun way for you to contribute to the Central Oregon Master Gardener Association, you can read the full job description on our website: <https://tinyurl.com/bdz8khh6>. The election will be held late this summer and you will be welcomed to the board in January 2023. If you have any questions about the position, contact either Janet Dart or Nancy Glick. We'd be happy to talk about what it means to be the Vice President of Master Gardener Education.



Newsletter Notes: Deadline for submission of material to the HoeDown is 1st Friday after the board meeting. All articles, notices and other journalistic efforts are welcome and appreciated. All information provided by the "HoeDown" is believed to be accurate but readers must assume all responsibility for their own actions based on this information.

Occasionally a product or company may be named in an article but this does not necessarily constitute an endorsement of said product.

Published by : COMGA Send ideas & articles to: **HoeDown** Rocky Bessette, 8200 NW Yucca Ave., Redmond, OR 97756 or rockyb820@gmail.com

COMGA Calendar ***for contact persons go to gocomga.com***

May

3 OSU Demo garden workday, 9am
3 Gardening Get Good At It, 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am
5 Board meeting 10:00am
6 COBA Home & Garden Show
7 COBA Home & Garden Show
8 COBA Home & Garden Show
12 HH Water-wise meeting & workday 9am
14 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon
17 OSU Demo Garden workday, 9am
19 Discovery CG mentor meeting & workday 6pm
26 HH Water-wise workday & meeting
28 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon
31 HH Water-wise workday & meeting

June

2 Board meeting 10:00am
4 Garden fair & Plant Sale 9am—Noon
7 OSU Demo Garden workday, 9am
7 Gardening Get Good at it 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am
9 Hollinshead Water-wise workday & meeting, 10:00am
11 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon
16 Discovery CG mentor meeting & workday, 6:00pm
21 OSU Demo Garden workday, 9:00am
23 Hollinshead Water-wise workday & meeting
25 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon

July

5 OSU Demo Garden workday, 9am
5 Gardening Get Good at it 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am
7 Board meeting, 10:00am
9 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon
14 Hollinshead Water-wise workday & meeting, 10:00am
19 OSU Demo Garden workday, 9am
31 Discovery CG mentor meeting & workday, 6pm
23 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon
28 Hollinshead Water-wise workday & meeting, 10:00am
29 OMGA Mini-College
30 OMGA Mini-College



PLANT OF THE MONTH

by Lisa Nakadate and Julie Hill

Featured Plant - Siberian Bugloss

Brunnera macrophylla
"Jack Frost"

Height: 12 - 18"
Spread: 18 - 30"
Flower: Blue
Bloom time: April - May



Why Should I Plant Siberian Bugloss in My Garden?

- This plant features shimmering foliage that brightens up any corner of the landscape and adds dramatic texture to shady spots.
- Small, blue, forget-me-not-like flowers with white centers bloom in airy, branched flower clusters rising well above the foliage on slender stems.
- Fire resistant and deer resistant.
- Clumps slowly spread by creeping rhizomes to form thick ground covers.
- Low maintenance.
- Plants may self seed in optimum growing conditions.
- No serious insect problems.

Information Sources

Missouri Botanical Garden: <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=m800>
Washington State University: <http://www.pnwplants.wsu.edu/PlantDisplay.aspx?PlantID=713>



June Garden Fair and Plant Sale

June 4, 2022

Seeds are germinating in the OSU Extension Service Demonstration Garden Greenhouse and perennials that we transplanted into 1 gallon size pots on March 23rd are growing vigorously! You can preview which exact plant varieties will be for sale by going to the www.gocomga.com website and checking out the Preview page for the June Garden Fair. Plants will be available for ordering starting May 20th and end May 31st. Remember to schedule your plant pick up time on June 4th when ordering.

We have 9 vendors committed to our June Garden Fair event and they will be out in Parking Lot J along with OSU Master Gardener mobile plant clinic and Insect Display, Irrigation Specialist Booth (from the city of Bend), Fire Free booth and OSU Master Food Preserver booth.

Vicky Kemp, June Garden Fair Coordinator

Spring Gardening Seminar 2022

The Spring Seminar webinars were a great success. We had 299 attendees who took a total of 631 classes. The webinars generated \$2,920 and the silent auction made \$1,162. We had sponsor donations totaling \$950. Total income for Spring Seminar was \$5,037 and our expenses were \$278.70.

