MONMOUTH FARM PART OF VALLEY’S CHANGING LANDSCAPE | PG. 6
Cultivating is a quarterly publication of Oregon State University Polk County Extension Service and Polk Soil And Water Conservation District. Included in these pages, readers can find practical information on farm and forest management, on home and lifestyle choices, and on the many programs and services available through the Service and the District.
WHO WE ARE

Oregon State University Extension Service
Polk County

The Polk County Office of the Oregon State University Extension Service provides research-based educational information and programs in Agriculture, Forestry, 4-H/Youth and Family and Community Development for the citizens of Polk County.

OSU Extension’s mission is to convey research-based knowledge in a way that is useful for people to improve their lives, their homes, and their communities.

OFFICE LOCATION & HOURS
289 E Ellendale, Suite 301
Dallas OR 97338 | 503.623.8395
extension.oregonstate.edu/polk
Mon-Fri 8am-12pm, 1pm-5pm

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

NICOLE ANDERSON | FIELD DROPS
503.434.8912

ALISHA ATHA | OFFICE MANAGER & COUNTY LEADER
971.612.0022

NEIL BELL | COMMUNITY HORTICULTURE
971.612.0026

SUZAN BUSLER | 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
971.612.0028

JENNIFER CRUCKSHANK | DARY
971.600.1222

CARLA CUDMORE | FRONT OFFICE & 4-H SUPPORT
971.612.0024

JAVIER FERNANDEZ-SALVADOR | SMALL FARMS
503.373.5766

TONYA JOHNSON | FAMILY COMMUNITY HEALTH
503.373.5763

MITCH LIES | CULTIVATING EDITOR
matchies@comcast.net

CHRISYS LUCAS | WELLS WATER PROGRAM
541.766.5596

RICHARD RIGGS | REGIONAL DIRECTOR
503.269.6399

CHRISTOPHER SCADDEN | SNAP ED
971.612.0030

RACHEL VILLWOCK | FRONT OFFICE & COMM. HORTICULTURE SUPPORT
971.612.0023

BRAD WITHROW-ROBINSON | FORESTRY & NATURAL RESOURCES
541.766.5554

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER
11 | PSWCD – Board Meeting – Polk SWCD office – 580 Main Street, Suite A, Dallas, OR 97338 – Time T.B.D.
27 | Dutch Bros Bucks for Kids Day 2019 – for Polk County 4-H

OCTOBER
3 | PSWCD – Finance Committee Meeting – 9 am
9 | PSWCD – Board Meeting & Long Range Planning – Polk SWCD office – 580 Main Street, Suite A, Dallas, OR 97338 – Time T.B.D.
14 | PSWCD – Closed to observe Columbus Day Holiday

NOVEMBER
EARLY NOVEMBER | PSWCD – Native Bulb Sale
1-2 | Annual Holiday Fair – Polk County Fairgrounds
5 | OSU Extension – Living on the Land workshop series – 6pm
7 | PSWCD – Finance Committee Meeting – 9 am
12 | OSU Extension – Living on the Land workshop series – 6pm
11 | PSWCD – Closed to observe Veteran’s Day Holiday
13 | PSWCD – OWEB Small Grant Application window closes
17 | OSU Extension – Living on the Land workshop series – 6pm
26 | OSU Extension – Living on the Land workshop series – 6pm
28 | PSWCD – Closed for Thanksgiving Day Holiday

DECEMBER
5 | PSWCD – Finance Committee Meeting – 9 am
11 | PSWCD – Board Meeting – Polk SWCD office – 580 Main Street, Suite A, Dallas, OR 97338 – Time T.B.D.
21 | PSWCD – Closed to observe Christmas Day Holiday
25 | Community Drinking Water Forum – Monmouth Senior Center – 1pm

JANUARY 2020
1 | PSWCD – Closed to observe New Year’s Day Holiday
2 | PSWCD – Finance Committee Meeting – 9 am
3 | OSU Extension – Living on the Land workshop series – 6pm
8 | PSWCD – Board Meeting – Polk SWCD office – 580 Main Street, Suite A, Dallas, OR 97338 – Time T.B.D.
20 | Closed to observe Martin Luther King Day
25 | PSWCD – Drinking Water Forum – Senior Center – 180 Warren St S, Monmouth, OR 97361 – 1pm-3 pm
27 | PSWCD – OWEB Small Grant Application Window Opens until 2-10-20
31 | PSWCD and NRCS – Local Working Group Meeting – OSU Extension – Time T.B.D.

