

Master Gardeners to the rescue

Basic gardening training offered through course

By Tammy King
of the Daily Courier

"When should I prune my fruit trees?" "When should I buy bare root trees?" "What sort of bug is this eating at my roses, and should I use an insecticide spray?" "Is it too late to compost leaves that fell in autumn?"

These are just some of the questions confronting Lisa Higgins, the Oregon State University Extension office's new plant clinic coordinator for Josephine County. It's her job to help frantic would-be-gardeners.

Higgins, who has a degree in botany from Southern Oregon State College and an extensive background in horticulture, may not have an answer for everything, but she knows where to find it.

One wall of the clinic, located in a corner office at the Extension Office, 215 Ringuette St., is covered with shelves full of resource materials, books and brochures. There also is a microscope ready to identify any curious looking "crawly thing."

Higgins also refers inquiries to Master Gardeners in the area or experts at Oregon State University.

She also arranges soil tests for gardeners who want to know if their soil is "alive or dead."

For those who want to solve their own gardening problems, though, Higgins recommends enrollment in the Master Gardener course, an intensive training and education program in basic gardening and horticulture with "a local bent."

Because each region has its own particular gardening challenges — weather, soil, plants and trees that are indigenous to the area, growing seasons, pests, weeds and diseases — it's good for backyard farmers "to learn from the experts," Higgins said.

The next Master Gardener training program begins Thursday at the Josephine County Extension Activity Building, 215 Ringuette St.

The 12-week program involves "a time commitment," said Higgins. In addition to the 72 hours of classroom instruction, each Master Gardener is required to pay back the Extension office with 60 hours of volunteer work helping others.

Higgins will supervise volunteers who will help Extension staff members answer gardening questions from the public and organize community education pro-



TAMMY KING/Daily Courier

Plant clinic coordinator Lisa Higgins looks over a cherry tree to determine if it needs pruning.

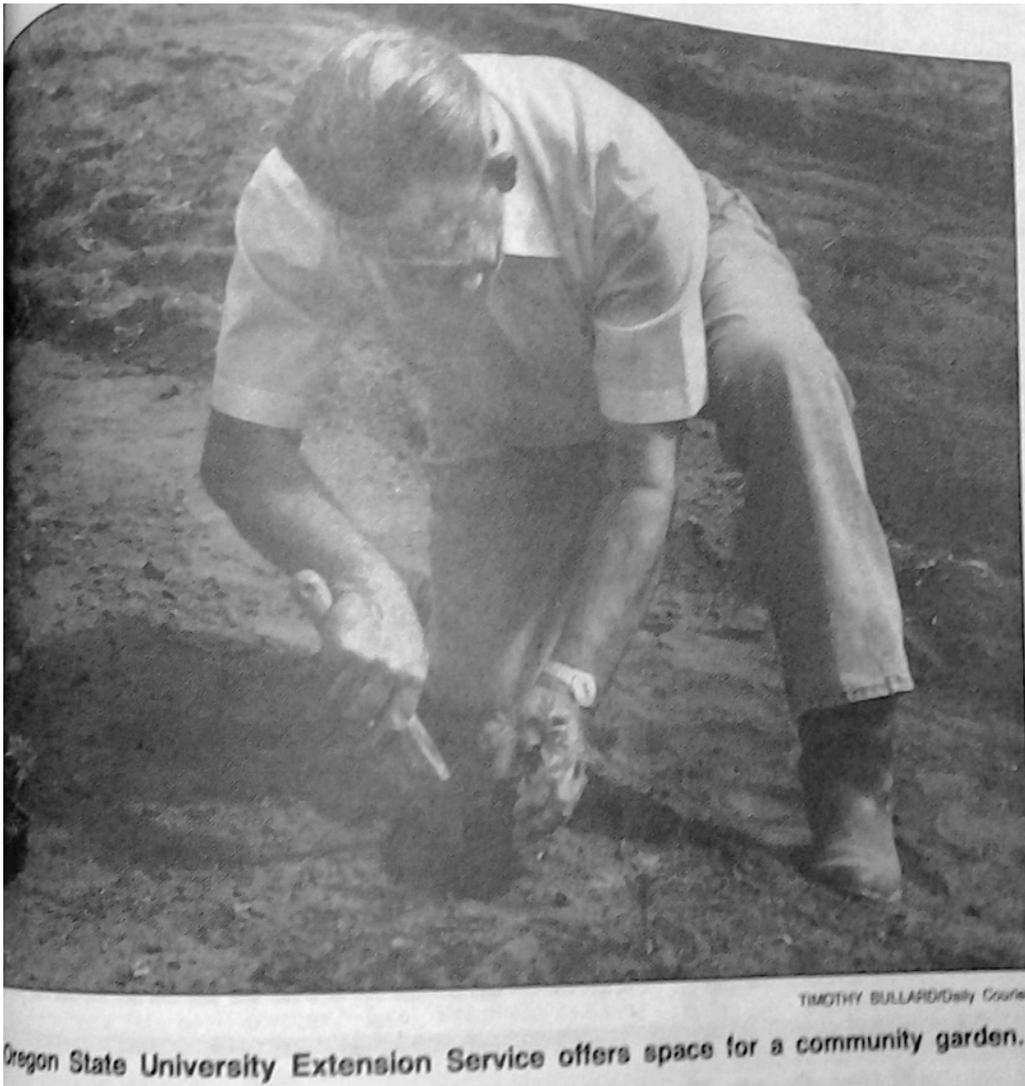
grams, such as plant clinics, the spring garden fair and garden seminars. Master Gardeners also may use their pay back time to volunteer as a 4-H leader or present talks to community organizations and schools.

