POLK WEED

POLK COUNTY MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2020

What will you find in the October Newsletter?

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* October Calendar
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* Mason Bee Wash Workshop
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Notes from the Editor: OCTOBER

How could we as Polk County Master Gardeners have predicted such a horrific event with dangerous wildfires that resulted in loss of life and property? We are sorry for all of you who have experienced this trauma directly and/or know family/friends who have lost everything.

Nature in our gardens was changed too. When the skies on September 08 turned smoky dark and then scary orange, I noticed when I was picking tomatoes that the bees were not visible in my garden flowers. Neil Bell sent out a comforting email that explained that I wasn't imagining this lonely phenomena. I missed their buzzing sound and wonderful companionship.

An Oregon State University Extension article on "bees and fires" reports that one reason for their disappearance is that smoke lowers temperatures and bees aren't as active when it's cooler. In addition, some insects and all bees use the pattern of polarized light in the sky, which is invisible to us, as a kind of compass to know where they are going. Bees use the gradations in polarized light as guideposts to navigate from their nest and to flowers and back. These patterns are maintained even when it's cloudy but the pattern is distorted once that smoky red-haze sets in. Studies are also being done to determine if the ash in the air may interfere with the ability of bees to breathe, smell and taste.

Ed Yung, a science writer for National Geographic, Feb 2013, wrote that studies show that bumblebees have a positive charged aurora that can sense the electric field that surrounds a flower. Flowers with nectar and pollen tend to have a negative charge, at least on clear days. Smoke interferes with natures' electric fields.
I am glad that the bees have returned for now. Unfortunately, at the time of this publication, there are still active fires in the Pacific Northwest. May you, your family and friends, stay safe and healthy. We are all thankful for the emergency responders who have given so much.

For more information on the effects of fire on bees click here:

https://extension.oregonstate.edu/forests/fire/what-effect-will-2020-fires-have-bees?fbclid=IwAR2vc2qTIpKWnHeAx5etYQYUKvyfkol3XSYDNraYnFLqGS6Xx_VKCzuquP0

Just a reminder: At the time of this publication, the OSU Polk County Extension Office in Dallas will be open Mondays-Wednesdays from 8am-5pm (closed during the noon hour) in order to serve the public as needed. All other hours we will be working remotely and our faculty will remain working remotely as well. All meetings at this time are to remain remote.

Questions? Please email polkmg@oregonstate.edu **or phone: 503-623-8395**

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

Stay Safe and Happy Gardening! Lorena Elliott, Polk Weed Editor

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Calendar for October

01 - PCMG Zoom Board Meeting, 10:00 am
03 - Butterfly and hummingbird day
04 - National Pickle Day
06 - Plant your garlic - Garlic Lover's Day
07 - National Flower Day
12 - Columbus Day
13 - Mason Bee Wash Workshop, 1:30-3:30, Gathering Place Inspiration Garden,
Judy Nathe - junat3@comcast.net
15 - National Mushroom Day
26 - National Pumpkin Day
31 – Halloween

Tree of the Month - Maple

HEADS UP! We still have a few openings for the Polk County Master Gardener Board. If you have considered joining this very important part of our organization, now is the time to jump in. We need your ideas and leadership.

Questions? Please email Jan Eggert: Jeggertn590@yahoo.com **or The Polk County Extension Office:** polkmg@oregonstate.edu **phone: 503-623-8395**

SIGN UP EARLY, LIMITED SPACE

Mason Bee Wash Workshop

Interested in learning how to clean the tubes and prepare mason bee cocoons for winter rest? Bleach water? Sand?

Presenters: Bev Loos and Carol Horning,
Marion County Master Gardeners

When: Tuesday, October 13, 1:30-3:30

Where: Gathering Place at Inspiration Garde 799 F Street in Independence

Due to covid restrictions participation is limited to 12 members. Please wear your mask and bring a large bowl or small tub. To reserve a spot, email Judy Nathe at junat3@comcast.net.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

We will never forget.....

Photo shared by Patti Younger - a frequent walker at the Inspiration Garden

"In the park Sept 08, 2020, as morning tried to break. Only the top of the trees saw morning as the smoke cover laid back down and day started again much later"

DALLAS YOUTH GARDEN NEWS!

