



# The Smallholding

**Smallholding** (n) 1. A piece of land and its adjacent living quarters for the smallholder and stabling for farm animals, on a smaller scale, usually under 50 acres. 2. A means of achieving self-sufficiency with the ability to supplement income by selling excess produce and meat.

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## Problem Grass Weed Species in Pasture & Forage

—Andy Hulting

Pastures and hay fields are browning and competitive grassy weeds have headed out and are more easily identified with the onset of warmer and



*Foxtail barley.*

drier weather. Now may be the time to take stock in the condition of pastures and hay fields to make some decisions about weed control and pasture renovation strategies for this fall.

As many of you already know, labeled herbicide options to selectively control grass weeds in established grass or mixed grass pastures and forage fields are limited. Therefore, growers need to focus efforts on cultural, mechanical and preventative weed management strategies, especially in years following establishment. Maintaining dense competitive forage is the best way to limit weed invasion and competition with the forage species. Preparing a weed free seedbed prior to planting, planting and fertilizing at the optimum rates and dates, planting high quality seed free of weed

seeds and selecting locally adapted species and varieties that respond to management over time are all keys to successful pasture management.

Even if growers do all of these things well, there are still some weed species that become problematic. Below are some details related to the identification and biology of four problem grass species.

### Common velvetgrass (*Holcus lanatus*)

Common velvetgrass is a perennial species native to Europe that typically exhibits pubescent gray to gray-green foliage. It has a fibrous root system and is an excellent competitor for soil mineral nutrients and can tolerate poor soils and those with high levels of copper, cadmium, zinc and lead. Common velvetgrass can be particularly invasive in coastal grasslands and wetlands because some biotypes tolerate high salt concentrations. Common velvetgrass reproduces by seed and seeds germinate immediately after dispersal if environmental conditions are favorable.

### German velvetgrass (*Holcus mollis*)

German velvetgrass is another perennial grass species native

to northern Europe. It can be distinguished from common velvetgrass in that its root system is typified by vigorous creeping rhizomes. In addition, the upper florets of German velvetgrass have a sharply bent or sometimes straight awn that is distinctly different from the "hooked" awn present on the common velvetgrass florets. Common velvetgrass foliage tends to be much more hairy than that of German velvetgrass.

Cultivation, highly intensive mowing and grazing and elimination of irrigation can help to reduce the abundance of common velvetgrass, but sporadic tillage should not be considered a management tool for German velvetgrass infestations because of the potential for spread by moving intact rhizomes throughout a field with tillage implements. However, using tillage in a dedicated manner throughout a fallow period can be effective means of killing German velvetgrass rhizomes in areas of pastures or fields.

OSU Extension Publication PNW 441-Common Velvetgrass and German velvetgrass, written by J. Fitzsimmons and L. Burrill, has some good diagrams and photos of the two velvetgrass species as well

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## Spring Update from the Small Farms Program



We've had another busy spring full of classes and farm tours. In April, we held a small-scale goat dairy class with a variety of speakers including two goat dairy ranchers and a number of OSU dairy specialists. We had over forty small farmers join us for the class and tour of Siskiyou Crest Dairy.

In May, we hosted a small afternoon workshop on raising alpacas as a possible production system for small acreage landowners with a tour of Adorabella alpaca ranch. Stephen Jones, the WSU wheat breeder, joined OSU, the Ashland Food Cooperative and THRIVE in May for an evening lecture on small-scale wheat production in the Northwest. We had a great group and the visit by Stephen Jones led to a number of new connections and partnerships. As a result of the lecture, many farmers are interested in getting back into grain production. In response, we will be holding a small class on the subject in September.

We received a grant from the Western Risk Management Education Center of Washington State University to hold two four-week classes in the winter of 2009 on intern management and labor management for small commercial farm-

ers. Stay tuned for more information on this. Maud, along with the Jackson SWCD, has put in a forage demonstration plot here at the experiment station. Look for her short article on what forages are growing and how you can learn more about growing pasture on your own farm.

