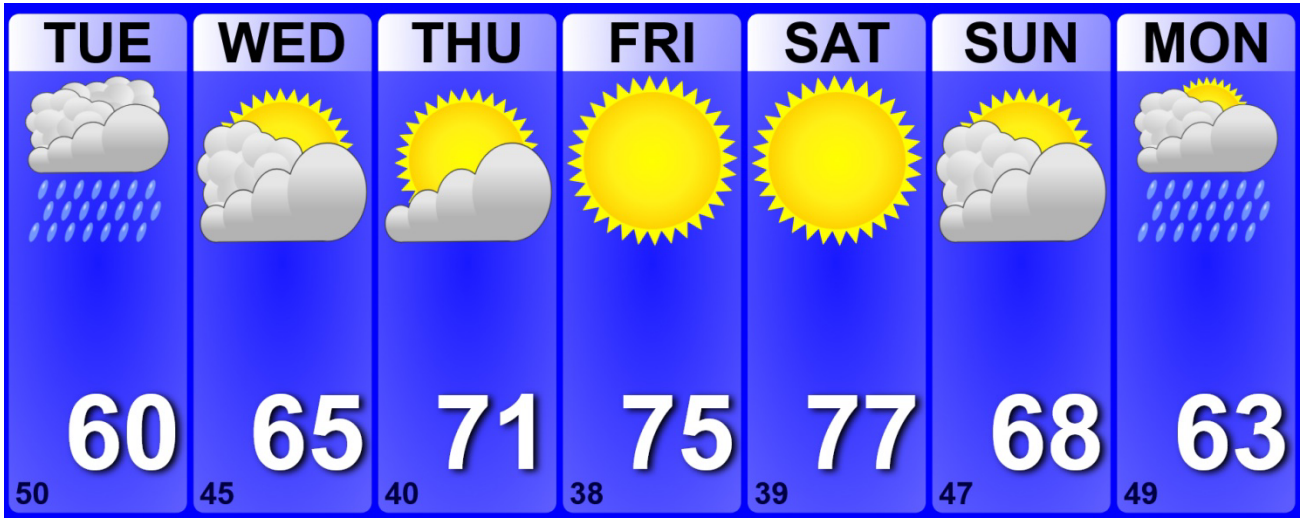
Weather-wise Gardening



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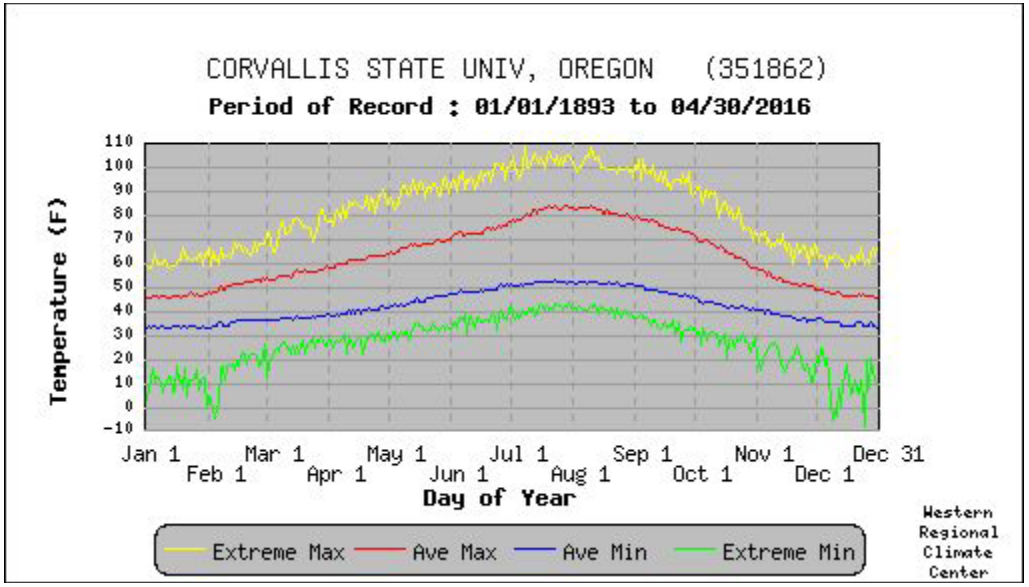
It’s a dance!

