

September 2021



Photo by JoAnne Abbott

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Board members 2021

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President's message



My neighborhood is growing sunflowers everywhere. Some are in neat rows; others are obviously volunteers. I've got both kinds and the pollinators and birds love them all.

I planted a white sunflower this year and worried that a hybrid might not be the best choice for my pollinator garden but by August, it was covered in bees. With the volunteer sunflowers across the yard, tall, floppy, brilliantly yellow and visited by yellow finches every day, it seems I've again accidentally grown both gorgeous and smart.

Near the new Redmond high school is a corner field filled with sunflowers that I've watched grow into a sea of yellow faces turned towards the sun. Studies have shown that some plants use phototropism to follow the sun and the sunny field is joy to see every week. (If you've never seen it, here's a cool video of the plants' behavior:

<https://plantsinmotion.bio.indiana.edu/plantmotion/movements/tropism/solartrack/solartrack.html>

you may have to copy & paste the link).

Lately I've been thinking how the Master Gardeners (and OSU) have learned to follow our own sun – that power source inside that keeps us steady, brightens our path and gives us the optimism to keep our own inner garden healthy.

When things get tough, try to remember the sunflower: find your light source and lean in.



Photos by
JoAnne Abbott

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

September

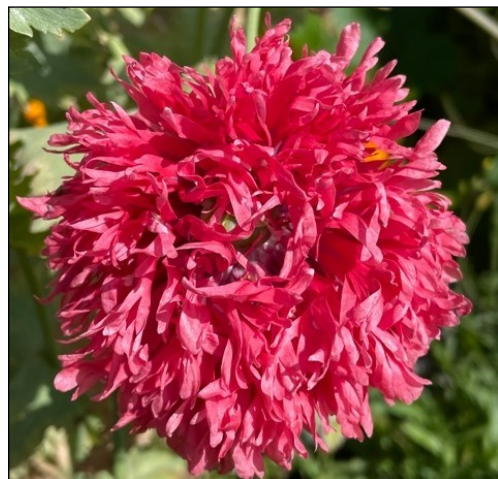
- 2 Board meeting, OSU Extension Service, Redmond, Bldg. #3, 10:00am
- 7 OSU & AAS Garden workday, 9:00am
- 7 KPOV radio, 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am, 12 Plants to Entice Pollinators
- 11 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon
- 16 Hollinshead CG volunteers meeting, 10:00am
- 21 OSU & AAS Garden workday, 9:00am
- 21 KPOV radio, 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am, Garden All Year: Build a Cloche
- 25 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon

October

- 5 OSU & AAS Garden workday, 9:00am
- 5 KPOV radio, 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am, Gear Up the Garden for Cold Weather
- 7 Board meeting, OSU Extension Service, Redmond Bldg. #3, 10:00am
- 9 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon
- 16 Hollinshead Community Garden closes
- 17 Hollinshead Community Garden closes
- 17 Discovery Park Community Garden closes
- 19 OSU & AAS Garden workday, 9:00am
- 19 KPOV radio, 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am, Sustainability in Your Garden
- 23 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon

November

- 2 KPOV radio, 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am, Five Easy House Plants
- 4 Board meeting, OSU Extension Service, Redmond Bldg. #3, 10:00am
- 13 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon
- 16 KPOV radio, 88.9 FM, 9-9:30am, The Winter Landscape Garden
- 27 Blog: Gardening in Central Oregon



The **2022 Election** of the Central Oregon Master Gardener Association Board will again be held virtually this year. On **September 19th all current members of our chapter will receive an email invitation to vote before October 2.** Results of the election will be announced at the COMGA board meeting on October 7.

Several Master Gardeners have asked about nominating candidates for the ballot. If you wish to nominate a COMGA member, you **must** confirm the willingness of the nominee to serve in the board position before the name can be added to the ballot on September 19.

We welcome anyone who wishes to join our board and I will add the name of any COMGA member to the slate if they are nominated for a position and I am notified before September 18.

Nancy Glick, President COMGA

ENTER THE MASTER GARDENER PHOTO CONTEST!

WIN PRIZES!