Thank you to the following people who made this seminar a success. Vickie Minor, Janet Dart, Nathalie Smith, Liz Anderson, Julie Hill, Jan Even, Evie Cox, Phil Paterno, Liz Douville, Cher Hinerman, Marilyn Clark, Jennifer Whelan, Lisa Nakadate, Nancy Glick, Sue Szabo. These people are awesome.

Rocky

2022 Home and Garden Show

By the time you read this, the 2022 Home and Garden Show will have taken place over the weekend of May 6-8, 2022. The OSU Extension Master Gardeners will have worked all-day plant clinics on Friday, Saturday and Sunday and five classes will have been offered covering vegetable gardening, tips for gardening in the high desert, and gardening with kids. Stay tuned for a full report in the June Hoedown.

Alpenglow Demonstration Garden

We are happy to let you know that the planning of the new Alpenglow Demonstration Garden in southeast Bend is moving right along! We met with Amy Jo in the garden this week and confirmed where each of the five mini gardens will be located - they include low maintenance, fire-wise, pollinator, urban and cultural gardens. We are in the process of selecting the plants we want to feature and will be sourcing them this week. We invite you to participate in a fun day of planting. We don't have a date yet but expect it to be in late May or June. We'll let you know as soon as we have more information. Until then, enjoy this beautiful spring!

Janet Dart & Lisa Nakadate



Hollinshead Water-wise Garden

by Pat Kolling & Chris Miao

The garden is starting to bloom! We planted bulbs in the garden last fall and the Puschkinia are up and blooming for the first time. The Narcissus and Allium are also on their way. Early signs of spring are in the air. Then - we had to cancel our April 14th workday because of snow! Ah, we all love the weather in Central Oregon.

We had several trainees volunteer to be part of the water-wise team, and we are excited to welcome them. We'll be orienting them to the garden and assigning work areas in the next weeks. They are enthusiastic and are looking forward to hands on learning.

We met with Dan Denning, Water Conservation Program Manager for the City of Bend and are planning a "Field Day" in conjunction with the city at the Hollinshead Barn on June 26th from 9AM- 2PM. We are in the early planning stages. The day will emphasize how to conserve water in the landscape and will utilize the water-wise garden for demonstrations and tours. More on this in the next update.



Please email any photos taken at COMGA events to Mimi Thomas, Historian, to her email at: mormormimit@gmail.com

ADVANCED TRAINING:

You can get your Advanced Training Credits online at OSU Extension's Level Up Webinar Classes on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 12 noon. Go to <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/growing-oregon-gardeners-level-series-2022>. Classes are recorded, so it's not necessary to attend live.

OSU Extension Service Demonstration Garden in Redmond

We had a few more OSU Extension Service Demonstration Garden workdays getting lots more spring clean-up done. But as always, a garden is never done!

On April 19th, we cut back perennials & did some weeding and also got to witness Toni Stephan operating her flame torch on the weeds in the gravel area! These volunteers were there to help: Rocky Bessette, Steward Taylor, Mary Biehn, Shawna Larson, Liz Brackman and Amanda Adams.

On May 3rd, we focused on weeding the annual All American Selection beds and worked on weed ID while we were at that. Amy Jo Detweiler is back at the office and gave a talk on codling moths on apple trees and the Happy Apples Project. Toni Stephan and Rocky Bessette had a "how to lesson" and demonstration on pruning the Asian pear tree. More weeding west of Building 3 and in the Demo Garden greenhouse. These volunteers were there to help: Vickie Minor, Stewart Taylor, Cher Hinerman, Victoria Butler, Pamela Bercovici, Jill Kendall, Ruth Mulligan, Cindy Rinker, Shawna Larson and Amanda Adams.

Thank You All for volunteering!