- We can fight the weather to garden by the calendar, or the moon, or we can go with the flow.
- I’m a weather buff by nature, and this is part of what makes gardening and farming fun for me.

Sources of weather info

- NOAA forecasts, Wunderground, etc.
- Big picture, 90+% accurate 3 days, 75% 7 days.
- Climate Prediction Center 6-10 day and 8-14 day outlooks: https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/
  - About 50% accurate
  - Helpful when deciding whether to wait out an unfavorable pattern

Know your climate



https://wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?or1862

Know your microclimate

- Personal weather station or Wundermap – compare to official forecasts
- Valleys near hills: can be 5-10 degrees colder at night
- Higher terrain (but less than 1000 feet): typically warmer nights, fewer frosts
- Valley flatlands: forecasts more accurate

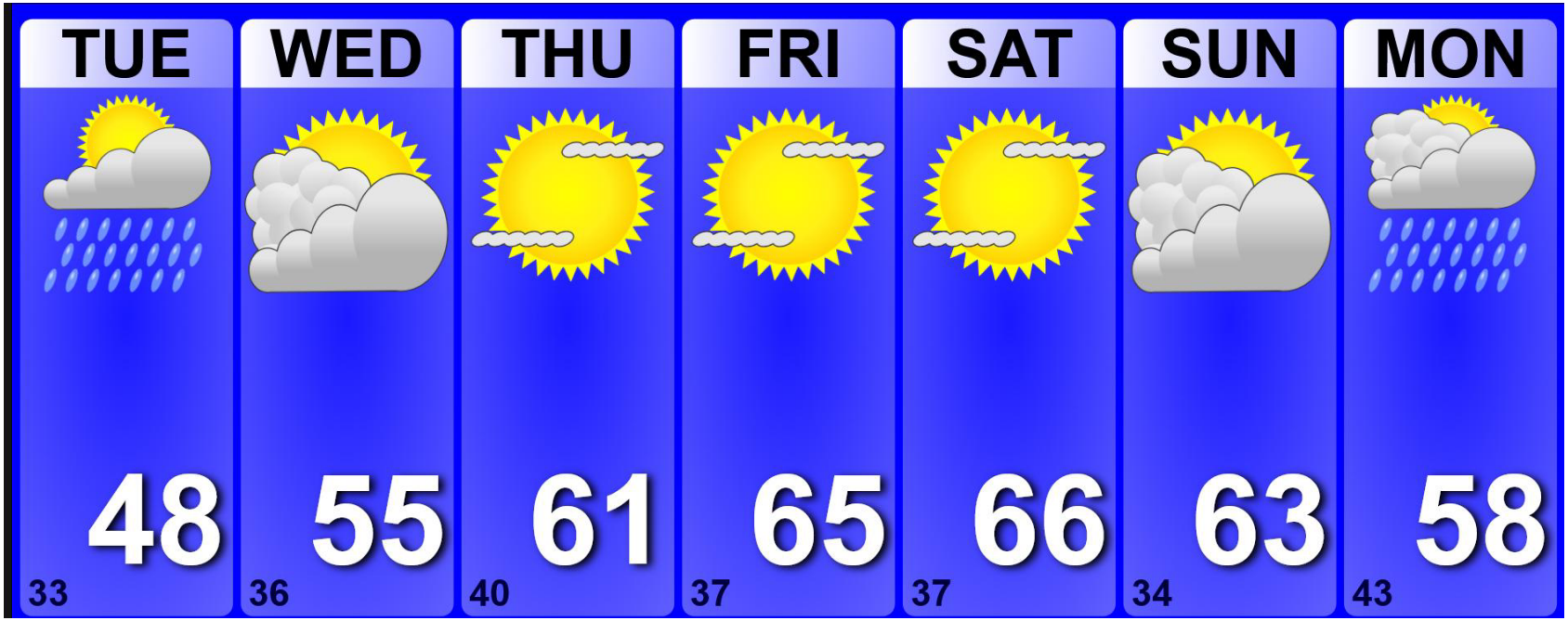
Weather windows and weather events

- Windows: patterns to watch for to guide garden actions

- Events: extremes to prepare for/respond to

Early spring (March-April)

- Window to watch for: 4+ dry days with highs in 60s



Window actions

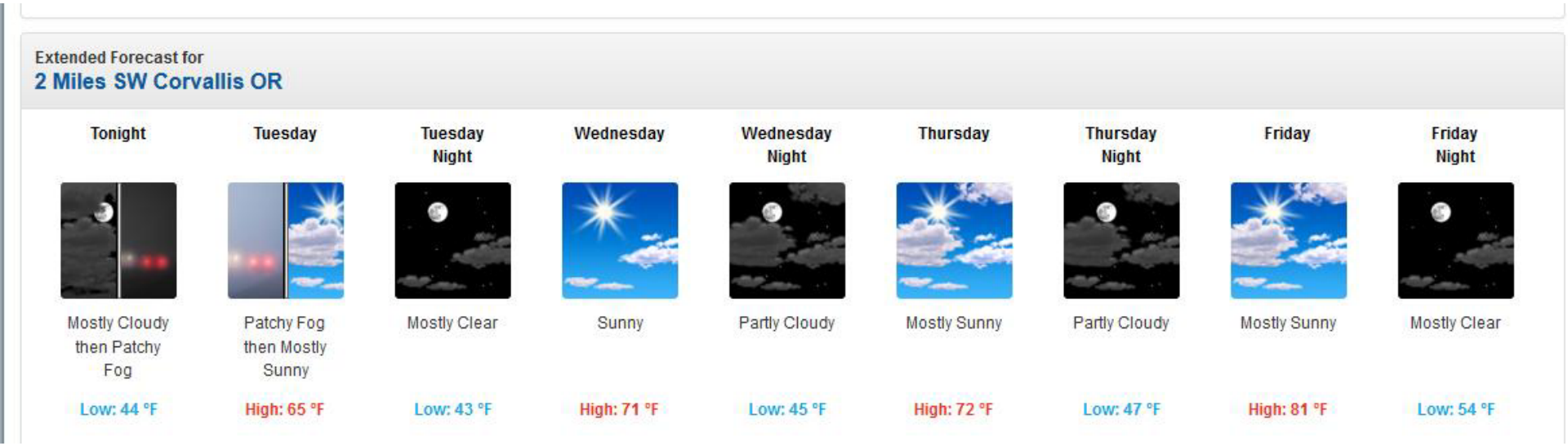
- Day 2: hoe (allowing weeds time to dry out)
- Day 2: direct seed cool-season crops (if no hard freezes ahead) – lettuce, radishes, peas, carrots, beets, etc.
- Day 4+ (depending on soil type): bed prep for next round of planting
- Ahead of rain: transplant early starts

