



A newsletter for  
those interested in  
Forestry, Woodland  
Management and  
Christmas Trees in  
Northwest Oregon

**Winter 2015**

## **Reading this on paper? This may be your last copy of *Tall Timber Topics*!**

Did I get your attention? In 2015, we are making a change to the way we produce and distribute this newsletter. Currently, we send out about 800+ printed copies, and another 500+ or so people receive it electronically in their e-mail. Some get both. **Beginning with our next newsletter in spring, if we have a valid e-mail address for you in our database, you will only receive the newsletter electronically**, unless you opt-in (see below). We anticipate that this will reduce our printed copies by about 200 per issue. We will be applying the cost savings to improving the quality of the remaining printed issues (if you are a print subscriber, you may have noticed that the copy quality is variable, and can be quite poor depending on which county produces your copy).

We realize that some people do not use e-mail or have ready access to the internet, and that others simply prefer a printed newsletter. If you are one of these people, rest assured that you will still be able to receive your copy in the mail. However, in order to do so, you must let us know your preference. Please complete the survey form on page 5 of this newsletter and mail it back to us.

I've been producing *Tall Timber Topics* ever since I arrived here six years ago, and many of you have been receiving it for much longer. I enjoy producing the newsletter, but it does require substantial time and money. I think it is time to evaluate the value of *Tall Timber Topics* to those who read it. I invite all readers to please complete a survey and help us understand how this newsletter is useful to you, and what could be improved. The survey will only take you about five minutes. It is on page 5, or if you are on your computer, you can do it online, [by clicking here](#).

Thank you and happy 2015!

**Amy Grotta**

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## Upcoming Events



### **Forest Tax Symposium: Understanding Oregon's Family Forestland Tax Landscape**

**Monday, January 26th, 8:30 am—4:30 pm, Corvallis**

Join fellow landowners, foresters, and trained tax and estate planning professionals to learn about the myriad of taxes related to forests and forestland ownership. Cost is \$45. Details: <http://www.oswa.org/blog/tax-symposium/>. To register: <http://taxsymposium.eventbrite.com>

### **Washington County Small Woodlands Association - January program**

**Tuesday, January 27th, 7:00 pm, North Plains Fire Station**

Speakers from various local, state and federal agencies will provide an update on assistance opportunities for woodland owners.

### **Yamhill Small Woodlands Association - January program**

**Wednesday, January 28th, 6:30 pm social hour/7:00 pm program, 2050 NE Lafayette Ave, McMinnville**

Speakers: Joe Touchstone and Brent O'Nion from ODF will explain the new E-notification system for Forest Practices.

### **Basic Woodland Management Shortcourse**

**February 2nd—March 2nd, 6:00—8:30 pm, (Sat. March 7 field session), St. Helens**

An ideal course for anyone just starting out caring for a woodland property.

For details: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/forestry/events>. Course is almost full at press time, so call (503) 397-3462 to check on space availability before registering.

### **Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District Native Plant Sale**

**February 5th, 6th, 7th, McMinnville**

Pre-order early for best selection. Order forms and details at <http://yamhillswcd.org/>

### **Washington County Small Woodlands Association - February program**

**Tuesday, February 24th, 7:00 pm, North Plains Fire Station**

Speaker: Mike Cafferata from ODF will talk about last year's Scoggins Creek Fire.

### **Yamhill Small Woodlands Association - February program**

**Wednesday, February 25th, 6:30 pm social hour/7:00 pm program, 2050 NE Lafayette Ave, McMinnville**

Speaker: David Diaz from Ecotrust will provide a demonstration of the Forest Planner tool.

### **Oregon Season Trackers—A Citizen Science Workshop**

**Wednesday, March 4th, 10 am - 2:30 pm, Hoyt Arboretum (4000 SW Fairview, Portland)**

Become an Oregon Season Tracker citizen scientist and help monitor seasonal patterns of precipitation (rain and snow) and phenology (timing of natural processes such as bud break). It is a fun way to contribute to science and learn about your local weather patterns. Cost: \$35 includes an approved rain gauge. See page 7 for more details.