Our women's agriculture group continues to grow and multiply. We held a potluck in April here at OSU and discussed weed management and the various resources available for weed id and management. In May, we toured Rogue Valley Brambles in Talent, a small diversified and integrated farm pasturing poultry and growing raspberries. In June, we visited two small farms—Vaughn Farm and Old Stage Farm and in July, we will visit Le Mera Gardens, an organic flower farm in Ashland. More women farmers are always welcome to join our group, so please contact us for more information if you would like to come.

Summer is here and we are busy as ever with phone calls and field visits, but there are some great upcoming classes so take a look at those on page 7. As always, if there is something you would like us to offer through Extension, please give us a call and we can talk about it. Thank you again for your support. ☼ -MebM

## The Forage Demonstration Garden at SOREC

*-Maud Powell*

This spring, OSU Extension Small Farms and the Jackson County Soil and Water District teamed up to create a forage demonstration garden. The purpose of the garden is to help pasture-owners learn to identify different forage crops. Shelby Filley, the OSU Extension Livestock and Forages agent created a similar forage observation plot in 1999 in Roseburg, and used the plot during many of her classes.

This spring, John Yungen, OSU Extension's retired agronomist and I as well as Angie Boudro of JSWCD, came up with a list of the most commonly seeded varieties of pasture grass and legumes in Southwestern Oregon. We also added a few lesser known varieties, like Eastern Gamma Grass, which is a warm season grass, and Burnett, a hardy, evergreen forb to the

list, in an effort to educate people about a broader range of varieties available for pasture seeding.

In mid-May, we seeded 4x4 plots of 22 different varieties at the Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center on Hanley Road, and then waited for germination. Most of the seeds germinated well, though the California oatgrass had to be reseeded. One of the biggest surprises has been the excellent germination rate in the birds-foot trefoil plot, a variety considered to be difficult to establish. We spent June weeding out the plots and designing signage for the demonstration garden. Once the plants go into seed production, part of each plot will be mowed down, so that people can see each plant in different stages of growth. Melissa and Maud plan to take participants in the Pasture Manage-

ment class in August r out to look at the forage demonstration garden. The SWCD will use the garden for similar educational purposes. The garden is open to the public, so feel free to come and visit!☼



*The forage demonstration garden at the Southern Oregon Research & Extension Center.*

## Farm Profile: Vaughn Farm

-Melissa Matthewson

Nancy and Ed Vaughn own 160 acres of mixed orchard and pasture land on Old Stage Road. The farm has been in the family since 1902 when Nancy's grandfather bought an original parcel of 1,200 acres.

In 1993, Ed and Nancy planted a twenty-two acre orchard with 4,870 pear trees. They grow a number of varieties, but mostly have Bartlett and Comice pears with some interplantings of Packhams and Bosc. They also



*The pond at Vaughn Farm.*

lease hay pasture. They are currently working with Lane Community College on a farm business management class and learning what else they can do on their farm as well as who in their family will take the farm over when they retire.

Nancy and Ed value their relationships with local agencies and try to cooperate with agricultural professionals as much as possible. Ed works with David Sugar, the OSU plant pathologist, testing chemical thinning of pears. They are also working with the local NRCS office and SWCD on designing a pasture irrigation system. They are looking into moving it out of

flood irrigation into more water conserving irrigation methods. Ed and Nancy also take every opportunity to learn more about farming by taking Extension courses, participating in the League of Women Farmers and have taken SWCD's Forage Management course. They are in the process of learning about management intensive grazing in order to add animals to their farm.

Ed and Nancy have sold their pears to the SOS packing cooperative in the past. With many changes happening in the cooperative and economics of pear orchards in the Rogue Valley, they are hoping to send their Bartlett up to Stattleman's in Hood River this year for packing. They are still looking for an outlet for their Comice pears. They do some direct sales around the Rogue Valley to various grocery stores. Nancy says that six percent of their crop brings in 20% of their income from direct sales. It is another testament to how a farmer can capture more of the value of their crop by selling into direct markets on the local level.

