What will you find in the January Newsletter?

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Notes from the Editor: JANUARY

A new year has arrived
TIME for a Tree Song

How about planting a tree or trees this year to celebrate a new year? Some believe a tree symbolizes taking root, thinking long-term with slow yet enduring growth, health and fruitfulness, beauty, and life. Trees provide shelter, wind and sun protection, water and soil control, animal homes, food, and beauty. If you listen closely when the wind blows, trees have their own song. Have you heard it in a forest? TIME to listen.

Trees remind me of my grandfather's "tree" garden which was planted long before I was born. My grandmother grew beautiful sunflowers, hollyhocks and vegetables while my grandfather cared for over 300 trees on their property. They proved to be very protective on the northern section as a wind and snow break against the very strong cold Kansas winter winds. In the land of prairie grass, wood is rare and for my grandparents to have a "grove" of cottonwood and elm trees was very special. He took the TIME to research and he knew that these type of trees had a higher chance of enduring the extreme weather of that area. My cousins and I were privileged to play for hours in the enchanted forest and to build forts out of tumble wees. My grandfather gave strict instructions that damaging a tree was forbidden. We were glad to follow those instructions because we loved that world of the tall giants and we could hear their song as the wind whipped through their branches. It was protective in the winter and provided shade and a cool spot to read a book in the summer.

My very small garden in Oregon includes three dwarf apple trees. In the beginning of my gardening adventure, we chose three different apple trees that bloomed around the same time and would produce apples that we loved to eat. I was not aware (before joining the master gardeners) of apple tree diseases that can occur and unfortunately we lost all our apples each year due to the fungus *Venturia inaequalis* that causes apple scab. What did we do? We removed the original trees and planted enchanted scab-resistant apple trees. It was a 'miracle' to see healthy apples and we were doing the happy apple dance! Even our small 6 year old trees produced more wonderful apples than our 10 year old mature disease ridden trees. It was a great TIME to make a change.

How about planting a tree this year to celebrate life and to take root in the new year? Maybe you need to start your enchanted forest? When you get a chance, take TIME to close your eyes and listen to the tree song as the wind blows.
Check out this fun video on apple trees!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWLmEh1HIBw&feature=youtu.be

If you decide to plant apple trees, here is a link on how to prevent apple scab.

https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/7-tips-controlling-frustrating-apple-scab

**Polk County Master Gardener's Plant Sale May 7-8, 2021, Cancelled**

Based on Oregon State University guidance and the Polk County Master Gardeners review of plant sale operations, we have decided to cancel the May 7-8, 2021, annual Plant Sale. We appreciate all who have made this annual event such a success while being held in Rickreall at the Polk County Fairgrounds. Due to notification deadlines for our vendors, the venue location and our all important growers, the decision had to be made now.

- We are all looking forward to the future plant sale planned for 2022.
- Please stay tuned and stay well!!

**Thank you** for your encouragement and newsletter articles. Please know your comments, suggestions, and submissions are always welcome at polkmgnews@gmail.com.

Wishing you a new growing adventure in 2021

Lorena Elliott, Polk Weed Editor

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

**THE POLK COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS HAVE A NEW WEBSITE THAT IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.**

A BIG THANKS to Rachel Brandon (Villwock), Gardener Support, PJ Plunkett,
Polk County Master Gardener, and one of our new trainees, David Chastain, who have been developing this much needed site.

Learn, Plan, Plant, Grow

CHECK IT OUT!  https://www.polkmga.org/

IMPORTANT REMINDER

NOTICE: At the time of this publication, all OSU Extension Offices are closed due to the Governor’s statewide freeze orders.

Our offices and staff WILL be available by appointment. People may contact us to schedule an appointment for seed certifications, pressure gauge testers, specific program related needs, drop off plant samples, etc. Just call the Polk County Extension office phone @ 503-623-8395.

January Calendar

Tree of the month - Oregon white oak

01 - Celebrate by feeding the birds
06 - Apple Tree Day
07 - Zoom PCMG board and chapter meetings
08 - Hug your Partner Day
10 - National Houseplant Day
11 - National Milk Day
15 - Martin Luther King’s Birthday
16 - Bald Eagle Appreciation Day
18 - Make your favorite Soup Day
23 - National Pie Day!
30 - National Seed Swap Day
Flower of the Month

Snowdrop

HEADS UP!

PRUNING CLASS

FOR POLK COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ONLY

(due to Covid guidelines, we are not inviting the public at this time)

'Pruning Demo' at the Inspiration Garden

Mt Fir Park, Independence, OR

January 15th at 10:00am.

Led by Bill Leedy, Polk County Master Gardener

This will be for MG's only with proper Covid protocols.

Questions: Please contact Bill Leedy, 503-949-9658
INTRODUCING NANCY ADAMS
Our New PCMG President

We are so fortunate to have Nancy Adams, Class of 2019, as our new Polk County Master Gardener President! Thank you Nancy for volunteering.

Have you ever wondered what the position of President provides for our Chapter? Here are a few examples of how important this position is to our membership:

- Provides leadership to the chapter and promotes our mission
- Conducts purposeful meetings according to the bylaws and standing rules of the Polk County Chapter
- Appoints committee chairs and is informed of progress and activities
- Explains projects needed, monitors funds and the budget
- Maintains good communication throughout the chapter including our Extension Office support
- Becomes acquainted with chapter members and has an interest in individual talents and needs
- Provides our Community Horticulture Agent with updates on board and association activities
Nancy will be providing the agenda for our board and membership Zoom meetings. The Board Zoom meetings will be held on the first Thursday of the month at 10:00 am with the membership Zoom meeting following from 6:00 - 7:00 pm. Say Hi to Nancy while attending the Zoom meetings that start this Thursday, January 07, 2021.