The Master Gardener Photo Contest is open until September 30th at 8:00 p.m. Enter photos in three categories: (1) Places (the places of Master Gardeners like demo gardens); (2) People (a Master Gardener in action), and (3) Program Priority (photos depicting one of our eight program priorities). Details, including a guide to taking great photos, can be found at <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/mgcoordinators/2021/07/26/the-master-gardener-volunteer-photo-contest-is-officially-open/>.

PRIZES: First-place winners in each of the three categories will receive signed, autographed copies of the books *Trees to Know*, and *Shrubs to Know*. In addition, an OSU Foods of Oregon reusable tote.

All second-place winners in each of the three categories will receive signed, autographed copies of the book *Trees to Know*. In addition, an OSU Foods of Oregon reusable tote.



Photo by
JoAnne Abbott

Onions aren't just for eating, they provide beauty in the landscape. Taper-tip or Hooker's onion (*Allium acuminatum*) is one such native example. The delicate pink to rose colored flowers 10-40 are loosely arranged in an upright umbel (see below picture). Typical of members of the onion family (Amaryllidaceae) the petals and sepals (tepals) look similar in color. The outer tepals are longer and wider than the inner ones and are somewhat recurved. Both narrow to a pointed tip, hence the common name taper tip onion. The 2-3 basal leaves wither from the tip by the time the flowers are fully expanded and functioning (anthesis). Taper tips are found in dry rocky or sandy sites throughout Oregon flowering from April to July depending on elevation. The bulbs were gathered for food by peoples in the Pacific Northwest in early spring and summer. Supposedly both the bulb and stalk are edible but the flavor of the stalk is more pleasant. The genus name *Allium* is from the Greek name for garlic and the epithet *acuminatum* refers to the pointed tepal tips. The other common name honors Sir William Jackson Hooker, a British botanist who catalogued hundreds of plant specimens collected in the nineteenth century in the PNW.



Credits: article by Judy Shearer
Photograph by Samantha Shearer
Fagan, D. 2019. *Wildflowers of Oregon*. Falcon Guides, Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Lanham, MD.

Meyers, S., T. Jasper, K. E. Mitchell, and L. K. Hardison eds, *Flora of Oregon*. Volume I: Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, and Monocots. Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, U.S.A.

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

Wild Ones: Native Plants Attract Pollinators

by Coggin Heeringa,

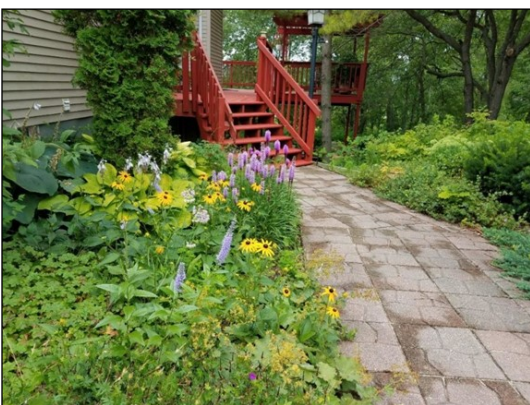
During the darkest, gloomiest days of midwinter, they arrive: seed catalogs! These colorful publications have been around for more than a century, delivering hope every year to housebound, frustrated gardeners and would-be gardeners. For rich and poor alike, in the city or the country, poring over seed and plant catalogs is a cherished winter tradition.

Those who are more inclined toward online shopping will – after one or two searches for information about flowers, bulbs or plant plugs – activate a flood of emails and social-media posts featuring stunning images of flowers in every color and shape imaginable. One click and an email address will also get you on a nursery mailing list.

By forgetting the frightful weather outside, gazing at the beautiful floral images and reading the lavish descriptions, a home gardener can visualize swarms of fluttering butterflies and almost hear the gentle hum of contented bees. But what is the best way to plan and grow a garden if attracting pollinators is your admirable ambition?

Native-plant advocate Neil Diboll is well known in Door County as a presenter at Crossroads at Big Creek and The Ridges and for his help designing the Peterson Park prairie garden at the YMCA. In the catalog of Prairie Nursery – of which he's president – Diboll wrote, "Amazingly, suburban and even urban landscapes can be home to a stunning variety of pollinators, birds and other desirable and beneficial organisms." He adds that "Plant it, and they will come" is true even in larger population areas.