Early spring weather events

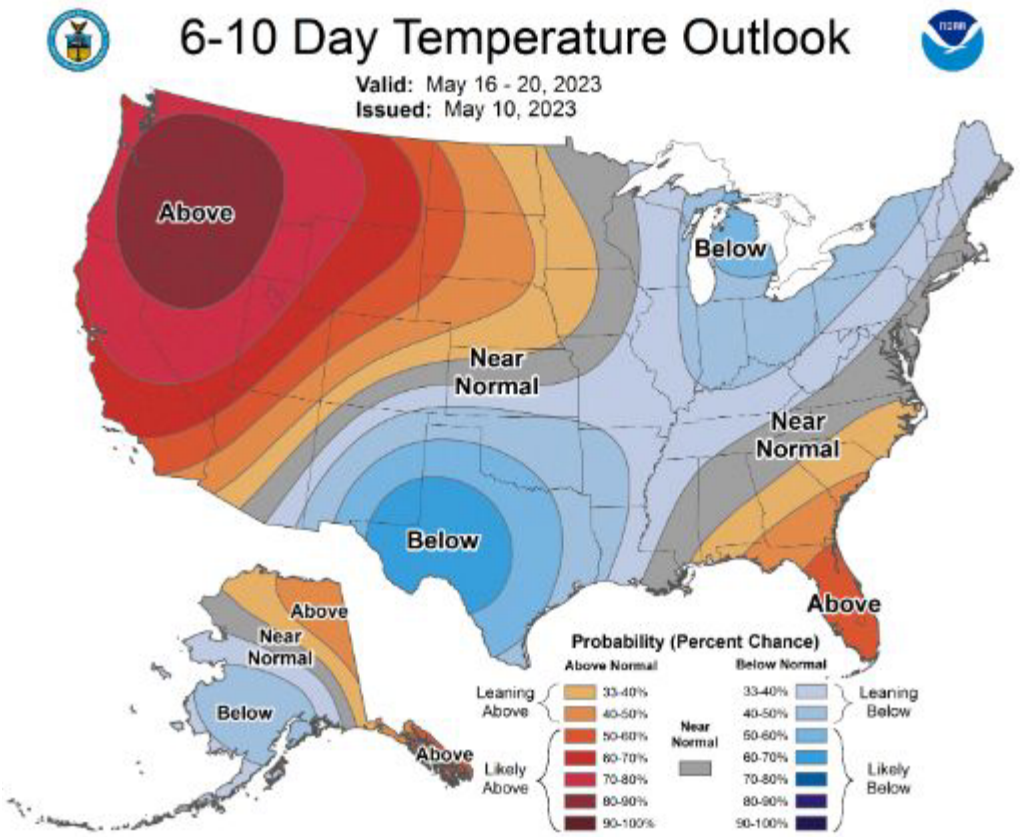
- Hard freeze (<25ºF)
  - Cover peas, young crops with tarps/blankets
  - Orchard/vineyard buds/blossoms may be damaged
  - Avoid planting crops with a hard freeze or cold pattern ahead

Late spring (May-June)

