It's autumn and harvest season!

Welcome to the September/October issue of the OSU Marion County Extension E-Newsletter! In it you will find educational articles and event information for you, your family, and your business. In this issue you'll learn about recovering from wildfires, small farms research in the mid-valley, well-water testing, food preservation, services for farm workers and keeping your pesticide license current.

Marion County Extension Responds to Fires

The fires came fast and furious and out of nowhere in September, and this year OSU Extension has learned to be nimble and reactive. With animals of all sizes pouring out of the Santiam Canyon and other areas of Oregon, an animal care evacuation center was established at the Oregon State Fairgrounds, and 4-H personnel, and youth and adult volunteers from Marion County were there to help take care of them. At the peak of the crisis there were about 750 small animals (rabbits, poultry, etc.) and a total of over 1100, including large animals (horses, livestock, etc.). In an incredible demonstration of community caring, 647 4-H volunteers signed up and filled 2- or 4-hour sessions totaling over 2000 hours during the event. Animals were housed and cared for a minimum of nine days and some for over two weeks. Thanks go out to Melanie McCabe and Margi Tipton for the many hours they spent in smoky conditions at the fairgrounds.
The OSU Extension Fire Program can help Marion County residents affected by the fires. Please read the information below for more details...

OSU is adding another valuable fire resource expert to its extension fire program team. Amanda Rau is based in Eugene and serves the Willamette Valley. She has experience in fire-adapted ecosystem restoration and conservation, prescribed fire and fuels treatment planning and implementation, and training, outreach, and communications.

Who would have anticipated that critical PPE would be needed for another health crisis in addition to COVID-19? The fires struck at the peak of harvest season with many farm workers in the field exposed to unhealthy air. The Oregon Department of Agriculture asked OSU Extension to distribute N95 masks to the agriculture community in Marion County. Two events were organized; the first rapidly delivered 4,000 masks to farm businesses, farm and farm worker organizations, and directly to farm workers. A second larger event placed almost 35,000 masks onto farm worker faces. They are essential workers who feed us, and we need to take care of them.

Note: If you are an agricultural business or farm worker in Marion County and you need masks or hand sanitizer, you can get PPE from Marion County Health and Human Services. Click HERE for information and order forms.

SNAP-Ed and 4-H faculty have a Farm to School grant from the Oregon Department of Education and were just about to deliver educational programs to wildfire-affected schools in the eastern county. Now they will have to adapt their programs to new conditions, already complicated by the pandemic. 2020 has been all about changing with the changes. They will work with schools to reach these youth.

And other extension faculty have had to adapt their programs to changing research and education conditions, such as the small farms research program, read below.

OSU Extension is deeply committed to and embedded in the community and will always be here to help when it’s needed.

Mark L Chien, office manager

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**OSU Extension Wildfire Recovery Information**

If you were affected by the fires, please check the [OSU Extension Fire Program](#). It offers resources for fire safety and recovery including an informative webinar series. The first webinar (2 hrs) is titled [After the Fire: Now What?](#) and contains critical initial recovery information.

Extension has experts who can help you to return safely to your home or business and begin the recovery process. You'll learn how to map your property for recovery planning; there's also an after-the-fire checklist and a flowchart for the post-fire recovery process, financial assistance, information about potential water and erosion issues and disaster relief programs, and much more.

The Marion County government has a [wildfire recovery](#) website with lots of important information for county residents.

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**Wildfires in Our Forests: Extension Is Taking Action and So Can You!**

*OSU Forestry and Natural Resources Extension*

*Note: This is a repeat of an article that appeared in the previous newsletter issue. Given current events, it is still very relevant.*

Fire season is officially upon us here in Oregon. It is not always obvious to many of us in the Willamette Valley since we get so much rain during the rainy season. However, it is
Thinking Big with Small Fruits and Farms

Small fruit specialty crops can have a big impact on the agricultural economy and farm businesses and families in Marion County and the mid-valley region. Consider the success of wine grapes in recent years, now a multi-billion dollar crop and the seventh largest farm-gate value crop in Oregon (2019 ODA census). OSU researchers are dedicated to improving current specialty crops as well as introducing new crops to the agricultural landscape to enhance farm productivity, originality profitability, and consumer demand and excitement. OSU scientists seek to improve a well-established crop like hazlenuts, or work with innovative growers to understand and improve a new crop like olives.

In 2017, one of the leaders of the nascent olive industry approached OSU small farms specialist Javier Salvador-Fernandez, who is based in Marion County and does research at OSU’s North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, to answer critical olive production questions such as what are the best cultivars that are also cold hardy enough to survive Oregon winters. Just as the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences helped to push the wine industry, Javier and the Olea research team are doing the same for olives and other small fruit crops such as strawberries.

Applied research involves both brains and brawn, and is an intimate collaboration between principle investigator, research technicians and support staff, students and their collaborators in industry. It's a complex system that due to COVID-19 had to pivot on a dime how they perform research and deliver extension education to their growers. Read more here about how the small farms team has responded to the pandemic to keep their research moving forward.

And to learn where olive and other crop research is done.....

Applied Agricultural Research Next Door

Much of the olive and other research for horticulture, field, tree, and other common mid-valley crops takes place at the OSU North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora. Even though it's just north of the border in Clackamas County, the research data and information produced at NWREC have great relevance and importance to Marion County agricultural producers. Marion County Extension provides faculty and student support and direct funding to NWREC. The best way to keep up with activities and research at NWREC is to attend meetings there (virtual for now) and read the Down on the Farm newsletter.