Karen Simonet and Vicky Kemp



Discovery Park Community Garden – DPCG



Gardening at Discovery is off to a slow but steady start thanks to a brisk April. The garden officially opened April 16 after a garden readiness work session on April 14th. Volunteers and Trainees met again on the 21st to do more garden

maintenance and to do a garden orientation for the Trainees. Our 9 new gardeners for 2022 received their hands-on-at-the-garden orientation in the following week. Registration went very smoothly thanks to Nancy's slick on-line system and Tim's quick payment monitoring. Bend Parks turned the water on at the hydrants earlier than usual, and this was very much appreciated by the garlic growers. We were also able to ready the sprinkler system, which is now, as of May 4, up and running. A few gardeners experimented with leaving cold hardy veggies out over winter. Likely due to our mild winter, a few lucky kale, spinach, chard and fava bean plants survived! (**professional gardeners, do not try this at home). We have seen a few gardeners setting out cool season bedding plants but the next few weeks are going to be really exciting as gardeners get their beds prepared for seeding cold hardy vegetables, and start transplanting the same. Given we see warming weather, the heat-loving veggies will start going in the ground in about a month. What a great time of year to be a gardener!

Gary Weber



FIELD TRIP

We met, Jeremy Fields, US Forest Service Ranger, at the Sisters Ranger station and headed out to the lower portions of the Green Ridge area.. Lots of fun and wonderful finds : manzanita, Bunch grass, even wild strawberries .



Naked Broomrape

by Judy Shearer

Mistletoe isn't the only parasitic plant in the PNW. There are several including this month's wildflower selection, naked broomrape or *Orobanche uniflora*. It is in a family of plants, the Orobanchaceae, that includes both homo and hemiparasitic plants. *Orobanche uniflora* is a homoparasite or obligate parasite because it does not photosynthesize and depends on its host plant for nutrition and water. The inflorescences are of solitary flowers (see pictures below). The flowers are white to cream, sometimes tinged purple, divided into 5 lobes slightly shorter than the tube. Along the lower throat of the corolla there is usually a patch of bright yellow hairs. Inserted within the corolla is a single style and four stamens. The plants appear late spring into summer and last 2-4 weeks. Little is known about floral/faunal relationships but bumblebees have been noted to appear at the flowers but in absence of cross pollination, the flowers are self fertile and can produce seed. The minute seeds can be wind borne to new locations. In order to germinate, the seeds require an appropriate host. In the case of broomrape this could be a sedum, saxifrage, sunflower, or goldenrod. Little is known about the interaction of host and parasite but quite possibly a suitable fungus may act as the intermediary between the two. Neither of the common names (naked broomrape and flowered cancer root) are particularly flattering. The first is derived from a medieval rendering of the genus *Genista* which refers to a group of European plants commonly called brooms and from the lack of leaves. The second from the fact it is a parasite that forms haustoria on the roots of the host. The plant is found in all 48 contiguous states and Alaska in moist to dry places where the host grows. It is a difficult plant to study because there are no visible leaves and its location is thus only apparent when it flowers and while it appears in the same vicinity it may not always be in the exact same location as in previous years.



Photograph by Samantha Shearer taken at Catherine Creek Natural Area, Washington.

References

Turner, M., and P. Gustafson. 2006. Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest. Timber Press Field Guide, Portland, OR.

Oregon Wildflowers app

NY Times article "The flower that must *not be named*".
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/13/nyregion/parasite-flower-orobanche-uniflora.html>

Advanced Training

All Spring Seminar classes were approved for Master Gardener Advanced Training.

You can get Advanced Training Credits online at OSU Extension's Level Up Webinar Classes on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 12 noon.

Go to

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/growing-oregon-gardeners-level-series-2022>

Classes are recorded, so it's not necessary to attend live.

Upcoming classes are:

May 10th: Growing Great Roses <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/growing-oregon-gardeners-level-series-2022#Roses>



LOWDOWN FROM THE BOARD

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2022

In Person and via Zoom Online

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Glick (President), Janet Dart (VP MG Education), Jan Even (VP Community Education), Marilyn Clark (Secretary), Tim Schindele (Treasurer), Mimi Thomas (Historian), Jan Barron (OMGA State Rep.), Evie Cox (Alternate State Rep.), Mimi Thomas (Historian), Rocky Bessette (Communications Liaison), Jolene Dodge (Membership Coordinator), JoAnne Abbott, Katherine Applegate, Chris Miao, Ruth Mulligan, Judy Shearer, Karen Simonet, Kirsten Hinton, Mimi Thomas, Evie Cox, Cher Hinerman and Amy Jo Detweiler.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. and was adjourned at 11:15 a.m. The board discussed the following:

Approval of Minutes from April 7, 2022, meeting.

Upon motion by Jan Even and seconded by Rocky Bessette, the minutes were approved as submitted by unanimous vote.