- Window to watch for in May: 5-7+ days with highs in 70s and lows above 40



Temperature Probability



Window actions

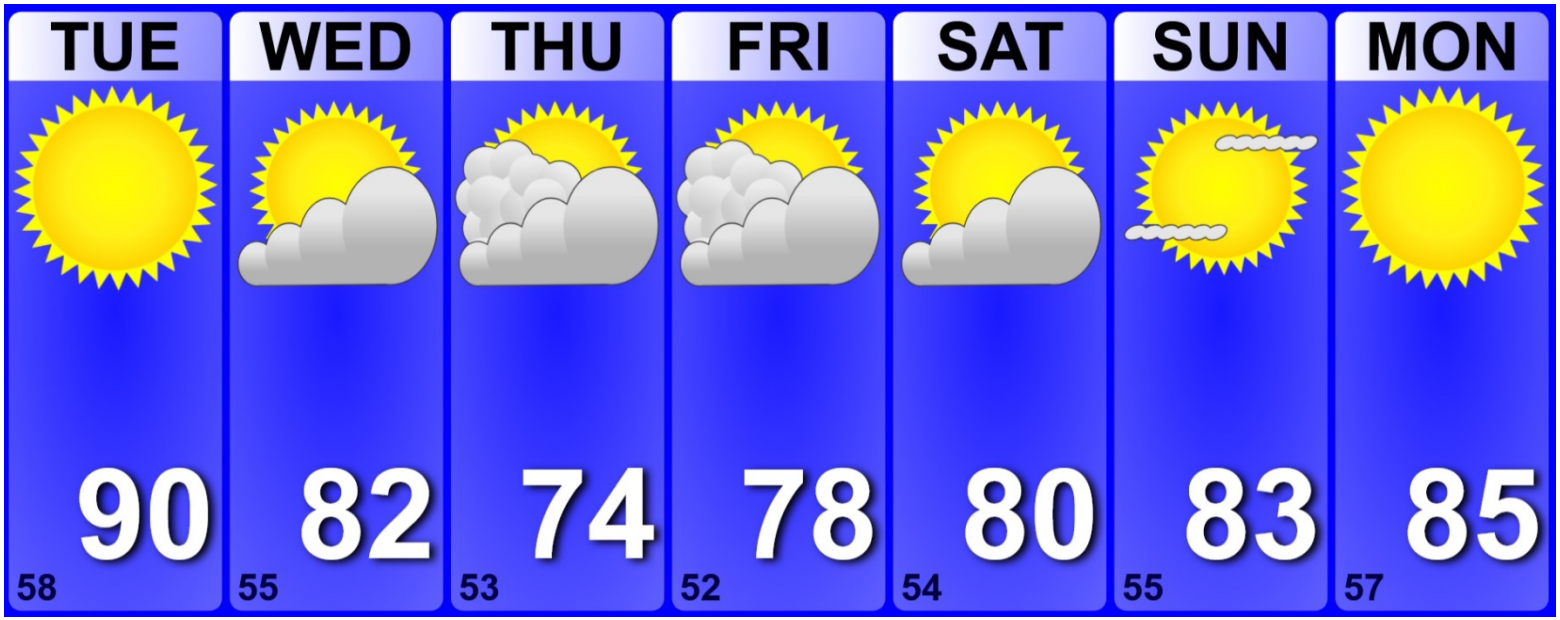
- Day 1: direct seed beans, quinoa, corn, cucumbers, squash, melons
- Transplant tomatoes (if no <40ºF ahead)
- Transplant peppers (if after May 15 and no <45ºF ahead)

Late spring weather events

- Late frost (<35ºF predicted)
  - Cover tender crops already in the ground
- Early heat (>90-95ºF predicted)
  - Harvest greens, radishes, brassicas ahead of heat
  - Harvest in early morning on hot days
  - Water in early morning, not at peak heat

Summer (July – Sept. 15)

- Window to watch for: 5-7 days of cooler temps (highs <85ºF)