But when Diboll advises readers to "plant it," it's not as simple as purchasing and planting the prettiest flowers you can find, and then concluding that you've done your bit to help nature. Ordering only the prettiest flowers in the catalog often is not helpful at all for attracting pollinators.



Give pollinators some variety. Butterflies feed on nectar, and bees require nectar and pollen throughout the growing season, from early spring to late fall.

By planting an appropriate variety of flowers, a gardener can provide a reliable food source for pollinators.

Understand that honeybees and wild native bees do not see the same colors that humans do. They're attracted to flowers that are yellow, purple and ultraviolet – a color

beyond our visible spectrum that we see as white.

Butterflies and hummingbirds can see red and orange, and because they can hover, they can visit trumpet-shaped flowers. Being unable to hover, most bees can visit only those blossoms that have a flat surface, which acts as a "landing pad." Simple symmetrical flowers with horizontal petals or a bottom lip are most attractive to bees.



Welcome pollinators with the native plants they crave.

If selecting appropriate plants seems too complicated, there's a simple solution: Plant natives.

Native plants have survived over the ages because they provide the pollen, nectar and floral oils that pollinators crave. Native plants are almost always some shade or combination of yellow, purple or white, and their blossoms tend to have the perfect shapes to accommodate insect pollinators. Often the flowers even have special stripes or spots – aptly named "bee guides" – to make food collection more efficient for the pollinators.

Many plant catalogs and, thankfully, most local nurseries now feature native flowers, shrubs and trees. The Door County Master Gardeners' annual plant sale, for instance, will have many native plants available – when it's safe again to hold the event.

In the words of Neil Diboll, "It is incumbent upon us, as stewards of the earth, to take action to preserve our natural heritage, not only for the sake of biodiversity and the future of the world, but because we depend upon diverse and stable ecosystems for our own survival. Planting natives encompasses far more than just doing a good deed for nature. Our very existence depends on it."

OSU Extension Demo Garden

Wow! What a sight at the Demo Garden! The sunburst squash are bigger than softballs! The pumpkins are just the right jack-o-lantern size, and green. Vicky Kemp brought 2 "holders" to prop up the fruit off the ground. We rotated the rest that had contact with the ground. The tomatoes are encased in their cages and waiting for them to ripen! Although I have a good recipe for fried green tomatoes. We harvest about 2 dozen squash and 1 dozen cucumbers for a food bank donation. We had an especially productive day with 13 volunteers! Amy Jo bought new plants to put in front of Bldg. 3.

Curt Millington planted the elderberry bush. Alice Spencer planted the switch grasses. Wanda Kuklis planted the "blonde ambition" grasses. Marissa Wright planted the common lilac, but only after battling with all the rocks and compact soil! It now looks beautiful and will smell so nice next spring. Thank you to Kirsten Hinton, Rocky Bessette, Mimi Thomas, Victoria Butler, Carroll Minium, Jolene Dodge and Toni Stephan for also joining us on that day. We also presented Alice Spencer with the Trowel Award for her work at the Demo Garden.

Thank you from Vicky Kemp and Karen Simonet

Why did the lettuce close it's eyes?

It saw the salad dressing



<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/136UN9EGFVBjJxkSPITSwvdBtMQb5fRRQ/edit#gid=509441911>

IT'S KPOV TIME GARDENING: GET GOOD AT IT

Tune in to The Point on KPOV 88.9 FM, Tuesdays
between 9:00 and 9:30 AM.

Here is our lineup of upcoming
Gardening: Get Good At It segments.