OSU Report. Amy Jo Detweiler reported that she has made it back into the office. She is writing a new job description for Toni's replacement. It will be different than Toni's, as it will not be a teaching position. In response to an inquiry regarding ECCO training, it was confirmed that you need to attend Toni's ECCO workshop unless you worked plant clinic last year. Amy Jo asked if COMGA would help support a 'retirement' send off soiree for Toni Stephan. There was 100% approval.

BOARD REPORTS:

Treasurer's Report from Tim Schindele was displayed on screen. Copies previously sent to board members and project coordinators. April is a very big month. \$6,523.29 in income, primarily community garden plot fees and Spring Seminar. It is over 60% of the annual budget. April PayPal net receipts amounted to \$4,480.82.

Membership Report from Jolene Dodge: We have 60 members so far this year. She is updating the list and will send it out later today to Tim and Nancy. Six people checked 'Associate.'

Quarterly Meeting and Master Gardener education – Janet Dart. The Forest field trip was very popular. There were 12-14 people plus spouses for Thursday, and more on Saturday (17 and two dogs). Ranger Jeremy Fields lead us to a couple spots off Indian Ford Road and to Bear Springs. Several people dug plants or will return later after it warms up. He reminded us not to dig plants near the road, and to trek into the woods a little instead.

Janet will be working on the next meeting soon, possibly a visit to Eileen Obermiller's greenhouse or pruning at Liz Anderson's.

OMGA Rep. Report – Evie Cox is working with the OMGA 'The Joy of Gardening Conference' (formerly Mini-college) Auction committee. The goal was to collect ten auction items valued at \$25 each from every chapter. We have five items left over from our Spring Seminar silent auction, so we need five more. Although we had previously thought about cash, they would prefer gift cards or items, possibly from valley garden centers. Evie can donate a nice cart if she can get it in her SUV to take to the event when she attends. Jan Even can also donate a broadcast spreader. (If we can get it there.) Rocky offered to send out an email asking COMGA members for auction donations or put it in the HoeDown. Evie needs the items by July 15th.

The committee is also looking for two hanging baskets worth about \$50 each. Evie planned to make them up herself. After further discussion, and upon motion by Marilyn Clark, and second by Rocky Bessette, we voted unanimously to reimburse Evie Cox for up to \$100 for the purchase of two baskets for OMGA, with funds coming from the mini-college budget.

Community Education /Social Media. Jan Even reported that the Home & Garden show is this weekend. We are holding five classes at the show. Two on Friday, two on Saturday, and one on Sunday.

We just finished the Saturday spring seminar zoom classes on 4/23. Congratulations are in order as we had a total of 299 attendees. This is more people than we had hosted at the in-person seminars of 250. We had a total of 631 class attendees. (Many people attended multiple classes.) The online format allowed us to reach many people from outside Central Oregon. It also enabled us to host more per class than we could have in person. One class had 75 enrollees. The surveys at the end of class revealed that most heard about the classes from Facebook. Not a surprise since we paid for some Facebook advertising.

The most common answers to one survey question on future topics revealed:

- Plants for Central Oregon (natives, vegetable varieties)
- Water-wise gardening
- Vegetables and season extenders (greenhouses, cloche)
- Pollinators and beneficial plants

The June Garden Fair June 4th at the Extension office parking lot will also feature some classes.

The Hollinshead Water-wise garden will be holding an event in conjunction with Bend on June 26th from 9am to 2pm. Pat Kolling will need volunteer assistance and will be putting out a notice.

Historian Report from Mimi Thomas. She asked for photos from the Forest field trip. And asked for action photos of the work being done, not just posed pictures.

Continued on page 8

LOWDOWN FROM THE BOARD Continued**ACTION ITEMS:**

Mobile Wi-Fi: Nancy reported that we have access through the Home & Garden show, so the project is currently on hold. A subscription to remote Wi-Fi will cost \$45 per month.

Lifetime Membership versus Life Achievement

Award: Nancy researched the topic, which came up from OMGA's chapter survey. Do we need to update Bylaws or was our handling sufficient? We had granted Liz Douville free membership dues for life, (including OMGA dues) for the Lifetime Achievement award. After discussion, we deemed we do not need to add another membership category of Lifetime to our Bylaws. We will rewrite the award description in our policy

Open Forum:

Rocky stated she will be picking up the T-shirts and apparel today, so they will be available to members soon.