The Vaughns yield about 350 tons of pears a year and hire a seasonal labor crew to come through and thin the pear trees as well to harvest. Right now is a relatively quiet time for the pears as they observe the bugs and wait for harvest time. For their direct sales, they have an antique apple polisher that they drop the pears into to shine them nicely for the direct markets they sell to. They usually pick Bartlett first and Bosc last, which are



*Farmer Ed Vaughn standing near one of his hay fields.*



*A view of the pear orchard at Vaughn Farm.*

usually ready by early October for picking. They use wind machines and water pumping for saving the fruit from early frosts.

While they are not certified organic they do practice integrated pest management and continually look for ways to provide habitat for beneficial plants and animals including insects.☀

## For the New Vegetable Farmer: Farmers' Market Displays and Attracting Customers

-Melissa Matthewson

As a new grower, bringing produce to your local farmers' market is an excellent way to start selling your products and gain exposure for your farm. While the quality of your produce is extremely important, how you display your produce as well as how you interact with farmers' market customers is critical to success. I have known farmers' market vendors who have beautiful and excellent quality produce, but do not have attractive displays and have suffered for it. When creating your market booth, take time with the details. They do count.



A bountiful booth. Photo by Lynn Ketchum.

What farmers' market shoppers like is a display of produce that appears bountiful and abundant. Bring a lot of produce with you to market and build your display with copious amounts of vegetables and color. Create a display that incorporates many different depths and eye levels for people to look at. Have signs that clearly label your vegetables and articulate prices.

Assume that people do not know what escarole or kohlrabi is. Give them cooking tips and recipe cards. People like to try new things and can usually be charmed into buying a bunch of scarlet turnips, for example, if you provide them with a good recipe on how to use that particular vegetable.

Use many different types of baskets or props that can hold salad mixes and loose greens and integrate bunches and heads in between those baskets. Shoppers can be shy, so make your booth accessible and less intimidating by thinking about table placement. Leave enough room for your shoppers to come in under your canopy. Double booth spaces help with this. Have bags hanging and accessible for people to shop and pick out produce. Think about using biodegradable or compostable bags as a marketing strategy. As well, integrate many different colors into your display. Think about alternating between red and green head lettuces. Put rainbow chard up front and center or purple cabbage in between a number of green cabbages. As well, invest

in a well-made large banner that has your farm name and location printed on it. People want to know who you are and where you are located.

Another important aspect of farmers markets is the importance of engaging with farmers' market shoppers. Make eye contact with the person who is buying your vegetables and engage in conversation with them about how they may prepare the vegetables. Tell them about your farm. It takes a lot of energy to cultivate returning customers, but with a little extra effort on your part, they will come back and become a steady shopper. Also, stay active at your booth. Try not to sit and do not talk on cell phones. It makes farmers look disinterested to customers. Smile at people as they come by and seem interested in whom they are and what they are doing at the market. Direct marketing is sometimes called relationship marketing, which is exactly what the farmers' market is—building community and new relationships through the exchange of food. People are coming to buy vegetables for the week, but also to meet and talk with their local farmer!☀

## The Small Farm Program Grows

The OSU Small Farms program is very excited to add Shelley Elkovich to our team this summer. Shelley has been hired to help organize two four-week courses on managing agricultural labor on small-scale farms, a project funded through USDA's Risk Management Education program. The courses will run in the winter of 2008-2009.

Shelley received a degree in English literature from Wellesley College before moving to the west coast. She has worked as a corporate recruiter and a marketing coordinator, ran a small business, and most recently coordi-

nated the Walker Fund Garden through Peace House in Ashland. The Walker Garden project offered agricultural education to children and provided fresh produce to soup kitchens. Shelley currently serves as the board president of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center.