Classes are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each Thursday. They will include instruction by experts in

the following areas: climate and plant growth, weed and pest control, plant parts and functions, greenhouse construction, plant problems, nut and fruit trees, berries, landscape design, ornamental tree care, patio and flower gardens, garden soil, composting, plant nutrition, indoor landscaping, saving garden

seeds, the all-American vegetable garden, organic gardening, mole and gopher control, turf grasses and the basics of irrigation.

Registration for the Master Gardener training program is requested by Tuesday. The fee for the course is \$50. For information, phone 476-6613.



TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

Oregon State University Extension Service offers space for a community garden.

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Togetherness in Gardening

Community plot gives city-dwellers room to grow

Gail Bullen
The Daily Courier

Are you a would-be gardener who lives in an apartment building surrounded by white gravel? Or does your tiny garden at home lack space for sprawlers like pumpkins, melons and squash?

Reserving a plot in the local Oregon State University Extension Service community garden this summer could solve both problems. Other than a \$3 key deposit, which is returned at the end of the summer, there's no cost to rent one of the 10-by-20-foot plots, according to Bill Burton. Burton is the volunteer Master Gardener who supervises the community garden for the Extension Service. People interested in reserving a plot should leave a message for Burton at the Extension

Service, 476-6613. The fenced community garden sits on county-owned land off West Park Street that was once used as a nursery, Burton said. The garden enjoys full sun and has a sandy loam soil.

The county parks department tills the garden every spring, according to Burton. Free irrigation also is provided and the water is funneled to each plot through pipes Burton lays out once the tilling is done.

Burton can often be seen at the community garden during the summer working his own plot. Burton can answer many questions for beginning gardeners. More advice is available from the Extension Service at 215 Ringuette St. just a couple blocks south of the community garden. Burton, a retired

carpenter and contractor, never had a chance to garden until he moved to Grants Pass about four years ago. He decided to try the community garden because he had little space at home, he said. One thing led to another, and he ended up enrolling in the Extension Service's 12-week Master Gardener Program three years ago. This will be the third summer that Burton, who likes to stay busy, has been the coordinator for the community garden.

Like Burton, Mabel Small lacked the time to garden until she retired in 1987 as a supervisor at a local electronics plant.

"It's lovely being able to work in a garden. It's a real outlet after being in an office for 23 years," Small said.

Small especially likes tending her plot early in the morning when the wild geese

are calling and the birds are singing. A large population of quail that live near the garden help keep the bugs down, she said.