September 7 Twelve Plants to Entice Pollinators

September 21 Garden All Year—Build a Cloche

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

Hollinshead Community Garden

by JoAnne Abbott

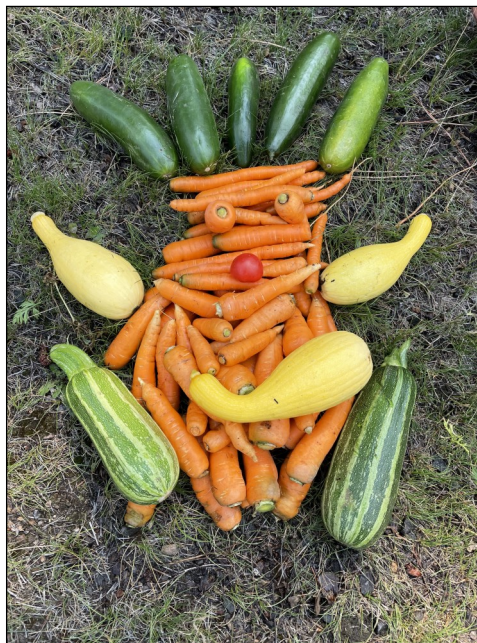
As many of you know, the 3 raised beds, just inside the garden gate, at Hollinshead Community Garden (HHCG), have been planted with All American Series (AAS) veggies donated by Amy Jo and Vicky Kemp. We started with very immature Midnight Roma's (smaller than my little pinky) and believe it or not, they are finally setting fruit! Unfortunately, we only have until mid-October for the tomatoes to ripen, so I'm not sure we'll get the time to see the fruit ripen to maturity before the garden closes. On the other hand, the Mini Love watermelon is quite prolific, and the Green Light cucumbers are producing beyond my belief!

We've made the great decision to release the two plots (4 & 16) that our MG's have been caring for over the past 2 years. They will be available when the lottery for 2022 gets underway. You can read the history of these plots in the past issues of the HoeDown to understand why we are excited to reinstate these plots.

Donated last week to The Giving Plate, was a plethora of carrots, squashes and cucumbers (see happy face veggies picture) from these two plots and the raised beds. The next donation will hopefully be kale, potatoes and more summer squashes. This is simply proof that these two plots are ready to be released into the lottery next year!

We don't only grow veggies at HHCG, but lots of flowers.... come by and enjoy the flowers and all their pollinators! It is definitely cathartic for me to simply ramble through the garden and enjoy the flora.

We have just about 5 weeks left before the closing weekend on October 16. There is plenty left to harvest, and plenty to enjoy. It appears this season has gone by way too quickly!



LOWDOWN FROM THE BOARD

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

September 2, 2021

Via Zoom Online

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Glick (President), Vickie Minor (Secretary), Tim Schindele (Treasurer), Mimi Thomas (Historian), Janet Dart (OMGA State Representative), Evie Cox (Alternate State Representative), Rocky Bessette (Communications Liaison), Jolene Dodge (Membership Coordinator), Marilyn Clark, Jan Barron, Bruce Dart, Vicky Kemp, Carroll Minium, Kate Applegate, Kirsten Hinton, Liz Douville, Pat Kolling and Amy Jo Detweiler.

The meeting started at 10:00 AM and adjourned at 11:10 AM. The board discussed the following items:

Approval of minutes of previous meeting

Motion to approve the minutes made by Jolene Dodge, seconded by Rocky Bessette, and approved by the board with no objections.

OSU Report

Amy Jo reported that the administrative support position has been posted, and applications are being accepted until September 17, 2021. The goal is to have someone in place sometime in October or November. Amy Jo thanked everyone for being patient with requests that Carrie would have handled, that Amy Jo is now taking on. She is also getting ready for master gardener training in 2022. She expects it to be a hybrid format, initially online, followed by some hands-on training. She expects applications to be available in October and she hopes to have them available electronically. Amy Jo also reported that right now, plant clinic is continuing in person but regulations could change. For the time being, volunteers do not have to provide proof of vaccination although OSU staff and faculty do need to. We can expect that going into the fall, we will be doing more zoom meetings than in-person meetings.