Window actions

- Direct seed and transplant succession plantings and fall crops
  - Early July: fall beets, carrots, brassicas, radicchio
  - Early August: fall/winter kale, lettuce
  - Early September, fall/winter mustards, arugula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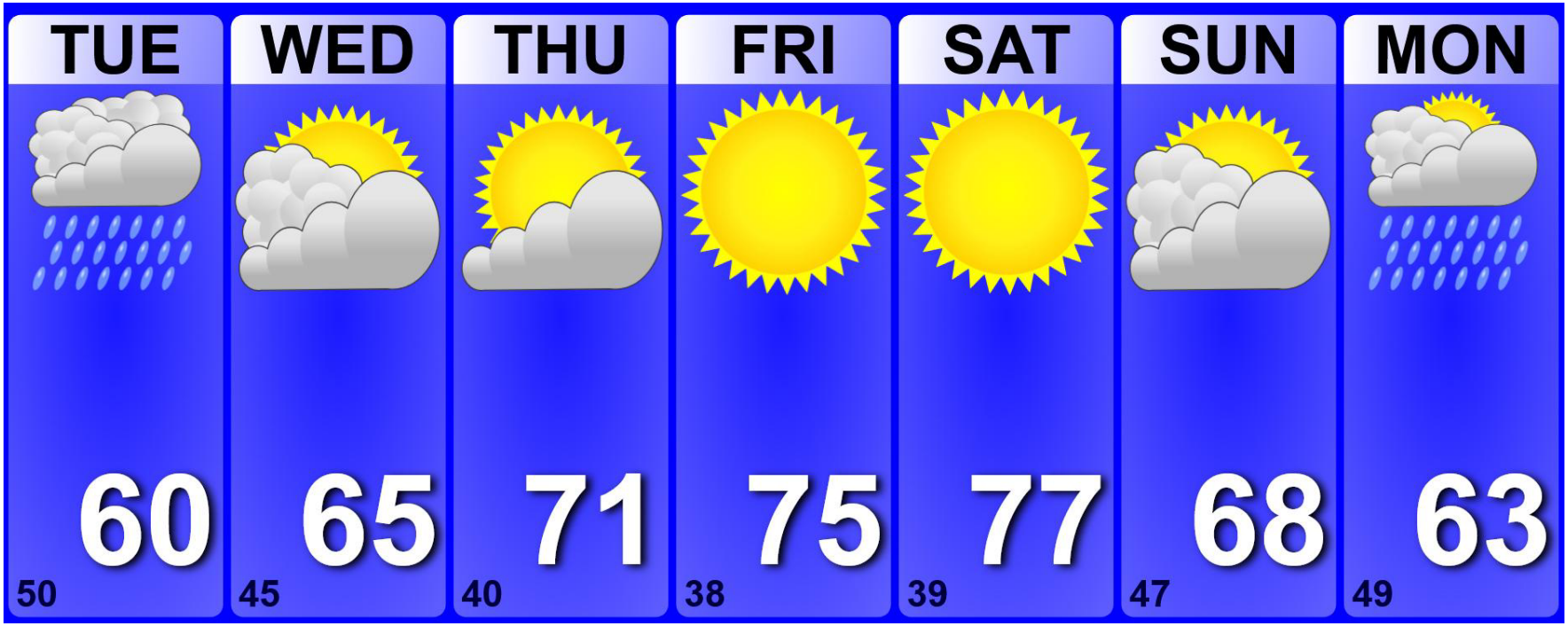
Summer weather events

- Extreme heat (>95-100ºF)
  - Harvest berries, greens, peas ahead
  - Keep adequate water but don't water at peak heat
- Rain (more than a sprinkle)
  - Harvest and cover ripe grains, dry seed crops
  - Harvest ripe/near-ripe tomatoes (they will split)

Fall (Sept. 15 – Nov. 15)