### **Columbia County Small Woodlands Association Tree Seedling Sale**

**Saturday, March 14th, 8:30 am, Lawrence Oil (Pacific Pride), St. Helens**

Arrive early for best selection!

### **Washington County Small Woodlands Association Native Plant Sale**

**Saturday, March 14th, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, Bales Thriftway, Farmington Rd., Aloha**

All profits go to scholarships for OSU Forestry students. Check [www.wcswa.com](http://www.wcswa.com) for plant availability.

## Understanding GMOs and forestry

By Amy Grotta, OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension, Columbia, Washington & Yamhill Counties

Adapted from TreeTopics, <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/treetopics>, December 19, 2014

The closest contest of last November's election – the GMO labeling initiative – [was finally put to rest](#) after a recount. The measure ultimately failed by a tiny margin, but it did a lot to put GMO's into the public spotlight. Of course, the ballot measure had to do with food labeling, not trees, but it got me thinking that it might be worth looking at how GMOs relate to forestry.

### What is a GMO?

In case you were not following along during election season, let's start with a definition. A GMO is an organism whose genes have been directly altered by humans, in a laboratory, through genetic engineering within individual cells. GMO methods can be used to modify an organism's own DNA or to insert DNA from another organism. The modified cells then are regenerated into whole organisms. Reasons for doing this might be to improve crop productivity, disease resistance, the nutritional yield of food plants, or resistance to herbicides to facilitate weed control. From the technology itself to the ways that GMO might be used in society, it quickly becomes obvious why GMOs can be very controversial.

### What is not a GMO?

So, on to forestry and trees. Planting season is upon us, and if your seedlings are coming from one of the small woodlands seedling sales, or from a large commercial forest nursery, and you are planting Douglas-fir, then chances are your seedlings are advertised as "genetically improved". Some people mistakenly think that this means that they are GMO trees, but this is not the case. For decades, we have employed traditional breeding techniques in forestry to produce seedlings that perform well. On the most basic level, this means that parent trees with desirable traits, such as drought tolerance, height growth, frost resistance, etc. are identified. Seeds or cuttings from these trees are collected and grown in a controlled area such as a seed orchard. More seed is collected from these trees, so that the desired traits can be passed on to the next generation. The "genetically improved" seedlings you plant are a product of this process, not of genetic engineering.

### How might genetic engineering apply to forestry?

The story of the American chestnut tree is a good example. The American chestnut once was a major component of forests in the eastern United States. It was a valuable timber tree and an important food source for both people and animals. But, a fungal disease, the chestnut blight, introduced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century virtually wiped it out. Only a few hundred trees survived.

(American chestnut, while not native to Oregon, was brought over and planted by pioneers. The blight is not prevalent in Oregon, so chestnuts [do well here](#).) Many people are working to try to restore the chestnut to its native range. Besides traditional breeding for blight resistance, some researchers are experimenting with genetic engineering. They have inserted a [gene from wheat](#) that conveys resistance to blight into American chestnut trees. The researchers are also testing many other genes, mostly derived from the blight resistant Chinese chestnut.

### GMO research at Oregon State

At OSU, forestry professor Steve Strauss is recognized as a leader in genetic engineering research. He does a lot of his work on poplars and eucalypts, which have potential for bioenergy feedstocks, pulp and solid wood. But, before GMO plants like these could be utilized commercially, regulatory agencies and the public will subject them to a lot of scrutiny. For example, we need to be sure that there are no unintended consequences, such as unplanned spread of the modified genes to other non-GMO plants in the environment, or on a farm. So Dr. Strauss and his cooperators do a lot of laboratory and contained field studies on the safety and risks associated with genetically engineered trees, with the focus on methods for preventing their spread until they are more fully understood.

Despite the failure of the GMO labeling initiative last year, we certainly have not seen the end of the debate around this issue. So, it's worth understanding what genetic engineering is and is not, and what the potential benefits and risks of this technology might be. For those who want to read further, I'll refer you to this website: <http://agbiotech.oregonstate.edu/>

I think the bottom line (and here I probably ought to invoke some sort of disclaimer about my personal opinion) is that genetic modification may eventually be a management tool, like herbicides, chainsaws, and other tools in your forestry "toolbox". GMOs are inherently neither good nor bad. The more important questions for forest managers and for society are how, when, and for what purposes they are employed.