BOARD REPORTS:

Treasurer's Report

There were several components to the Treasurer's report this month. Income for August was actually only \$289.25, not \$789.25. Tim explained that OMGA gave Amy Jo a grant of \$500.00 for the Water-wise Garden but wrote the check to COMGA. Secretary's explanatory note: per the OMGA awards report, this was an Extension Educator grant to create garden signage explaining the benefits of Water wise gardening. Tim deposited the check as a contribution, then wrote a check to OSU Extension for \$500, and put that amount down as a \$500 donation to the horticulture program. The remaining \$53.83 of contributions included our second quarter rewards program payment from Amazon Smiles (\$8.62) and the combined first and second quarter rewards program payment from Fred Meyer (\$45.21). Tim noted that Fred Meyer does not write a check if it is less than \$25 so we did not get a check in the first quarter but our accumulated amount was included in the second quarter check. CD interest is high because our 37-month CD at First Interstate matured and paid \$136.80 in interest for the last 13 months. As was discussed last month, Tim rolled over that CD, now worth \$5,380 into a six-month CD, which only pays .1% annually. There was one

late-joining gardener at Discovery Park Community Garden who was charged \$15 for her plot, 6 bags (\$60) of row cover were sold at Hollinshead or at the Extension Office, and Rocky sold one hat for \$8.

Expenses included a \$123.46 reimbursement to Gary Weber for DPCG garden supplies, the \$500 donation to horticulture already mentioned, a \$30 refund to a gardener who was asked to leave Hollinshead for non-compliance, and a \$406.90 reimbursement to Janet Dart for the tech committee, that was approved at the August board meeting.

Tim made an adjustment to the books going back to June 2021, to account for the \$96.68 cost of the umbrella and stand that were purchased for use at Discovery Park Community Garden. Initially, these had been expensed to the DPCG budget but on further review, it was determined the cost was for a reusable and transferable asset and the cost was removed from DPCG and charged to the Opportunity Fund.

Tim reported that we have exceeded our income projection for the year by almost \$3,300 and have also exceeded our budgeted spending by about \$750 to date. He does not think we will spend more than \$2,000 during the rest of the year (for items such as the Hollinshead water bill from Bend Parks & Rec, compost for the Water-wise Garden, liability insurance policy renewal and whatever we are able to do for Volunteer Appreciation and Recognition Night).

The budget committee (Rocky Bessette, Bruce Dart and Tim) met on Tuesday August 31, 2021 and developed a tentative, conservative 2022 balanced budget based on an assumption that Spring Seminar will have to be virtual again in 2022. Tim will circulate the proposed budget as soon as a few items are finalized. He expects it to be ready for discussion at the October board meeting. The committee thinks the proposed budget is reasonable and achievable and expects it to be approved by the board, and sent to the membership for a vote. Expenses associated with our advertising/marketing budget for Community Education classes, and the expenses for the State Representative to OMGA (which will likely have Zoom meetings again in 2022) were reduced but everyone else who submitted a budget proposal will be getting the money they requested for expenses. Tim thanked all the project coordinators who submitted budget proposals in a relatively short amount of time. He reported that the DigiSigner form process was easier to use and he will be working with the tech committee to improve the process for the next budget cycle.

Tim reviewed a proposed change to the Policies & Procedures related to when overages must be reviewed by the budget committee. Currently, if a project chairperson or board member has a budget and wants to exceed it by more than 5%, our current P&Ps require that the request be reviewed by the budget committee and, if approved by the committee, then voted on by the board. If the committee, and then the board, does not approve the extra expense, whoever incurs it does not get reimbursed. Routing such a request through the budget committee takes extra time and serves no useful purpose. The 5% threshold can also mean the budget committee has to convene to review expenditures that may be trivial, wasting the committee's time (e.g., in 2021, \$37 was budgeted for

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LOWDOWN FROM THE BOARD continued

volunteer appreciation. We have already spent \$60 and under the policy, the budget committee would have to meet and review an average of 5% of \$37, which is \$1.85). Tim proposes that we remove the step of referring requests to exceed budget to the budget committee and instead, bring them directly to the board. In addition, we would replace the 5% threshold with \$50. Amounts less than \$50 in excess of budget would not require approval, as the COMGA overall budget can easily absorb them. The proposed new language of the specific P&P would be:

"4 c. If, during the year, there is a necessary expenditure exceeding by \$50 or more the budgeted amount, whether offset by projected revenue or not, the request will be presented to the Board at the next scheduled board meeting. After discussion, a motion shall be made to approve the over-budget expense, followed by a vote of the Board. The Secretary will capture this in the meeting minutes, including to which project or category this expense will be charged. If the project coordinator incurs the additional expense without the prior approval of the Board, he/she accepts the risk that the over-budget amount may not be approved and will not be reimbursed." Paragraph 5d would be eliminated as redundant. After a full discussion, Vickie Minor moved to accept the proposed change as written, Janet Dart and Rocky Bessette simultaneously seconded the motion, which was approved without objection.