The Masked Gardners have had a fantastic year despite COVID which almost kept us from operating. Then the wildfires showed us even more how important our work is to the community. We have raised over 4500 pounds of food for families in the area!! Be sure to check out our website for more details and see the interns who worked so hard to make this possible. http://www.dallasyouthgarden.org/

Submitted by Amelia Gardner, a very proud "Masked" gardener

TIME TO PLANT YOUR GARLIC!

The best time to plant garlic in the Willamette Valley is from September through November. Garlic roots develop in the fall and winter, and by early spring they can support the rapid leaf growth that is necessary to form large bulbs. For more detailed information on growing garlic check out the OSU website:

https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/get-your-garlic-primer-planting-growing-harvesting

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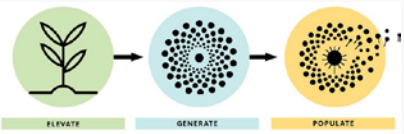


Elevate -> Generate -> Populate: Master Gardener Training Classes in 2021

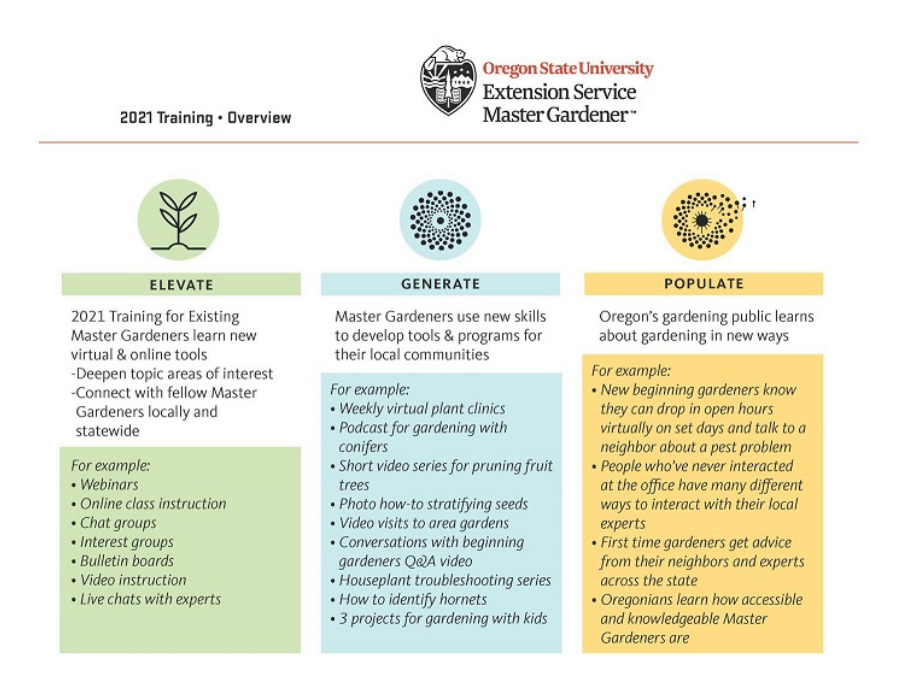
The 2021 Elevated Master Gardener Training will be available to all current Master Gardener Volunteers, including those students who were enrolled in the 2020 Master Gardener training classes (regardless of whether or not they were able to finish their 2020 coursework or volunteer service hours). These classes will be coupled with garden and horticulture education classes that will be available to Master Gardener Volunteers, as well as the general gardening public. More details on the overall *concept* for the 2021 Elevated Master Gardener Training can be found, below.

In order to help us finalize training topics and delivery, we would like to hear from YOU! What classes would YOU like to take? What factors might limit your participation? Share your ideas, questions, and comments with us, by taking a short survey.

The survey consists of 16 questions, and will be open through October 4, 2020.

https://oregonstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9GHRZznxFBTSkrX

Questions about the survey or the 2021 Elevated Master Gardener Training may be directed to Gail Langellotto at gail.langellotto@oregonstate.edu or 541-737-5175.



CHECK OUT ARLENE PATE'S GLORIOUS GOURDS

Thanks for sharing Arlene

"This is my best gourd crop ever—119 gourds!" (from about 7 plants)

We love our bees and bees love Sedum Autumn Joy (Stonecrop). A great addition for fall garden blooms.

Thanks for sharing Nancy Sullivan!

What is the GREAT Pumpkin?