What do you see on your daily walks?  
How about an artichoke in December!

Thanks for sharing Luanne Whitaker, Class of 2008  
(located on Oakcrest in Salemtowne)
Notes from Neil

As December comes to a close, in our garden this is when the last of the leaves get raked up. We have a rural property south of Dallas which features a number of Oregon White Oak and Bigleaf Maple, so the leaves are not in short supply. They do serve as the basis for ample compost, I have to say, so starting around Thanksgiving the annual ritual begins and lasts for these 5-6 weeks, depending on the weather of course. Days like we are having as I write this, sunny and mild, help in the raking process greatly as it’s a lot more fun to be outside and the leaves are correspondingly drier and therefore, a lot easier to rake!

Warm days like this in December and January are also a treat because they bring out the best in the winter-flowering plants in our garden and they also bring out an often surprising array of insects to visit those flowers, assuming the day gets warm enough. The threshold seems to be between 50-55 F, at which point you will observe honeybees and some native pollinators flying around as well as hummingbirds of course, who never quit all winter long.

At this time of year, they have a trio of shrubs in bloom from which they can choose. For the honeybees, the most popular of these is our large, mature specimen of Mahonia x media ‘Charity’. This evergreen shrub is now about 10’ tall and wide after probably 15 years (anyway). It produces spikes of yellow flowers starting in mid-December and will continue to flower until early February. On warm days, especially in January, the flowers are simply alive with honeybees to the point where you can hear the shrub in bloom.

Another shrub with appeal to hummingbirds and a broad array of insects is our Chaparral Currant (Ribes malvaceum), which produces clusters of tubular pink flowers from early December until April, which is an incredibly long period of time. This is a 10 tall by 8’ wide summer-deciduous shrub which we grow in afternoon sun at the base of our grove of Douglas fir. If you only have room for one winter-blooming shrub in your garden, this one would be a good choice. This provides forage all winter for hummingbirds and again, when it is sufficiently warm, many different insects,
especially as the weather gets warmer as spring approaches. It is also supremely drought tolerant, requiring no summer water, but it will drop almost all its leaves in summer in response to drought, a characteristic that takes some getting used to. As it begins to rain consistently in the fall, the shoots begin to grow and it leafs out and flowers again.

The last of our late-December flowering shrubs is Wintersweet (Chimonanthus praecox), a 12' tall and 8' wide deciduous shrub, which produces highly fragrant, waxy blooms throughout late December and January. On cool days you need to put your nose close to the blooms to detect their scent, but if it does get warm (-ish) and sunny, the scent can be detected far from the plant. Unlike the other two, I’ve not observed much activity at the flowers of this shrub and to be honest, it’s not much to look at the rest of the year, but the scent makes it all worthwhile.

We grow other plants that come into their own in January and February, but for now, these three are providing our winter interest. So, if you have leaf-raking chores to do, here are three ways to make that chore that much more enjoyable and keep some of the local fauna happy at the same time!

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The Amazing Garden of Karen Lippsmeyer
(Class of 2014)

Here are a couple of pictures of veggies I am growing now: I broadcast the seed in the fall and will have greens all winter and onions ready to transplant in the spring. Here are photos of the Napa cabbage and Walla Walla onions.
Three years ago I received a Wax Begonia plant from a fellow Master Gardener. I was familiar with Begonias, but had never done any research about them. Native to moist subtropical and tropical climates, Begonias do quite well here during the spring and summer but need to be brought inside when frost threatens in the fall and winter.

Begonia is a genus of perennial flowering plants with over 1,800 different plant species. This Wax Begonia loves its shady location on the north side of the house. It puts on quite a show all summer with its bright red flowers which have sepals, not petals.
Eggplant Heaven - Very Impressive!
From the Garden of Libby Phillips
(2020 Trainee)

I got one eggplant from the Polk County Master Gardeners last spring as one of the plants that was intended for the plant sale. In the past I have never had much luck with eggplant when I lived in Colorado and South Dakota but this plant took off and was impressive. We put it in a small area between poppies and peas along the fence. We probably had at least 7 or 8 beautiful fruits over the summer, more than we could use so I shared with neighbors. I don’t know the variety but I’ll definitely try eggplant again.
DO YOU REMEMBER?

Important Things to Know

Mission: “To serve our community by promoting research-based, sustainable gardening practices.”

OSU Polk County Master Gardeners
Neil Bell, OSU Ext. Horticulture Agent
Rachel Villwock, Program Assistant
Carla Cudmore, Program Assistant

Membership dues: $20/year

Please send inquiries, address changes, and membership renewals to:
Polk County Extension Office
289 E. Ellendale Ave, Ste 301
Dallas, Oregon 97338
Extension Office: 503-623-8395

Master Gardener Merchandise:
Jan Quintens - 503-623-9442 cell: 541-659-3012
Cuttings Through the Year $9
Mac’s Field Guides (each): $6
   NW Trees
      NW Wildflowers
      NW Good/Bad Garden Bugs
      NW Park/Backyard Birds
Trees to Know in Oregon (2010) $14
Shrubs to Know in PNW Forests $9

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Polk County Master Gardeners
Oregon Master Gardeners Association
The Polk Weed is the publication of the OSU PCMGs™, published monthly and mailed to members.
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You are receiving the Polk County Master Gardener Newsletter.

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