Of course, there was another big initiative on the ballot last November. And like GMO's, the production of marijuana certainly has its intersections with forest ecology and management, as many people in southern Oregon might tell you. But that's a topic for another day...

## It depends

By Amy Grotta, OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension, Columbia, Washington & Yamhill Counties

Adapted from TreeTopics, <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/treetopics>, November 7, 2014

Remember those Magic 8 balls where you would ask a question, shake the ball, and get an answer? I wish life were that simple.

Extension agents get a lot of questions. Some say we are notorious for always answering with “well, it depends.” As an Extension agent I’m as guilty as anyone of using “it depends”, and not because I want to dodge your question. Usually there is more than one answer; more information is needed; and ultimately, you are the one who will be able to answer your own question after a more thorough evaluation. Here is a sampling of inquiries I’ve received by phone, email, or [Ask an Expert](#) over the past few weeks, to illustrate this.

***“Do you have advice for the most effective strategies for killing blackberries? We want to use only as much herbicide as is really needed.”***

It depends!

How large an area needs to be treated? Is it a site prep situation, or are the trees already planted? Is there desirable vegetation intermixed with the blackberries, and if so, how much?

I hope I didn’t frustrate the askers by giving them a whole lot of questions in exchange for the single one asked. But each situation is different and the “best” strategy will depend on these and other factors. Knowing how herbicides work is critical to successful integrated pest management, which is really what the question is about.



*A wall of blackberries*

***“I have a few acres of pasture and I’m thinking of planting some trees and putting it in forest deferral. Is this a good idea?”***

It depends!

Are the soils suitable for growing trees, and if so what kinds? Have you thought about how you will get the site ready for planting? Do you have the ability to control competing vegetation on the site for several years after planting? Are you willing to commit time and money to this effort for the next five years? Will you be able to pay back taxes should the plantation fail and forest deferral be removed?

This person got 5 questions back for the price of one. I’m not in a position to tell her whether it’s a good idea, but I can help her evaluate the answers to some of my questions.

***“We have some big trees on our property. Should we cut them now to make sure they don’t overgrow the market?”***

It depends!

Despite common assumptions, some mills buy big logs. Have you checked to see whether your trees are really too big? What are your overall income goals for your property? Are you thinking of removing just the biggest trees, or doing a clearcut? Which course of action, including no action, would leave the stand in better or worse condition over the long run?

I believe that there are no stupid questions. So bring ‘em on. But don’t be surprised if the answer is “it depends”.



*Big logs coming into the mill*

## Tall Timber Topics Reader Survey

Thank you for taking the time to give us your thoughts about *Tall Timber Topics*.  
When you have finished, please remove this page from the newsletter, fold and mail.

You can also take this survey online at this link: [https://jfe.qualtrics.com/form/SV\\_9TXFEi6SMII45Fz](https://jfe.qualtrics.com/form/SV_9TXFEi6SMII45Fz)

Are you a woodland owner?  YES  NO

How do you currently receive *Tall Timber Topics*?

in the mail  by e-mail  both in the mail and by e-mail

If you read *Tall Timber Topics* electronically, do you ever click on links in the newsletter to read further on a topic?

YES  NO

How much of the newsletter do you typically read?

The whole thing, cover to cover  Flip through and read just the parts that interest me  I read very little of it.

How is Tall Timber Topics most useful to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If it is not useful, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How useful or relevant are the following regular Tall Timber Topics features to you?

	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful
Calendar of upcoming events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articles about woodland management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articles about wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articles about weeds, insects, or diseases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articles about scientific research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information about new Extension publications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summaries of stories in the media related to forestry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What topics would you like to see that we aren't covering? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever read something in Tall Timber Topics that has influenced the way that you manage your woodland?

YES  NO

If you have an example, please describe. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When was the last time that you attended an event (workshop, class, field tour) sponsored by OSU Extension?

