



UMPQUA VALLEY
Hort News

Horticultural Newsletter for The Umpqua Valley

March & April 2009

Oregon State
 UNIVERSITY

Please note: The contents of this newsletter are provided for educational purposes, and are not intended to be taken as strict recommendations for treatment of any orchard pest or condition. ALWAYS READ THE MATERIAL LABEL PRIOR TO APPLICATION.

Extension
 Service
 Douglas County

2009

Calendar of Coming Events

2009

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Steve Renquist
 Horticultural
 Extension Agent

April 1

Grafting Class at the OSU Extension office. Call the Extension office to register for our annual apple grafting class. We will supply the rootstock and scion wood and you can go home with three new trees. Come learn how grafting works. \$20 fee. *Please pre-register by calling 672-4461 for "Grafting Class" (pay at the door). Space & materials limit the class to 25.*

April 18

Arbor Day in Stewart Park. Join the city of Roseburg Parks department, local arborists, and OSU Extension at the pavilion for our annual celebration of trees and tree care. Bring your tree questions to us.

April 25

Earth Day and Energy Fair at the Douglas County Fairgrounds. The OSU Extension and Master Gardeners will be joining dozens of other local groups to promote good environmental practices. The Extension agent will be talking about certifying your landscape as sustainable. Learn how to use our sustainable worksheet to evaluate your landscape.

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 & Distribution
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Agriculture, 4-H Youth,
 Family & Community
 Development, Forestry, and
 Extension Sea Grant
 Programs. Oregon State
 University, United States
 Department of Agriculture,
 and Douglas county
 cooperating. The Extension
 Service offers its programs
 and materials equally to all
 people.

Gardening Trends for 2009

A number of media groups provide survey services to the nursery industry in Oregon. One of the most recent surveys of garden customers showed a couple of interesting trends. Gardening in a sustainable or eco-friendly manner topped the list. The second strongest trend was to focus more on growing food and not so much on ornamentals. Buying more plants and food from local producers was also a strong new trend. Nurseries in Oregon are reporting the sale of blueberry, raspberry, blackberry, and elderberry bushes are all way up. Strawberry plants and vegetable seed sales are also strong.

A nation wide phone survey by the National Garden Association also found that 9 out of 10 households believe it is important to maintain their landscape in a way that benefits the environment. When asked if they knew how to maintain their landscape in an eco-friendly fashion, only half of the people responded they did. It is important for Extension and for the landscape industry to lead people in the right direction toward sustainable (low input) gardening methods that have been verified by science based research.

Using Tree Wraps to Prevent Sunscald

As a landscaper or gardener you don't have to look around very much to find a number of trees with split bark or large cankers, being invaded by wood rotting fungi and boring insects. This is a big problem in urban landscapes. If you think about most of the damaged trees you have seen, this sunscald problem is usually on the southwest side of the tree trunk, and can be very common when trees are either close to pavement, sidewalks or surrounded by rock mulches.

So what is causing these injuries? Most of them are caused by the sun warming the bark during nice winter days, activating dormant cells that can be damaged by the evening cold. When cells are damaged cankers or sunken spots develop on the trunk and the bark eventually cracks or peels off. If trees are surrounded by rock or sidewalk (even snow), you get more light reflection that can intensify the cell damage in the young bark. During summers intense afternoon sun the tree bark cells can also be hurt by reflective heat and light.

Cracked or split bark is most likely to occur with thin bark tree species, when trees are young. Red maple, flowering cherry, and crab apple are just a few species I see around Douglas County with this problem.

So what should you do to prevent this damage to your young trees? Generally it is as easy as using light colored tree wraps made of kraft type paper, plastic wraps, or vinyl guards. Fruit tree growers paint the trunks of young trees with white latex paint to reflect light. This may not be a good esthetic solution for ornamental plants in your landscape so stick to the wraps. It is most important to use the wraps during the first few years. After that period the tree bark thickens and is less prone to cankers and splitting. Some people advise taking the wraps off during summer once your trees leaf out if the trunk is in the shade. If you decide to leave the wraps on for a few years, check under them periodically to make sure the wrap is not harboring or promoting insects or disease.