Respectfully submitted:

Marilyn Clark

Community Education Report

April was a busy month for community ed with what is traditionally our biggest education event, the Spring Gardening Seminar. Like last year, all the classes were held on Zoom. As usual, Rocky and her committee did a great job. A big thanks, too, to the tech committee for managing our Zoom.

Spring Gardening Seminar
VIRTUAL CLASSES

- Gardening Basics for the High Desert
April 2, 10:00 am
- Waterwise Gardening
April 2, 1:00 pm
- Perennials and Shrubs That Do Well In Central Oregon
April 9, 10:00 am
- Central Oregon Native Bees and the Plants they Frequent
April 16, 10:00 am
- Composting
April 16, 1:00 pm
- Firewise Gardening
April 23, 10:00 am
- Greenhouse Design for All-Season Growing
April 23, 1:00 pm

\$5 per class. Register at goconga.com
All classes will be offered via Zoom.

A special thank you to our sponsors:

Presented By:

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Attendance this year was considerably higher than last year. In fact, it exceeded the old days of in-person classes, which typically drew about 250 people. This year we had 299 unique attendees, who signed up for a total of 631 classes. As with the vegetable gardening Q&As on Zoom, we heard from several people who weren't able to attend a class they had registered for but

were able to view it later through the link they received after the class was over. People seemed to really appreciate that.

Most of the classes were larger than we would have been able to accommodate in person, with class attendance ranging from 33 to 75. Of the 299 people who attended one or more class, 16 of them were from outside Central Oregon.

In the evaluations, we asked students how they learned about the classes. The largest number cited Facebook. This is not surprising, since that's where we concentrated our publicity, both through free postings and paid placements. We spent a total of \$1,098.29 for Facebook ads for Spring Seminar and \$414.98 for Spring Seminar ads on other channels, for a total of \$1,513.27. Total revenue from classes was \$3,155 (631 classes x \$5 per class), so total advertising spend was 48% of class revenue.

Of greatest interest to me for the purpose of future planning were the topics that people said they were interested in. There were lots of ideas mentioned, but I would group them into four big buckets:

Plants recommended specifically for Central Oregon (whether veggies, natives, or other landscape plants).

Waterwise gardening – irrigation methods, rain collection, water conservation, plant selection, etc.

Vegetables and season extenders including greenhouses, high tunnels, cloches, etc.

Pollinators and other beneficial insects

I will work with our community garden coordinators to set up some talks around these topics in the gardens through the summer. Maybe we could do something at Redmond and Alpenglow demo gardens too.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

June Garden Fair
JUNE 4, 2022 | 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Deschutes Co. Fair and Expo Center

We have New Cover and Soil Thermometers for sale, too!

PLANTS OFFERED FOR SALE

- Perennials of the Year
- Tomatoes
- Other Plants: Cantaloupe, Cucumber, Kale, Marigold
- Pumpkin
- Summer Squash
- Watermelon
- Zinnias

Plants for sale will be offered online for selection, payment and scheduling pick-up.
Visit goconga.com to start your order!

ORDER ONLINE: goconga.com
Pick up times will be 9:00 am to noon.

Pick up your plants, then park your car and visit the rest of the fair!

MOBILE PLANT CLINIC

10 MINUTE UNIVERSITY PRESENTATIONS

REDEMPTION & VENDOR BOOTHS

Central Oregon Master Gardener Association

Sat. June 4: June Garden Fair at OSU Extension. Vendors are back! There will also be educational displays. Ordering begins May 20.

Sunday June 26: Pat Kolling and Chris Miao are working with the City of Bend to plan a Waterwise Field Day. This will be held at Hollinshead Park and will take advantage of the Waterwise Garden there, as well as the

Hollinshead Barn for some classes or presentations. We're facing severe drought this year and saving water is a topic everyone is talking about. If you live in the city of Bend, even/odd watering day restrictions are in place. The city is offering free sprinkler system inspections beginning in June, and also provides a lot of information.

resources at <https://www.bendoregon.gov/government/departments/utilities/conservation/waterwise-irrigation>.

Jan Even, VP/Community Education

The Old Farmers' Almanac Epsom Salt in the Garden: Good or Bad for Plants?