2022 Board Election

Nancy explained that in the past, the elections have been at the quarterly meeting in August or September (usually at the annual BBQ). Because of the ongoing pandemic, there will be no BBQ this year so we will have a virtual election, as we did last year. Nancy will set it up in SurveyMonkey, it will open September 19 and close October 2. She will send an email ahead of time to alert the membership and to explain that if anyone wants to propose a name not on the ballot, the individual being nominated must be willing to serve. The current ballot is President: Nancy Glick; VP of MG Education: Janet Dart; VP of Community Education: Jan Even; Secretary: Marilyn Clark; Historian: Mimi Thomas; Treasurer: Tim Schindele; OMGA State Rep: Jan Barron; Alternate State Rep: Evie Cox. Two positions are appointed by the President and the current holders plan to continue: Membership: Jolene Dodge and Communications Liaison: Rocky Bessette.

ACTION ITEMS:**G-Suite/Workspace Protocols**

Janet Dart reported on the development of G-Suite, which has now been renamed Google Workspace. Through Tech Soup (which is free), we can get discounts on software, which allowed us to obtain Google Workspace for free, and to purchase software at half price (e.g., webinars through Zoom). Jan Even, Nancy Glick and Janet Dart have done the initial draft of a policy & procedure for using Google Workspace, which is now with Vickie Minor for review and comment. Amy Jo has suggested that we do a video and a zoom class for project coordinators and the board, on how to use the components of the software. This is expected to be up and running in January 2022.

We had a brief discussion on how to handle tech-related costs such as software, focusing on whether the costs/

expenses should be under the tech umbrella or expensed to the project. For now, we will leave things as is, but as we go through the next year, we should pay attention to the tech needs for the various project coordinators to see how things could be improved.

PROJECT STATUS REPORTS:**Hollinshead Garden**

Kirsten reported that plants are growing, people are harvesting, things are going fine. She has cleared out the plot for the gardener who was asked to leave, noting that it was overgrown with weeds. There will be a meeting in October to talk about the guidelines and how to proceed in situations where someone is in violation. Kirsten reported that Amy Jo has some ideas that could help in these types of situations. Kirsten also reported that the garden will close for the season over the weekend of October 16-17, 2021.

Discovery Park Garden

Gary was unable to attend and there was no formal report this month.

OSU Demo Garden

Vicky reported that there was a good turnout of 12 people for the most recent work day. There are four (4) remaining work days scheduled for the demo garden. Duties will include harvesting and transplanting for the landscaping between the buildings. The last official work day will be October 19; the annual beds and vegetables will be cleaned up, and the garden will be put to bed for the winter. Vicky also reported that all volunteers will be masked, even if outdoors, because it is too difficult to maintain a 6' social distancing space.

Water-wise Garden

Pat Kolling reported that the garden looks very nice right now. Purslane is an issue in the native beds because it is growing in several areas nearby. Other plants have gotten big and discussions are ongoing about how much larger certain plants will get. Work is also being done to finish the database to get information loaded and available. Discussion followed on whether there could be a class this fall on putting gardens to bed. Pat will work on putting something together, which could be done by webinar. This led to a broader discussion on developing a plan over the winter for community ed. Nancy would like to see a rough calendar of classes that could be held during the year through in-person sessions or by webinar depending on the need and circumstances, with specific details finalized as things develop. Based on our experiences this spring and summer with webinars, there is continuing support for this format, as it allows people to attend classes who would otherwise be unable to do so because of travel or other restrictions.

Continued on page 8

LOWDOWN FROM THE BOARD continued

Open Forum

Vicky Kemp reported that she has received permission from the fairgrounds to use the roundabout and Parking Area J for a plant sale in 2022. The areas would be used as they were this year, for pickup and delivery to customers. Parking Area J would be available for vendors, if we are allowed to have them. Currently, the plant sale is scheduled for June 4, 2022.

