

1991

Regional Gardening Seminar March 30

Tammy King
Daily Courier
March 21, 1991

The third annual regional gardening seminar, sponsored by the Master Gardeners and Rogue Community College, is here.

This year, the seminar is planned for March 30 at Rogue Community College.

Classes begin at 9 a.m.

The enrollment fee is \$5 per class with a four-class maximum. The schedule is as follows:

9 to 10:20 a.m.

- **Tomatoes – Seeds to Table:** Master Gardener and Food Preserver Linda Thompson will tell you how to get the most out of this versatile fruit, from seeds to sauces.
- **Bugs and Weeds:** Extension agent George Tiger will share his expertise on identification and control of common garden pest and noxious weeds.
- **Natives in the Landscape:** Nurseryman Andy Sudkamp will discuss the advantage of using native plants in the home landscape.
- **Bonsai:** Rachel Winter, who teaches bonsai classes at Rogue Community College, will share her knowledge and demonstrate techniques of this Japanese art form.

10:30 to noon

- **Culinary Herbs:** Herbalist Alan Zenet will discuss selection and use of herbs in your garden and kitchen recipes.
- **Turf and Grass:** Rogue Community College instructor and commercial landscaper Steve Siegel will share the latest methods for growing and maintaining a lush green lawn.
- **Pruning:** Local arborist Rick Brown will give shortcuts and tips on pruning for better tree shape, size and vigor.

■ FREE PLANT CLINICS COMING TO THE ILLINOIS VALLEY. Volunteer Master Gardener Bob Pergeson will staff a free plant clinic in the Illinois Valley every Tuesday from 9 a.m. to noon, beginning April 9. The clinic will be open until mid-May. The plant clinic is located in the Soil Conservation Service Office of the County Building, Cave Junction.

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■ MASTER GARDENERS TO HEAR ALL ABOUT BEES. The bees will be buzzing at the Josephine County Master Gardener's Association meeting Wednesday. John Campbell, president of the Southern Oregon Bee Association, will address the group at 7 p.m. at the Extension Service office, 215 Ringuette St. He will discuss pollination, honey production, killer bees and pesticide problems. He also will bring a demonstration hive.

■ SPRING GARDEN FAIR TAKES PLACE THIS WEEKEND. The Josephine County Master Gardeners Association and the Oregon State University Extension Service are conducting a spring garden fair from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday at the local Extension office, 215 Ringuette St. There will be demonstrations and exhibits including native, plants, plant propagation, grafts, small wood lot management, moles and gophers, plant clinic, soils, food preserving, mushrooms and poisonous plants. Admission is free.

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TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

Lisa Higgins helps with home horticulture problems.

Bugged by bugs? Call these folks

Extension staff have the answers

By Dan Dillon
Daily Courier
4-25-91

Their telephones ring when the ants and termites swarm, when plants are withering, and when people find strange bugs.

Who are these people who revel in the oddities of nature? "They're a bunch of nuts to begin with, because I'm one of them," said Max Cain.

Actually, they're Master Gardeners, who have extended their hands to help home horticulturists as part of the Josephine County Oregon State University Extension Service since 1979, when the first classes were conducted locally.

They come from all walks of life, said Lisa Higgins, who has been with the program for four years and is now a part-time Home Horticulture Program assistant.

Engineers, Doctors, Teachers, Dentists. All are people interested in gardening.

"They want to know about gardening in the Rogue Valley, and this is a great way to find out," she said. The seed of the Master Gardeners program was sown in 1976 in Thurston County, Wash., 50 years after the Extension Service was initiated to help professional agriculturists.

The Extension Service made no provision for helping people with gardens, so the premise of the group was simple, Cain said.

"If they can help the farmers, why can't they help the gardeners?" said Cain, a Master Gardener since 1986.

More than a green thumb goes into the information they share on the Master Gardener hotline, where volunteers fielded between 1,800 and 2,000 questions last year.

Master Gardeners pay \$50 for 72 hours of classroom training between January and April. In exchange, they agree to volunteer 60 hours sharing the information they gleaned in the classroom.

"The big question we're getting right now is, "What kind of bug have I got here?" he said. "Or 'My plants are dying; what causes them to die?'"