Photo credit: Martina Unbehauen/shutterstock

Is It Really a Miracle Cure?

By Robin Sweetser

Most gardeners love a reliable home remedy and are eager to embrace a magic bullet. This is the case with Epsom salts. They are supposed to make flowering plants bushier and blossom more and make peppers and tomatoes more productive. But are they really a miracle cure? Can Epsom salts be harmful? Let's separate myth from reality.

What Are Epsom Salts?

Epsom salts are the chemical magnesium sulfate ($MgSO_4$)—so they offer both magnesium (about 10%) and sulfur (about 13%).

Magnesium is needed by plants to generate the chlorophyll needed for photosynthesis. On a plant lacking magnesium, the older leaves will turn yellow between the veins and along the edges and growth will be stunted. Sandy, light, low pH soils are prone to magnesium deficiency. If your soil is quickly leached by rainfall and has a pH of 5.5 or less, it probably lacks sufficient magnesium. The addition of compost to raise the level of organic matter in the soil will help.

Sulfur is needed to form some vitamins and plant proteins. If a plant lacks sulfur the young leaves will turn yellow. Sulfur also gives vegetables such as broccoli, onions, and mustard greens their flavors. Sulfur is seldom deficient in garden soils in North America so deficiencies are rare. Plus, if sulfur is overdone, it will build up in the soil and make it hard for plants to make use of the other nutrients they need. If you are lacking sulfur, manure is a good organic source.

The Truth About Epsom Salt

One reason people use Epsom salts is to prevent blossom end rot. This isn't true. In fact, Epsom salts can be harmful! Why? Blossom end rot is caused by a calcium deficiency, not magnesium or sulfur deficiency. And adding too much magnesium to your soil can actually prevent calcium uptake!

While many vegetables (leafy greens, beans, peas) can grow in soil with low magnesium levels, other plants

including tomatoes, peppers, and roses need high levels of magnesium. So what if Epsom salt is added to the soil to correct large soil magnesium deficiencies? Unfortunately, horticultural studies (Auburn University, Delaware Valley College) prove that adding Epsom salts to the soil (directly or through watering) does not link to higher yield or healthier growth from peppers and tomatoes to roses.

When it comes to your soil, do not rely on Epsom salts to adjust deficiencies in magnesium or sulfur! The only real way to know if your soil is lacking magnesium or sulfur is to have it tested. (There are soil tests provided by your cooperative extension.) If you add Epsom salts to soil that already has sufficient magnesium, this can harm plants and contaminate soil.

In addition, spraying Epsom salt solutions on plant leaves can also cause leaf scorch. Excess magnesium can also increase mineral contamination in water that percolates through soil. Remember that Epsom salt is a highly soluble chemical. When you use Epsom salts on plants, it can it will leach out of your soil fast, running into and polluting ponds and streams. The best practice is to avoid adding any extra chemicals to your soil - even things that seem 'safe' - because you can easily do more harm than good.

Alternatives to Epsom Salt

Before heading to the drug store for some Epsom salts, get an OMRI certified agricultural grade magnesium sulfate or look for a slow-release form of magnesium that will have longer lasting effects such as magnesium-enriched biochar or kieserite. If your soil is acidic, dolomitic limestone will raise the pH and add magnesium.

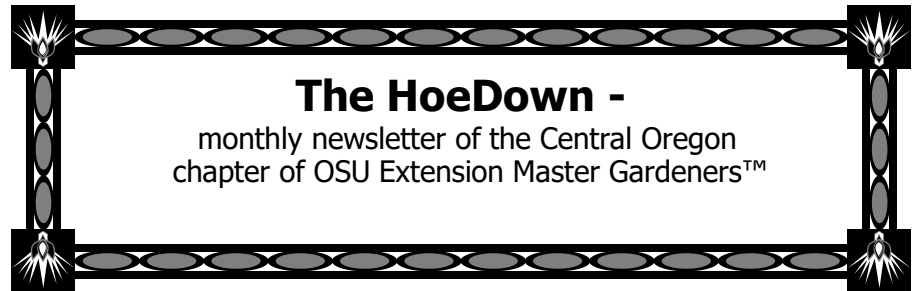
Bottom-line: Save the Epsom salts for soothing your tired aching body after a day in the garden!



Central Oregon Chapter of OSU Extension Master Gardeners™
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Redmond, OR 97756



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