Rocky Bessette did a virtual presentation of the trowel awards for Spring Seminar, honoring Janet Dart and Nathalie Smith. Rocky explained that both people were getting the award because of their contributions to making Spring Seminar happen this year. They figured out how to program and host five webinars, they spent countless hours putting everything together and as a result, the webinars went off without a hitch. We were told by an IT professional that the presentations were very professional. They both deserve the recognition and made Rocky very proud.

Nancy Glick reminded everyone about the MG photography contest. Specific information on the types of photos and how to upload them, can be found at:

<https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/mgcoordinators/2021/07/26/the-master-gardener-volunteer-photo-contest-is-officially-open/>.

Janet Dart is also including this in an article for the HoeDown. The deadline for submissions is September 30, 2021 at 8:00 PM. Winners will be announced October 25.

No other business was discussed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Minor, Secretary



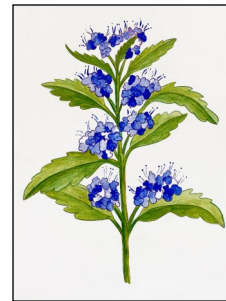
Photo by
JoAnne
Abbott

PLANT OF THE MONTH

by Lisa Nakadate and Julie Hill

Featured Plant - Blue Mist Spirea
Caryopteris x clandonensis 'Blue Mist'

Height: 3 - 5'
Spread: 3 - 5'
Flower: Lavender-blue
Bloom time: Late summer to fall



Why Should I Plant Blue Mist Spirea in My Garden?

- * Blooms with a profusion of dark blue flowers in late summer when few other shrubs are flowering.
- * Attracts butterflies, pollinator friendly, and deer and rabbit resistant.
- * Invaluable nectar source for bees and butterflies due to the time of year it blooms.
- * Once established, needs only occasional watering.

Fun Facts

- * It is a hybrid between two species, *caryopteris incana* and *caryopteris mongolica*, two shrubby species from the Far East.
- * Foliage has a sage-like scent.

Information Sources

Water-wise Gardening In Central Oregon: <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9136> Monrovia: <https://www.monrovia.com/plant-catalog/plants/2470/blue-mist-bluebeard/>

STORING YOUR HARVEST WITHOUT A ROOT CELLAR

By Robin Sweetser

Now that you have grown and harvested some beautiful winter-keeping vegetables, how are you going to store them? Not everyone has access to a root cellar. Here are other ways to store your harvest!

In great-grandma's day, most houses had a root cellar or a cold storage room somewhere in the house. Today's modern houses don't include that feature and pride themselves on having warm, dry, finished basements instead of cold, damp cellars with dirt floors (for good reason).

So, how do you store crops such as winter squash, beets, carrot, beets, onions, sweet potatoes, and cabbages, which would have traditionally been kept in a root cellar? Unless you're ready to invest in building one, here's advice on how to keep your garden harvest through the winter.

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8 Storing Your Harvest

First, find a cool, dry place in your house:

Does any room in your house stay below 60 degrees (F) but above freezing?

Do you have a closet on an outside wall?

Can you section off the coolest corner of the cellar or attic?

Do you have an unheated mudroom or entry?

How about using picnic coolers or a clean metal garbage can with insulation in an unheated garage or shed?

My parents used their bulkhead for cold storage. It had easy access from inside and outside and the wide steps made handy shelves. They could open the bulkhead door occasionally to add fresh air, but the warmer cellar air kept things from freezing on extra-cold nights.

HOW TO STORE DIFFERENT VEGETABLES

Different fruits and vegetables need different temperatures and humidity levels to store successfully. There are four basic groups:

GROUP 1: COLD AND MOIST

These root crops like it cold, 32° to 40°F (0° to 4.5°C), and need very moist conditions (90% humidity). They can be stored in a basement—or perhaps a garage—but they will need to be covered in packing materials like sand or peat moss. This material should then be kept moist (not wet!). You can use a spray bottle to add moisture as needed.