Within the last year  Within the last five years  More than five years ago  Never

If you would like to update your subscription preference, please fill in the information below. Beginning with our next issue, subscribers for whom we have a valid e-mail address in our database will receive *Tall Timber Topics* by e-mail ONLY, unless they specifically "opt-in" and request to stay on the paper mailing list.

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Check if you want to continue receiving a paper copy of *Tall Timber Topics* in the mail.

*Optional demographic questions:* Oregon State University is committed to diversity and to ensuring equal opportunity to those wishing to benefit from our programs and services. We invite you to voluntarily disclose information to help us monitor the effectiveness of our civil rights and affirmative action efforts. Neither the information provided, nor the decision not to provide it, will be used to determine eligibility of the benefits available through participation.

Gender:  Male or  Female

Ethnicity:  Hispanic or  Not Hispanic

Race:  White  Black or African-American  American Indian or Alaska Native  Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

More than one race

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Thank you!

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## Science that YOU can participate in - Oregon Season Trackers

Do you want to learn more about the microclimate where you live?  
Want to contribute to our understanding of the weather and its effects on plants and animals?

Become an **Oregon Season Tracker** "citizen scientist" and help monitor seasonal patterns of precipitation (rain and snow) and phenology (timing of plant growth phases such as bud break). Your observations will give you new insight into the place where you live. And, they will be used by scientists at HJ Andrews Experimental Forest, and across the nation, to develop a better understanding of the weather and climate and how they affect plants. Your observations may be particularly valuable if you live in a rural area or at higher elevations.

### Oregon Season Trackers Workshop: Wednesday, March 4th, 10 am - 2:30 pm Hoyt Arboretum, 4000 SW Fairview, Portland

At the workshop you will learn how to participate in two national citizen science networks:

- **CoCoRaHS** participants collect rain and snowfall data used by the National Weather Service, climate modelers, emergency managers, and others.
- **Nature's Notebook** observers report on seasonal plant changes in key native species.

Course fee: \$35 includes all materials and an approved rain gauge.\*

**To register:** online at <https://secure.oregonstate.edu/osuext/register/830>

\*If you do not want your own rain gauge, there is a reduced course fee of \$10. Use this link to register instead:

<https://secure.oregonstate.edu/osuext/register/831>

Questions? call Amy at the OSU Extension office at 503-397-3462



## Welcome new staff

We have a new face in the OSU Extension Office in Columbia County. Brandy Saffell joined the Forestry & Natural Resources Extension program last summer as an Education Program Assistant. She is working part-time with Amy Grotta, developing and coordinating a training program on invasive forest insects for arborists, natural resources professionals, and volunteers. That program, Oregon Forest Pest Detector, will be launched later this year. Starting in 2015, Brandy will also be providing more general support to the FNR Extension program, so you may hear from her or see her at a workshop or program this year.



Brandy is an OSU graduate, having received her Master's Degree in Forest Ecosystems & Society in 2013. For her graduate research she did some very innovative work on the biology of trees infected with Swiss needle cast (you can read about it [here](#)). She is also a Master Gardener volunteer. We are very fortunate to have her working with us in Extension!

Another new addition to our program is Tiffany Fegel. Tiffany is based in Corvallis, but has a statewide assignment as coordinator of the Master Woodland Manager program and the Oregon Women Owning Woodlands Network (WOWnet). (She replaces Nicole Strong, who has moved into a Forestry Extension Agent position in central Oregon.) Tiffany is a native of Sandy, Oregon, graduated from OSU with a degree in Natural Resources, and then went on to West Virginia for a master's degree in forestry extension. Welcome back to Oregon and to OSU Extension, Tiffany!



## Birds of a Feather— Seeking Mistletoe Bird Foraging Observations

Now that winter has arrived and stripped most trees of their leaves, you may notice something special if you look up in the treetops of oak trees. Clumps of Pacific mistletoe, known to scientists as *Phoradendron villosum*, are revealed in the canopy.