She has been an avid gardener for the past twenty years, and is passionate about local food security and the health of small farms. She lives in Ashland with her

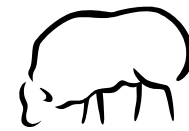


Our new program assistant, Shelley Elkovich.

husband and two children. She will be working in the Small Farms program for the duration of the Risk Management grant, which is one year. We are thrilled to add a new staff member to OSU Small Farms and expand our programmatic work.☀

## News & Resources

- New Study Finds Consumers Will Pay More for Local Foods (*From ATTRA*)**—New research suggests that the average supermarket shopper is willing to pay a premium price for locally produced foods. The study also showed that shoppers at farm markets are willing to pay almost twice as much extra as retail grocery shoppers for the same locally produced foods. Both kinds of shoppers also will pay more for guaranteed fresh produce and tend to favor buying food produced by small farms over what they perceive as corporate operations, according to the study. The study, conducted by Ohio State University researchers, is published in the May issue of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics. <http://www.ohioagconnection.com/story-state.php?Id=429&yr=2008>
- Sheep and Goat Grants Available**—The American Sheep and Goat Center (ASGC) announces the availability of up to \$200,000 in competitive grants for product or business development, producer information or education, marketing and promotion for sheep or goats or their products, genetic retention, and animal health. Eligible applicants, including many business structures but excluding individuals, may apply. The intent is to fund a variety of proposals that will benefit the U.S. sheep and goat industries. Proposals are due August 1, 2008. <http://www.sheepandgoatsusa.org/2008%20Grant%20Ann..htm>



*-Jim Hermes*

## Feeding Pastured Poultry

The pasturing of poultry is becoming a popular management method for many small flock producers, and even some moderately sized commercial farms. When pasturing chickens, the birds are allowed to roam in large areas that have various grasses or other forage plants. This is similar to systems commonly used for cattle and sheep. In fact, many producers will have their poultry flocks follow a cattle herd; the grazing cattle will keep the grasses short enough so that the smaller chickens can more easily move around.

Many pastured poultry enthusiasts like the fact the birds are able to graze in the grass just like the cattle and sheep. However, it must be realized that poultry have a different digestive system and cannot digest the grass. Cattle and sheep are ruminants, animals whose digestion system has a significant amount of fermentation to break down plant cellulose, the woody parts of plants. The rumen portion of their digestive tract contains countless numbers of bacteria, protozoa and fungi that produce the proper enzymes so that the animals can utilize the cellu-

lose as a source of nutrition.

Poultry don't have this capability. So, while poultry managed in pasture systems appear to be eating grass, and they do eat some, they get almost no nutrition from the grass itself. These foraging chickens are looking for seeds and insects that are found in the pastures.



During the spring and early summer, insects are plentiful and provide an excellent feed source for chickens. And once the grasses, weeds and other forage plants in the pasture produce seeds the birds will readily consume them to obtain their nutrition. How-

ever, late in the summer the seeds are gone and insect numbers decline so the available nutrients for poultry are significantly reduced.

Therefore, it is important for producers of poultry in pasture systems to provide a year round supply of a prepared feed. Unlike cattle and sheep, poultry require a balanced diet on a daily basis to thrive and remain productive. The birds should have feed available at all times. When the insect population of the pasture is high and when seeds are plentiful, the birds' consumption of prepared feed will decrease so some savings will be realized during spring and early summer. In the fall and winter, when pastures are nearly void of insects and seeds, the chickens will turn to the feed as their sole nutrition source.

So, remember to keep feed available to your pastured poultry at all times so their nutrition will always be at an adequate level for maintenance, growth and production. ☺

*Jim Hermes is the OSU Poultry Extension Specialist.*

## How Fuel Prices are Affecting Farmers

-Maud Powell



We are all feeling the dramatic rise in the cost of fuel over the past few months. For the first time in years, Americans are changing their driving habits to reflect the ever increasing expense of filling up their gas tanks. Fuel prices are affecting most businesses, whether from increased expenses or decreased consumer spending, or both. So how has the rise in fuel affected small farmers? On a positive note, small, local farms are beginning to be more competitive with larger farms that truck or ship their produce across the country and world. Consumers increasingly understand the significance of supporting small farms in an effort to maintain local food security. Most farmers who sell their produce at the Rogue Valley Growers markets this year sell out routinely and can't seem to bring enough of their products to market. Some Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs expanded their membership and filled up. All of this seems to bode well for the small farmer...