- Window to watch for: dry after wetting (>1/2”) rain



Window actions

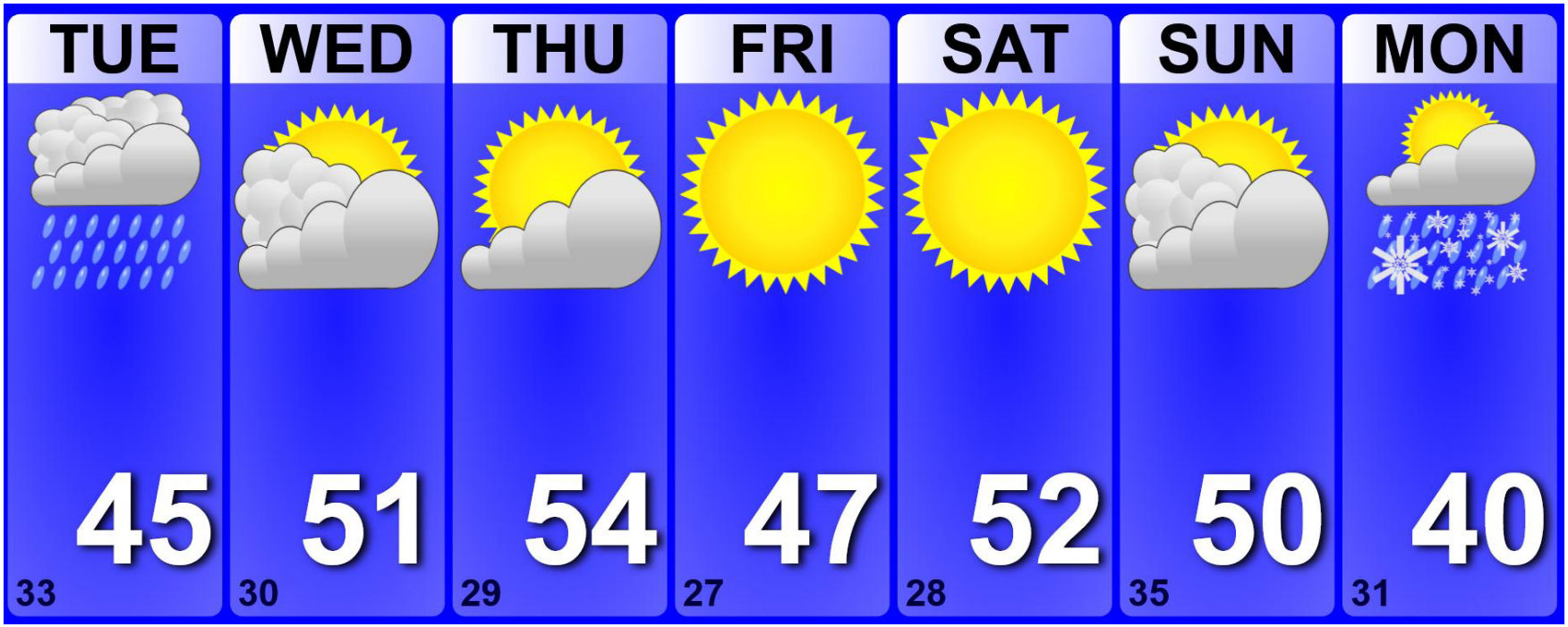
- Prep beds for cover crops, garlic
- Hoe germinating winter weeds/grass

Fall weather events

- First frost/freeze (<34ºF predicted)
  - Harvest all winter squash, melons, ripe tomatoes/peppers
  - If it's early (before Oct. 10) it may be worth it to cover tomatoes and especially peppers for a few more weeks of ripening
- Pattern switch to continuous rain
  - Plant cover crops (earlier is better) and garlic
  - Finish all weeding and ground work

Winter (Nov. 15 – Feb.)

- Window to watch for: dry spell (5-7 rain-free, mostly sunny days)



Window actions

- Manage weeds
- Harvest carrots and root crops
- Late winter: prep ground for first peas/radishes (not possible every year)

Winter weather events

- Extreme cold (<23ºF)
  - Harvest or protect crops if hardiness limit will be reached
  - Insulate with snow (if available) or mulch/leaves (but beware of voles!)
  - The same temperature is more damaging if it occurs early, or suddenly after warm temps

Some hardiness limits

- 20-25ºF: Damage to lettuce, Asian greens, some chicories. Most winter crops survive. (Almost 100% chance.)
- 15-20ºF: Damage to most chicories/radicchios, brassicas, exposed shoulders of beets and carrots. Most winter crops survive. (~50% chance)
- 10-15ºF: Likely loss of unprotected favas, phacelia cover, chicory/radicchio, carrots, beets. (~30% chance)
- 0-10ºF: Only parsnips, garlic/onions, cereal grains, and some exceptional kale/cabbage will survive unprotected. Typically these temperatures coincide with snow cover which will insulate less hardy crops if deep enough. (~15% chance)
- -3.4ºF: Lowest temperature I have observed in Corvallis (December 2013).

Keep a journal

- Record weather events and garden activities.
- What worked well? What will you change next year?
- If you're a real weather nerd, consider getting a personal weather station that keeps a record for you.

Don’t sweat it!

- Despite judgmental Facebook comments gardening is not really about “right” and “wrong.”

- Experiment, learn, go with the flow of the weather, don’t be afraid to buck conventional wisdom and see what happens.

Questions?