Most of us are familiar with movie "The Great Pumpkin" where the Charles Schulz character, Linus, carefully prepares his pumpkin patch to encourage the "Great Pumpkin" to rise and give presents to children. This brings a question to answer. Are all pumpkins the same?

Of course we know that some folks grow "giant" pumpkins for contests and some grow tiny ones for decorating flower arrangements. Pumpkins come in a variety of colors and shapes with some of the lightest shades being the sweetest used for pumpkin puree and baby food. Besides needing large spaces or strong vertical arbors, how do we as gardeners decide which variety to grow for a "real" pumpkin and a "great" pumpkin?

Do you want pumpkins for eating, carving, or decorating? Native Americans dried strips of pumpkin (or winter squash) and wove them into mats. They also roasted long strips of pumpkin on the open fire and ate them. It is thought that the origin of pumpkin pie occurred when the colonists sliced off the pumpkin top, removed the seeds, and filled the insides with milk, spices and honey. The pumpkin was then baked in hot ashes. Can you imagine the flavor and wonderful aroma?

We tend to think of pumpkins as a vegetable, but it is biologically considered a fruit. Pumpkins are a member of the gourd family, Cucurbitaceae, which includes cucumbers, honeydew melons, cantaloupe, watermelons and zucchini. These plants are native to Central America and Mexico, but now grow on six continents. We classify them in America as "winter" squash.

Choosing seeds for your pumpkin patch needs to be thought out carefully. Pumpkins used for food are different from those bred for Halloween carving. Some pumpkins are bred to be large, mostly hollow, and flat bottomed. The flesh, however, will disappoint you because it can be watery and bland. For eating, make sure you pick seed varieties for planting that

are developed for cooking. Some popular varieties include Sugar Pie, New England Pie or Baby Pam Pumpkins.

What does a "great" pumpkin need to grow? Full sun, lots of space, consistent ground watering, good air movement and soil that has good drainage. Seeds should be planted on small hills that are separated by several feet. Always plant two seeds per hill to ensure at least one seed is viable. Remove one plant if both produce. Vines will quickly sprawl dozens of feet, even climbing fences like a trellis if the fences are in the path of the growing vines.

Don't forget that pumpkins are heavy feeders. They prefer very rich soil that is well-drained and not too soggy. The fall is a good time to mix lots of compost and aged manure into the planting site before you sow seeds or transplant in the spring. In the Willamette Valley, make sure your planting site drains well in the winter.

According to Purdue University Cooperative Service Extension, pumpkins need low nitrogen, high potassium and high phosphorus for successful growing. Before planting seeds, you can apply a tablespoon or two per hill of 4-8-5 or 6-10-10 fertilizer. After several pumpkins have formed, pinching off the ends of vines will help the plant focus energy on those pumpkins instead of using energy to continue growing the vine. It is wise to use mulch to control weeds.

Did you know? Pumpkins and winter squash bear separate male and female flowers on the same plant (monoecious). Bees transfer pollen from male to female flowers making fruit set possible. Information from Michigan and New York County Extensions indicate that pumpkin flowers need 8-10 visits per female flower for adequate pollination and that each female flower is only receptive for about 24 hours. Research at Oregon State University supports this finding. Multiple pollinator visits are needed, with the number dependent on crop, bee species, time of day, temperature, and other factors. Having a bee hive or planting flowers that draw bees to your pumpkin patch is extremely important.

Oregonians are famous! Pumpkins grow very well in the Willamette Valley region of Oregon. In 2018, there were 2,600 acres of pumpkins harvested. The total monetary value of pumpkins was $9.8 million dollars. In the same year, the Daletas' family entered a pumpkin that was grown in Pleasant Hill, Oregon, to compete in the Bauman's Giant Pumpkin Weigh Off. Their pumpkin won the contest at an astonishing 2,157.5 pounds! Now that could be considered a "Real Great Pumpkin".

There is nothing like the aroma of pumpkin pie or pumpkin spice lattes! We all love decorated pumpkins for celebrating October. We could say that the pumpkin, or winter squash, is an American icon. Nothing signals the start of autumn like the arrival of pumpkins. What type of pumpkin would you grow in your pumpkin patch? Have you heard of a sweet French pumpkin called Galeux d'Eysines? I want to try growing it next year. Maybe pick a variety that you will enjoy carving or decorating and then grow a few that would make the best pumpkin dessert. Next year your pumpkin patch will be ready for the rising or growing of the "Great Pumpkin".