But here is the bad news: the cost of farming has risen just as sharply as fuel prices. Not only is driving to distribution points and filling tractor tanks dramatically more expensive, but the cost of almost all inputs have also skyrocketed. From irrigation parts to fertilizer to animal feed, prices have

doubled or tripled since last year. Nitrogen fertilizer, for example, is manufactured by natural gas, so an increase in natural gas prices has a direct and rapid effect on farmers and ranchers. Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District's Randy White, who has also been a rancher most of his life, noted that "even the price of twine has gone up!" White also commented that "with the cost of fertilizing my pastures tripled and the cost of feeding my cows in the winter doubled, I have to ask myself how long I want to stay in this business." White Oak Farm's Taylor Starr reports that the bottom line is that he is making less money this season. For small farmers, many of whom are struggling to stay in business, the increase in costs could be make or break. Josh Cohen of Barking Moon Farm explained that it is difficult to raise prices enough to accurately reflect costs without making customers balk and walk away. Consumer education about the costs of farming is an important piece of the puzzle.

So how do we make farming, such a vital part of our economy, landscape and very survival, financially sustainable?



Some farmers, like Chris Jagger of Blue Fox Farm, have used innovation to make their farms more fuel efficient. Chris uses a solar-powered electric cultivating tractor on his farm, and encourages other farmers to follow his lead. For information on converting an Allis Chalmers cultivating "G" tractor to an electric vehicle, check out this website <http://www.flyingbeet.com/electric/>.

Nationwide, a number of farmers are now switching over to animal power by modifying their equipment. While the training of animals to pull equipment can be initially time-consuming, the long term savings in fuel costs can be dramatic. Necessity may not only be the mother of invention, but also the mother of collaboration. Some farmers, like the members of the Siskiyou Sustainable Cooperative, distribute their produce collectively, thus making more efficient use of equipment and fuel. Here in the Small Farms program, we are working to develop local markets for grains, hops and other products, so that producers and consumers will have less distance to travel. Farmers have a greater incentive to share equipment and other supplies, and reuse or salvage any items they can. While it may be a precarious time for small farms, there is an ever greater need for locally produced food and fiber.☼

## Jackson County Weed Pull

-Maud Powell

On Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 75 people braved the heat in order to participate in the Jackson County Cooperative Weed Management Area's first annual *Let's Pull Together* event. The Cooperative Weed Management Area is a group of state, county and federal agencies and organizations whose mission is to raise awareness about the spread of noxious weeds in Jackson County. *Let's Pull Together* was inspired by a similar event held annually in Deschutes county. Members of the

Weed Management area, including representatives from OSU Extension Small farms, the Nature Conservancy, local watershed councils, Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District, BLM, Forest Service and others, chose six different venues for the weed pulling: North Mountain Park in Ashland, Prescott Park in East Medford, Bear Creek Greenway in Central Point, Denman Wildlife Preserve in White City, Jefferson Nature Center off Highway 99 and Valley of the

Rogue State Park. The 75 volunteers spent two hours pulling a variety of weeds, including yellow star thistle, puncturevine, and bindweed, and then congregated at Hawthorne Park in Medford for a barbeque, raffle, and bluegrass band. Despite the intense heat, we got a lot of weeds pulled. The Cooperative Weed Management Area plans to make this an annual event.☼

## Calendar of Events

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- **Thursday, July 17th, 5:30—8:00 p.m., League of Women Farmers Potluck & Tour, Free**

*Location: Le Mera Gardens. Call Melissa or Maud for more info at 776-7371.*

- **Saturday, August 2nd, 9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m., Small-Scale Pastured Poultry Production, \$25**

*Location: Fair Oaks Grange, 1020 Fair Oaks Road, Sutherlin, OR. To register, contact OSU Extension in Roseburg at 541-672-4461.*

This class is for small farm entrepreneurs or hobby farmers interested in adding laying hens, broiler chickens or turkeys to their small farm operation. Topics will include general management, nutrition and health of poultry; choosing an alternative poultry production system; poultry farmer panel and Q&A; poultry marketing opportunities; and rules and regulations for direct marketing and poultry processing. The workshop will end with a field tour of B&K Natural Farms, a local pastured poultry farm in Sutherlin, Oregon.