The local office is backed by professionals at OSU with an insect laboratory and museum, a herbarium and a plant disease laboratory.

This weekend, they will share their knowledge during a clinic at the Spring Garden Fair at the 4-H Activity Building, 215 Ringette St., in Grants Pass.

The clinic is almost an instant replay of the hotline.

"Lots of insects, lots of household insect problems," Higgins said of the requests for assistance. "How to prune is probably the No. 1 question. 'Are those ants really carpenter ants or are they termites?'"

Thirty people signed up for Master Gardener classes this year, with another 43 on the rolls as paid members.

"I think the advantage for people once they find out we're there is it's a non-threatening atmosphere," Higgins said.

Unlike a commercial nursery where customers might feel obligated to buy something when they ask questions about gardening problems, Master Gardeners' information comes without strings. "They're not obligated to do anything, other than keep using our service so we can keep proving we're necessary," Higgins said.

Monthly educational meetings at the 4-H Activity Building are open to the public.

Guru of green's seen it all

But zucchini still thrills pioneering Master Gardener

By Barbara Hahn

Daily Courier

4-25-91

Beginning gardeners all tend to make the same major mistake, says Ray McNeilan, a gardening author and coordinator of Oregon's Master Gardener program. "They usually start too big and want to plant everything under the sun, McNeilan said during a recent visit to Grants Pass. "A new gardener will usually try to plant more than he can possibly take care of."

The result is a frustrated gardener who may throw in the towel when his efforts don't produce the seed -catalog-perfect produce envisioned during enthusiasm of spring.

In his more than 30 years of gardening and teaching, McNeilan has seen the typical fits and starts of gardeners.

Originally from Oklahoma, McNeilan came to Oregon in the late 1950s to obtain his master's degree in ornamental horticulture from Oregon State University. He remained with OSU, working as an extension agent, "off and on," he added. In between, he managed a nursery and horticultural supply business.

In the mid-1970s he had returned to the Extension Service. He helped organize the Master Gardeners in 1976 and has been its state program coordinator since then.

"We try to give them a fairly broad review of all aspects of home horticulture," McNeilan said of the program.

This year, there are 756 new Master Gardeners in the state, and 2,088 people have been in the program at least a year, he said. There are ongoing Master Gardener training programs in 17 of the state's 36 counties.

It was because of McNeilan's work with the program and the urging of Master Gardener Micheline Ronningen and an editor of Portland's Timber Press that McNeilan teamed up with Ronningen to write "Pacific Northwest Guide to Home Gardening." The book, published in 1982 and recently updated, outlines the region's unique growing conditions, gardening challenges and how to achieve gardening success.

While McNeilan notes there are hundreds of gardening books available, there seemed to be a need for one about the Northwest because of its unique growing conditions.



BARBARA HAHN/Daily Courier

Ray McNeilan has made a career of sharing his green thumb.

Oregon climates, for example, vary widely, from the rainy northwest section to the drier environs of southwest Oregon to the short growing seasons of Eastern Oregon.

The book focuses on the western side of the Cascades, where milder climates allow gardening nearly year-round in some areas. Chapters include in-depth discussions on climate, soil, pests, vegetables, small fruits and tree fruits.

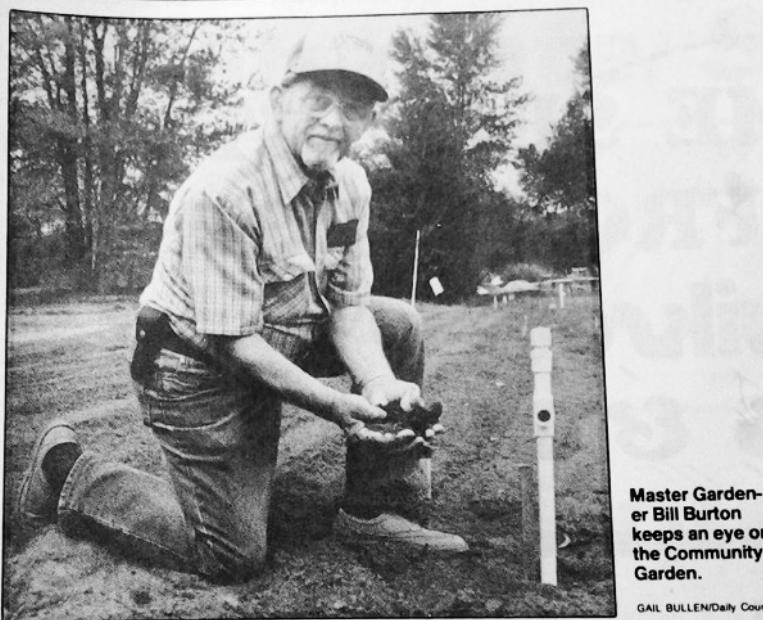
While McNeilan's book covers the basics, new issues constantly face gardeners. For example, McNeilan noted that the Master Gardeners' advisory council in Multnomah County has drawn up a list of issues it believes needs to be addressed. These include increasing emphasis on programs for youth and the handicapped, projects that match up prolific gardeners with needy families, pesticide use and water conservation.