Just for fun - here is a short video about a "pumpkin patch"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3cc2QeSfWw

Submitted by Lorena Elliott

From the President's Corner

Happy October!

It is wonderful to see the fall coming again this year.

The pumpkins are showing up and standing out in the garden. Our squash plants are delivering a good harvest of acorn and butternut squash.

We had a huge harvest of tomatoes this year. What did you do with yours? We decided to make spaghetti sauce and freeze it for the winter months. We used peppers, onions and garlic from the garden.

We wanted to give a special thank you to all the trainees and members who showed up and helped with the recent plant sale. Unloading plants, sorting them and arranging the orders made the pick up of the pre-ordered plants a seamless operation. Thank you to our webpage folks who did the work of setting up the ecommerce sale. PJ Plunket came and took pictures to upload on the webpage and also assisted in sorting and loading plants. Thank you.

A big shout out goes to George Woodward for delivering a truckload of large pots he had been saving. Thank you George.

We also wanted to thank all the Polk County Master Gardeners and wonderful trainees for the many dedicated hours this year.

In Unity,
Bobbie Muncrief
Enjoy the warm, sunny weather.

(Beautiful Plumeria)

NOTES FROM NEIL

Defoliation of Sweet Box due to Wildfire Smoke in Oregon

Jay W. Pscheidt, Extension Plant Pathology Specialist

Coincidental with the heavy smoke that pushed air quality off the charts, we have seen unusual defoliation in plants. Much of it was normal old leaf drop in response to stress conditions. After a droughty winter (half our normal rainfall) and even doughtier summer, we had those hot dry Santa Anna-like winds that resulted in a million acres of burned forest. Old (first to form) leaves that are shaded, diseased and inefficient for the plant turned yellow and were shed. Even evergreen plants (which aren't) were casting those older leaves or needles. This is a normal

response by many different plants and is not a concern. Most of these plants will survive and return in the spring for a new season.

What is new and concerning was the rapid defoliation of Sarcococca spp. (sweet box) and some Ilex spp. (various holly) and potentially some Euonymus sp. The Sarcococca experienced green leaf drop over a few days after the smoke cleared out. Reports of this symptom have been confirmed on plants grown in Eugene (classic smoke accumulation area in the southern Willamette Valley), Corvallis, Rickreall, Damascus, Milwaukee, Molalla and somewhere between Oregon City and Canby. Washington County is not confirmed. This rapid defoliation was not seen in Seattle, Tacoma, La Conner, Bainbridge Island or Gig Harbor, WA.

Plants in gardens and open air structures were affected but not in a plastic hoop house. There is less species information but it appears S. confusa and S. ruscifolia were affected but the more common S. hookeriana var humilis were not.

A report of a garden grown blue holly (Ilex x meserveae) and nursery grown Ilex sp. with the same rapid defoliation of green leaves occurred at the same time. These reports have been confirmed in Springfield, Coburg, Lebanon and Mt. Angel. Unusual defoliation of a large holly bush in Eagle Creek and a sky pencil holly (I. crenata) in Tigard was also reported. Also, Euonymus sp. were reported with unusual defoliation where older leaves were being shed. In one case the Euonymus had this condition but the Sarcococca was fine. Although this symptom is more like the normal reactions described above there have been reports of this condition from Eugene, Molalla and Tigard.

Although the smoke was hazardous for humans and animals it is not generally considered a problem for plants. There was ash fall and blocked out sun for several days all of which contributed to these defoliation issues. It is important to realize the difference been a normal plant response (dropping of old leaves) vs something that is not normal (rapid dropping of green leaves). We suspect that most of these plants will survive pending favorable conditions this winter.

Notes: Sarcococca sp. are susceptible to a new fungal disease called boxwood blight but the symptoms are very different. Boxwood blight symptoms include leaf spots, stem lesions as well as defoliation. Rapid defoliation of green leaves is not a character of this disease.
Air Quality during this 2020 event was in the “unhealthy” range or higher (>150) for 7 to 10 days and in the “hazardous” range (>300) for a few days in much of the Willamette Valley.

Average highest reading was 476 with a high in Salem of 563. Air quality during the 2017 Eagle Creek (Columbia River Gorge) fire by comparison was an average high of 158 with a high in Springfield of 332.

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
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