Sue Haden has a small garden at home, but decided to get a plot at the community garden last summer so her children could raise plants that need a lot of room to grow, such as squash, pumpkins and melons.

Five-year-old Nathan planted the seeds, 10 year-old Katie watered them, and both loved being in the dirt.

The two children became especially fond of growing pumpkins last summer. They scratched their names and designs into the pumpkins when they were still small and watched what happened when they grew.

"By Halloween we had custom pumpkins," Hadden said.

Katie has already started growing pumpkin seeds at home to transplant into this summer's garden, according to Hadden. The girl also is planning to grow carrots this year, mostly as a treat for her pony, Hadden said.

Sign up for OSU's '91 gardening program

It's time to sign up for the 1991 Oregon State University Extension Service Master Gardener Program scheduled to start in January.

The Master Gardener Program is intended to provide home gardeners with basic instruction in horticulture and then to use the trainees to help Extension Service staff members answer gardening questions from the public.

The course of study will include pruning, vegetable garden management, landscaping, plant disease, insects, soil and water management, lawn and turf maintenance, fruit,

nut and berry cultivation and how to grow herbs.

The classes will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. one day per week for 12 successive weeks. The classes are held at the Josephine County Activity Building, 215 Ringuette St.

Tuition is free, but there is a \$50 fee for materials. Training is provided in exchange for volunteer educational activities.

Master Gardener activities start after the training period is completed.

Each participant spends a predetermined number of hours staffing plant clinics, where the public brings questions and plant speci-

mens for plant problem diagnosis.

In addition to plant clinic hours, volunteers will be asked to plan and care for a demonstration garden, organize and lead 4-H clubs, talk to garden clubs and schools or assist with a spring garden fair.

Availability to participate in Master Gardener programs and projects are essential for enrollment. Enrollment will be limited.

Applications must be submitted as soon as possible before the Jan. 4 deadline.

For more information, phone George Tiger or Lisa Higgins, of the Josephine County OSU Extension Service Office, 476-6613.

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Space still available for gardening program

There is still space in the upcoming Oregon State University Extension Service's Master Gardener Program.

The program, which begins mid-January, is intended to provide home gardeners with basic instruction in horticulture and then to use the trainees to help extension staff members answer gardening questions from the public.

The course of study includes vegetable garden management, landscaping, plant disease, insects, management of soil and water, lawn and turf maintenance, fruit, nut and berry cultivation and herb growing.

Classes will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. one day per week for 12 weeks at the Josephine County Activity Building, 215 Ringuette St.

Upon completion of classes, Master Gardeners are required to staff the extension service's plant clinic and participate in public service projects.

Tuition is free, but there is a \$50 charge for lesson materials. Enrollment applications must be submitted by Friday.

For more information, phone George Tiger or Lisa Higgins at 476-6613, or stop by the extension office, 215 Ringuette St.

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Pruning booklets available

Master Gardeners also offering help

Winter dormancy is a popular time to prune trees, and National Arbor Day Foundation and the Josephine County office of the Oregon State University Extension Service have free booklets available.

Master Gardeners also are available to offer pruning suggestions.

How a tree is pruned in its first few years of life will affect its shape, its strength, and even its life span.

Booklets include step-by-step illustrations showing how proper pruning in the early years of a tree's life can save money in the long run and result in safer, more beautiful, healthy, easy-to-maintain trees.

Master Gardeners can help with a variety of information, including showing how homeowners how to make a pruning cut, how to prune for desired form, how to strengthen the tree by removing certain branches, how to maintain the tree's health by removing trouble spots and when to leave temporary lower branches and when to cut them.

Advice is even given on how to hold a pair of pruning shears and how to make pruning cuts at the proper angle.

To obtain pruning guides, stop by the Extension Service office, 215 Ringuette St., or phone George Tiger or Lisa Higgins at 476-6613.

To obtain a copy of the free booklet, "How to Prune Young Shade Trees," write to: How to Prune, National Arbor Day Foundation, Nebraska City, NE 68410.

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