Overall, McNeilan believes fewer people are growing vegetable gardens than did so a decade or so ago. And those who do garden aren't necessarily doing it because of cheaper or higher quality produce.

"We're finding that more people are gardening as a form of therapy, as a way of relaxing," he said.

Even McNeilan turns to his garden for relaxation. So what is his favorite garden vegetable?

"My wife and I love zucchini squash," he said, noting they tend a 50-foot row of squash each year.



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Master Gardener Bill Burton keeps an eye on the Community Garden.

GAIL BULLEN/Daily Courier

'Do dirt' among friends

Stake your claim in the county Community Garden

By Gail Bullen
of the Daily Courier

Some people have already signed up for a plot at the Josephine County Community Garden this summer, but there's room for a lot more, according to Master Gardener Bill Burton.

The garden is a joint project of the Josephine County Parks Department and the Josephine County Master Gardener Association.

The fenced garden is on county-owned land off West Park Street — just a hoe, rake and shovel away from the Oregon State University Extension Service office on Ringuette Street.

The only money a budding horticulturist has to put out for a 10-by-20-foot plot in the garden is \$3 for a key deposit. The County Parks Department tills the garden every year, and it's served by the Grants Pass Irrigation District.

Burton lays out irrigation pipe to every plot, so gardeners need only hook up a garden hose to water their plants.

"Everything is handed to them on a silver platter," Burton said.

Most people who garden there raise plants that enjoy full sun: tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, beans and corn.

Last summer, one man raised cut flowers for his church, Burton said.

Gardeners will have to bring fertilizer to supplement the sandy loam found in the community garden, but may not need to worry about insecticides.

Burton said he has grown an organic garden there for the past three years.

People sign up for plots at the community garden for a variety of reasons.

Burton, for example, has room for only two small raised beds at his home. He raises most of his vegetables at the community garden.

A woman who recently bought several acres off Rogue River Highway signed up for a plot this summer after discovering "her ground wasn't worth a darn for gardening," Burton said.

The community garden was started five years ago. This will be the fourth summer Burton has been in charge.

Burton works in his plot three or four times a week, usually early in the morning or in the evening. He checks to make sure there aren't any leaks in the irrigation pipes and is always available to answer questions.

When Burton's not around, gardeners also can seek advice from the Extension Service. A Master Gardener will be on duty from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays during the summer, Burton said.

Burton, a retired carpenter and contractor, raises far more than he needs. He supplies eight people in his neighborhood with fresh produce in the summer. He also donates his excess to Josephine County Community Services for Meals on Wheels and to the Gospel Rescue Mission.

People interested in reserving a plot at the community garden should leave a message for Burton at the Extension Service at 476-6613.

Gardeners can master endeavor

Now is the time to sign up for the 1992 Oregon State University Extension Service Master Gardener Program scheduled to start mid January.

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

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

Classes will run from 9 a.m. to p.m. each Thursday for 12 consecutive weeks. The classes are held at the Josephine County Extension Service office, 215 Ringuette St.

Training is free, but there is a \$50 materials fee.

Master Gardener activities start after training is completed.

For more information, phone 476-6613.

■ LEARN WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR GARDEN'S HARVEST. "What to do with the Harvest" is the topic of the Master Gardener's meeting Wednesday. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Oregon State University Extension Service office, 215 Ringuette St. The public is invited.