A great NWREC tradition is its Annual Harvest Dinner, a celebration of the agricultural bounty - people and edibles - of the past summer. It will be held online on Thursday, October 22nd from 6:00 to 7:15 PM. BYO food and beverage! It's usually an invitation event but this year it's open to everyone!

Well Water Nitrate Screening for Marion County
By Chrissy Lucas-Woodruff, Groundwater Education Program Coordinator

Did you know that the Marion County OSU Extension Service offers free well water nitrate screenings for domestic well users? While it is important for all households to do regular well water screenings, we especially encourage homes with small children, newborns, and pregnant women or infants to test for nitrate because of a rare type of blue-baby syndrome, and all homes with private wells should be aware of their nitrate level. The nitrate ion moves easily through the soil profile (especially during the rainy season) making it not only a contaminant of concern, but also an indicator to check for other surface-based contaminants.

For a free nitrate screening, bring ½ cup of untreated well water in a clean, water-tight container to the Marion County Extension Service office. Choose a container that you are comfortable not getting back and clearly mark your contact information on it, just in case one of our trained testers is not in. If they are in, the test takes about 10 minutes to complete.

For additional information on well water and septic systems, free Rural Living Basics classes (soon to be offered remotely), and other nitrate screening opportunities visit the OSU Extension Service well water website or for more information call 541-713-5009 or send email to Chrissy.Lucas@oregonstate.edu.

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Food Preservation on the Rise in Homes

By Elani Elkins, Master Food Preserver Program Coordinator

Oregonians are spending more time working and living at home this year. This has created an increased interest in food preparation and preservation. Elani Elkins is the OSU Master Food Preservation program coordinator in Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties, and she is here to answer your food preservation questions to make sure that you and your family stay safe and have delicious and healthy foods to eat. She fielded an unprecedented number of questions in August and offers a list of food preservation resources for homesteading hobbyists. Read more...

Pressure Gauge Testing Service: It's Free!

We are getting towards the end of the fresh fruit and vegetable season. If you are a food preserver and you have a pressure gauge that needs to be tested, bring it to the Marion County Extension office during office hours and we will provide a no-touch testing service for you. The integrity of a pressure gauge is essential for safe food preservation. Before you come, it may be helpful to read instructions for your visit. Please call us if you have any questions.

Note: You can purchase Clear Jel, a thickening agent, at the Marion County Extension office for $4 for a one pound bag.

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Your Growing the Farm Community
Panic, fear, confusion, and hopelessness are just a few words that describe what farm workers in Oregon are feeling having to work; not knowing if the person next to them has COVID-19, and can potentially put their life and their family’s life at risk. Yet they must work to pay their bills and can’t afford to take time off to quarantine if necessary. Northwest Family Services (NWFS) wants to inform all farm workers (field workers, tractor operators, loaders and drivers, and farm office personnel) about health and safety, and the assistance available to them. As the flu season rapidly approaches and collides with COVID-19, we feel a great sense of urgency to reach out to the farm community and help them understand the great risks of not properly using their personal protective equipment and physical distancing.

At no cost to farm owners, NWFS provides short educational meetings at no cost to their farm workers. Meetings are schedule at the best time for farm owners and include handout bags with KN95 masks, hand sanitizer, and NWFS resources that are available to them.

Our main focus is to inform the farm worker community that there are many resources like food boxes, that are available for them during a quarantine period from our contact tracers. We help them find COVID-19 testing and flu shot centers, and safe sheltering while in quarantine.

For more information, contact Carolina Garcia, Farm Worker Outreach Coordinator for Marion and Polk counties at 503-740-4158 or cgarcia@nwfs.org.

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Keep your Applicator's License Current with Online Pesticide Recertification Courses

Licensed pesticide applicators must be properly trained and certified. The Oregon Department of Agriculture is the licensing body in our state. They require licensees to 1) re-test, or 2) complete continuing education in order to maintain their certification status over time. OSU meets this need and connects the applicator community to the vast expertise in the College of Agricultural Sciences. Together, we aim to protect human health and the environment by providing the best, most engaging, science-based pesticide safety education in the region. Click HERE for schedule of online courses in 2020-2021 and registration and course information.

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Upcoming OSU Extension Events in Marion County in 2020

Note: Many extension events have been affected by the COVID-19 alert. Please check the Marion County Extension website event listings for events online and around the state. Thank you for your patience.

Please contact OSU Marion County Extension if you have any questions about any of these extension events or need assistance with registration.

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OSU Extension Service: Our Attitude

We believe that the best way to make a difference is to get straight to the heart of the matter. We start with an accessible and relatable approach and build on it with passion. We listen to our clients, respect their needs, and amplify their voices to create research-based solutions together that empower real and sustainable change. It’s what we’ve done for more than
100 years, and we’re committed to doing it for the next 100 years.

Thank you for reading our newsletter!
Do you have questions, comments, or suggestions?

We would love to hear your comments about this newsletter, and what you would like to read about in our next issue of the OSU Extension Marion County E-newsletter!

Please send your questions and comments to mark.chien@oregonstate.edu.

Thank You! -- Mark Chien, Editor

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