Tree wraps can also provide a secondary line of defense if you have young bucks in your area who like to rub their antlers up and down your tree trunks. It always seems to me they pick out small to mid size trees that have very smooth bark. The wraps should be used as a preventative again until the trees get larger.

Think Local Umpqua and their "Local Pages" Project

The folks at Umpqua CDC would like to remind anyone who is producing local food that they will be publishing a guide to local food and independent business called "Local Pages". Listings in this guide are free to any food producer who qualifies as local and independent. They will be publishing 10,000 copies and distributing them free at the visitor center and other local businesses. Contact Lily Brislen at Umpqua CDC for more details, 673-4909.



Growing Food in Plastic Tunnels

With recent trends in the nursery industry toward raising eatable plants for use in landscapes, and having your customers try to find more local food sources, you may want to consider using your plastic tunnels or greenhouses to produce food or food producing plants instead of ornamentals.

In the past you may have had a few tunnels at your nursery or farm to cover ornamentals, produce hanging flower baskets, or bedding plants. With the trend toward food crops you may want to think about actually growing vegetables and fruits in the tunnels to enhance the supply and quality of local produce, or to extend the growing season for a variety of plants. This isn't a new concept. Farmers all around the country have been using tunnels for the past ten

years or more. Norris Blueberry Farms used tunnels with his blueberries for many years. The technology and experience is sufficient in the industry to be able to get good guidance if it is something you would like to do.

If you are currently growing crops locally for a CSA, adding a tunnel to get your crops going earlier or keeping them going later in the fall and winter might be a good idea. If you decide to go in that direction, know that growing food under plastic will be a bit different. You will need to think about soil temperature, fertilization, pollination, and pest management issues you might never had to deal with during summer crop production. Let me know if you would like to discuss some of these issues.

New Studies on No-Till Water Erosion Reductions

Recent research being done at Kansas State University has shown that no-till farming practices improve soil structure so significantly that even when crop residue is thin on the surface of the soil, water related erosion is dramatically reduced.

Soils that have been farmed no-till for two or more years have already seen soil structural properties improve, increasing soil organic carbon content and improving soil porosity. This

can be very important for soils that experience heavy rain during much of the year. Of course soils that retained a heavier crop residue on the surface, or cover crop, reduced erosion even more.

The studies did show that if you are farming in a very windy location the amount of wind erosion was directly related to the lack of crop residue on the surface of the soil. Heavy crop residues controlled wind erosion the best.

Water Quality Protection Methods Studied for Herbicides

Another research project being done by scientists at the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA in Missouri could be very important for our local water quality issues. Scientists were studying a variety of methods to keep herbicides being used in farmed fields from getting into waterways. Contamination of surface water by atrazine and other herbicides has raised public health and ecological concerns. In the Pacific Northwest herbicide issues have been very contentious with water quality and fish health.

Scientists in many studies have shown that vegetative strips between fields and waterways do reduce the transport of soil sediments and any herbicides bound to those sediments. What the recent studies are showing is that the species of grass being used in those vegetative strips can make a difference as to how much sediment is trapped, and a surprise, how much herbicide degradation takes place. It seems certain types of grass can accelerate the uptake and degradation of atrazine and other herbicides.

The tests in Missouri used orchardgrass, smooth brome grass, tall fescue, ryegrass, switchgrass, and eastern gammagrass to see which would degrade herbicides the best. Among these species the eastern gammagrass showed the highest capacity to degrade atrazine. Orchardgrass, smooth brome grass and switchgrass also enhanced the chemical degradation.

These studies showed the importance of having a solid grass strip between your crop field and any waterway to provide the ecological protection our rivers need. The strips in tests showed that herbicide transport was reduced by stopping soil movement off fields, trapping sediments, and increasing water infiltration back through the soil, and the grasses themselves were responsible for taking up chemicals and accelerating chemical degradation. In the future work is being planned to introduce chemical degrading enzymes or microbes into grass strips to see if they can survive in the soil rhizosphere and add to the chemical degradation ability of the strip.

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To find local Extension information & news . . . Douglas County/OSU Extension Web Site:
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/douglas/>

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