- **Thursday, August 28th, 5:00—8:00 p.m., Pasture Management 101, \$5**

*Location: OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. Call for more info at 776-7371.*

Pasture Management 101 is for the small acreage landowner who has pasture or who is thinking about putting in pasture. Topics will include how to establish a new pasture and how to renovate a damaged one as well as how to identify which forage grasses are growing in your pasture. Topics also include grass growth cycles, weed control, fertilization and proper grazing management. OSU Extension resource materials will be available for small landowners. Class will also include a walk of OSU Extension's new forage demonstration plot.

- **Wednesday, September 10, 4:00—8:00 p.m., Small-Scale Grain Production, \$10**

*Location: OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. Call for more info at 776-7371.*

Small-Scale Grain Production is designed for small acreage landowners interested in learning to produce grains either for human consumption or for animal feed. The class will provide an introduction to all aspects of producing grain including variety selection, planting, irrigation, harvesting and marketing.

- **Saturday, September 13th, Oregon State University Extension Open House, Free**

*Location: OSU Extension, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. Call for more info at 776-7371.*

Come meet local farmers and get a look at sample CSA boxes and growers market tables. Taste melons and tomatoes. Get to know your Small Farms Extension agent. Take a hay ride around the Experiment Station's pear orchard.

- **Saturday, October 4th, Time TBA, Farmers as Writers, \$15**

*Location: OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. Call for more info at 776-7371.*

Hear from three farmers about their experiences writing blogs and articles about farming and homesteading. The workshop will also include details on how to set up a farm blog, how to prepare writing for submission to farm magazines and journals as well as a short writing workshop for participants.



# Newsletter of the SW Oregon Small Farms Program.

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more discussion on the impacts of intensive grazing and tillage on their management. The publication is available online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>

### **Hare barley (*Hordeum murinum* ssp. *leporinum*)**

Hare barley is a non-native, cool-season, annual grass that can be problematic in pasture systems. In California, hare barley probably became naturalized in the late 1700s with the arrival of Spanish missionaries. It is now of course common in Oregon. It has the characteristic "wild barley" seed head that usually remains intact on plants long after the plant has completed its life cycle. Immature plants are palatable to livestock, but as the spiklets develop they can injure the

mouth, eyes, ears and skin of livestock so mature plants are rarely grazed leading to abundant seed production. Hare barley reproduces by seed so limiting seed production through tillage, grazing early in the season or mowing is the key to limiting spread of established populations.

### **Foxtail barley (*Hordeum jubatum*)**

Foxtail barley is a native cool-season grass that can behave either as a short lived perennial or as an annual. Foxtail barley can be distinguished from hare barley because it usually lacks auricles. Hare barley has well developed auricles. In addition the awns of foxtail barley can be very long, ranging from 25-90 mm in length. Foxtail barley can sometimes be a problem weed in small grain crops, but more commonly it is a roadside and pasture weed.

As mentioned above, often the best defense against some of these weedy grasses is good pasture and grazing management. There are several Extension publications available that discuss in detail best management practices that can limit problems with weeds in pastures and forage systems.

### **EM 8645 Pasture Management Guide: Coastal Pastures in Oregon & Washington**

### **EM 8812 Weed Management in Hay**

**Also refer to the Pasture Management page on the OSU Small Farms Site:**

<http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/pastures>☀

*Andy Hulting is the OSU Extension Weed Specialist.*