Mistletoes are a group of shrub-like flowering plants that parasitize both coniferous and deciduous trees. There are many species of mistletoes, some of which can only parasitize one host tree species. In the Willamette Valley, Pacific mistletoe mostly parasitizes Oregon white oak, though it can sometimes use pin-oaks and other ornamental trees.



Although mistletoes are parasites on trees, they can benefit other organisms in many ways. Across the globe, mistletoes may be keystone species, increasing biodiversity by providing a host of resources for wildlife including nutritious fruits and leaves, increased leaf litter, cavities for nesting and dense cover and loose bark for sheltering. A recent study by Dr. David Watson of Charles Sturt University in New South Wales, Australia found that 20% of bird species disappeared from a forest after mistletoe had been removed. Watson believes that this decline in bird diversity may be due to the loss of resources provided by the mistletoe.



Photo: OSU Professional and Noncredit Education

Scientists know that mistletoes are generally good for wildlife, but there has been no research on the effect Pacific mistletoe has on wildlife in western Oregon. Drs. David Shaw (Oregon State University College of Forestry) and Joan Hagar (U.S. Geological Survey), as well as graduate student Kyle Pritchard are trying to find out if and how mistletoe benefits overwintering birds in the Willamette Valley. Understanding which bird species utilize mistletoe berries, and how mistletoe is dispersed is a critical link in the ecology of the system.

You can help by volunteering to report sightings of birds foraging on mistletoe berries this fall and winter. Volunteers can report their sightings online at the Avian Mistletoe Project website:

<http://avianmistletoe.forestry.oregonstate.edu>

Please include detailed location descriptions or coordinates if possible, along with any feeding observations. Your data contributions can help us better understand the role of this fascinating parasite in Oregon ecosystems.



**OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension is on Facebook!**

<https://facebook.com/osufnr>

“Log” on and engage with the Oregon forestry community from your home, from the forest, from just about anywhere!

## New Publications

### ***Tax Tips for Forest Landowners for the 2014 Tax Year***

By Linda Wang, National Timber Tax Specialist, U.S. Forest Service  
Available for download from <http://timbertax.org/>

### ***Tools for Measuring Your Forest (EC 1129)***

By Steve Bowers and Tristan Huff. Revised November 2014, 9 pages, free download at:  
<https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/53642/ec1129.pdf>

### ***Group Selection Cutting in Mature Douglas-fir Forests (EM 9106)***

By Tristan Huff. New December 2014, 6 pages, free download at:  
<http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/54621/em9106.pdf>

This publication is the fourth in the "Alternative Forest Management" series:  
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/silv/silv1.pdf>



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## Trees and Forestry in the News

[Environmentalists, Portland-area lawmakers take aim at timber industry in 2015 legislative session](#) (*The Oregonian, January 9, 2015*)

Their first goal is putting new limits on aerial spraying of pesticides on forest land near public drinking water.

[Sustainable wood initiative announced at Portland conference](#) (*Portland Tribune, January 6, 2015*)

The OSU College of Forestry is partnering with the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Design to create a new Oregon Forest Sciences Complex in Corvallis. It will showcase the use of cross-laminated timber, which can be used to construct tall wood buildings.

[Private forest owners aging, parcels shrinking: Oregon State University program spreads](#) (*The Associated Press, December 7, 2014*)

Though many landowners are deeply attached to their property, that affinity can be harder to pass down than a legal deed. The Ties to the Land program is aimed at encouraging families to have conversations about the future of their land.

[Tigard company takes aim at biochar](#) (*Portland Tribune, December 5, 2014*)

Biochar - a cooked wood wood product made from leftover debris at logging sites - makes for a hearty fertilizer, and is a great way to replenish carbon levels in the ground.

[Protecting Northwest forests as bigger wildfires burn longer](#) (*KUOW, November 20, 2014*)

Large-scale fires are expected to increase over the next century. According to forest ecologists that's why it's important to thin forests and conduct controlled burns now.

[Town that thrived on logging is looking for a second growth](#) (*The New York Times, November 15, 2014*)

The town of Sweet Home is struggling, but some community members still see potential in the forest as an economic engine.

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