Pick root vegetables before the temperature drops below 25°F (-4°C), brush off loose soil (don't wash them), clip tops to 1 inch, and leave roots intact.

Pack beets, carrots, turnips, radishes, and rutabagas in damp sand, peat moss, or sawdust so they don't touch each other.

Celery keeps best if pulled up by the roots and stored upright with the roots in damp sand.

GROUP 2: COLD AND DRY

Cold but drier, 32° to 40°F (0° to 4.5°C), and 60 to 70% humidity.

Apples, pears, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and potatoes can be stored in the same place as root vegetables as long as they are given extra air circulation to keep them drier.

For the apples and pears: Many gardeners advise wrapping each individual fruit in newspaper to help them keep longer and discourage any rot from spreading.

Cabbage and brussels sprouts can be uprooted and replanted in a bucket or bag of moist soil.

Potatoes need darkness and a spot nearer to 40°F (4.5° C).

Isolate the apples in their own container, as they give

off ethylene gas and also absorb strong flavors like cabbage.

Bosc and Anjou pears are good keepers. Condition them at 50° to 70°F (10° to 21°C) in a dry, airy place for a week before storing them at 32°F (0°C).

GROUP 3: COOL AND DRY

Cool, 40° to 50°F (0° to 10°C), and dry (under 60% humidity).

Onions, garlic, and shallots keep best in a dry, unheated spare room or closet.

Before storing, dry them for about two weeks in an airy location before braiding or hanging them in mesh bags.

They can also be stored in shallow boxes or baskets no more than two layers deep.

GROUP 4: SLIGHTLY WARMER AND DRY

Slightly warmer, 50° to 60°F (10° to 15°C), and dry (60% humidity).

Sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and winter squash actually need slightly warmer conditions to keep their texture. So, they can be kept in a dry basement or closet in the home, which is below room temperature.

Squash and sweet potatoes do need to be cured before storage. For squash, leave stems intact and cure for two weeks to dry and harden the skin before storing. Sweet potatoes need to be cured at a high temperature (80°–90°F; 26°–32°C) for 5-10 days before storing and don't let them drop below 50°F (10°C) in storage.

Both will last longer if they aren't piled up too much and have good air circulation.

OTHER STORAGE OPTIONS

Refrigerators: For produce that needs cold and moist or cold and dry conditions, storing in the refrigerator is a great option.

Leave in the ground: Until the ground freezes, you can store crops like beets, carrots, turnips, potatoes, and radishes right in their garden bed. Cover them with a good amount of hay or straw. They can then be dug as needed or until the ground freezes.

Extend the season: Use cold frames, row cover, or back-yard hoop or green houses to keep your vegetables producing for at least a few more weeks.

Make a root clamp: Instead of building a root cellar, just dig out holes in the hard ground to store cabbages, potatoes, and other root vegetables. Use hay in between each vegetable. Cover with a thick layer of straw, and then the dirt to keep out any frost. Then cover with more straw (a bale or two).

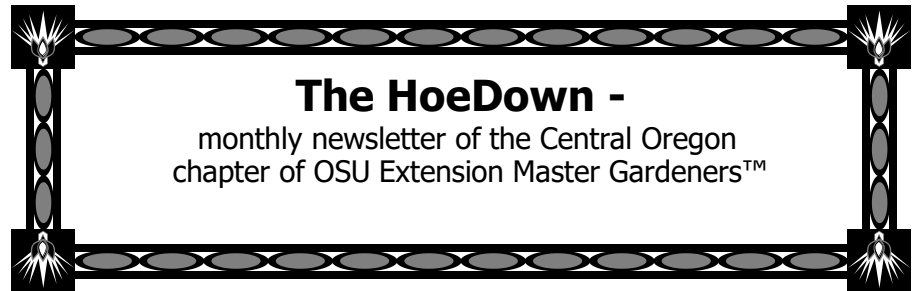
CHECK ON YOUR STORAGE

You can't just leave your storage and forget about it. Be sure to check your stored produce regularly and remove anything that has started to spoil! If you don't, the rot will spread to the rest. Remember the saying, "one bad apple can spoil the bunch."

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