WHO WE ARE

Polk Soil and Water Conservation District

Nearly 3,000 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) across the United States are helping local people conserve land, water, forest, wildlife, and related natural resources. SWCDs are charged with directing programs to protect local renewable natural resources.

Polk SWCD was formed in April 1966, and promotes erosion control, reduction of invasive species, improvements to farms and forests, control of animal waste, as well as improving wildlife habitat and water quality/quantity issues in Polk County. The Polk SWCD is administered by 7 locally elected volunteer directors representing 5 zones and 2 at-large positions within the county. The Polk SWCD is a source of information and education on natural resources.

OFFICE LOCATION & HOURS
580 Main Street, Suite A
Dallas OR 97338 | 503.623.9680
www.polkswcd.com
Mon-Fri 8am-4:30pm

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

MARC BELL | SENIOR RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST
marc.bell@polkswcd.com | Ext. 103

PATTI GRAY | OFFICE ASSISTANT
clerk@polkswcd.com | Ext. 108

JACKSON MORGAN | FARM SPECIALIST
jackson.morgan@polkswcd.com | Ext. 113

KARIN STUTZMAN | DISTRICT MANAGER
manager@polkswcd.com | Ext. 110

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There was a day – and not long ago – when crop diversity for a grass seed grower meant rotating to wheat. Today, according to Matt Hamilton of Hamilton Farms in Monmouth, it is unusual to find a grass seed grower who isn’t producing multiple crops, including one or more long-term perennials, such as blueberries or hazelnuts.

“When some of these other crops like blueberries or hazelnuts have a good year, you can’t even compete with them,” Hamilton said. “So, you’ve got to kind of join them.”

The Hamiltons, father Steve and sons Matt and Ben, decided four years ago to join the hundreds of Willamette Valley farmers who in recent years have swapped out grass seed acreage for hazelnuts, planting two 80-acre hazelnut orchards two years apart.

According to December 2018 data from Pacific Agricultural Survey, in the last five years alone, growers have planted nearly 40,000 acres in the Willamette Valley to hazelnuts, essentially doubling the valley’s acreage to about 80,000 when counting bearing and nonbearing orchards.

Grass seed acres, meanwhile, still dominate the valley’s landscape, but have fallen from a peak of around 500,000 acres in 2007, or one-third of the valley’s 1.5 million arable acres, to around 320,000 acres today.

“I think people have realized that grass seed isn’t recession proof,” said Steve Hamilton, referring to the collapse of the grass seed market during the Great Recession. “We are hoping that hazelnuts will be more of a stable diversification.”

In addition to grass seed and hazelnuts, the Hamiltons produce red clover seed, typically used for planting dairy pasture; meadowfoam, used for its oil in the cosmetics industry; and radish seed, which is used by Midwest corn and soybean growers for cover crops. Among grass seed crops, the Hamiltons produce perennial ryegrass, used in the turf market, and annual ryegrass, used for cover cropping, among other uses.

The Hamiltons invest heavily in cover crops on their own farm to keep soil in place during rainy winter months on their hilly terrain.

“We’ve always had hills to contend with,” Steve said. “We’ve always had erosion potential, and if we don’t take care of the ground, we are not farming very long. We always have something planted.”

“It is going to cost you something, but if you don’t do have a cover crop, your topsoil has the potential to disappear,” Matt said. “It takes many thousands of years to build up that topsoil, and that is your most valuable asset.”

Like many now in hazelnuts, the Hamiltons went into the crop without first-hand knowledge of how to produce it. And things could have gone better.

The Hamiltons experienced what Matt described as a kind of perfect storm in their first year, at one point fearing they were
losing literally half their trees to a nut borer that until they encountered it was relatively unknown in hazelnut circles.

The Pacific flatheaded borer, which is attracted to diseased or otherwise stressed trees, bore tunnels into the Hamiltons’ trees, in many cases girdling and nearly killing them. Fortunately, through research, talking to other growers and through working with Oregon State University Extension Service Hazelnut Specialist Nik Wiman, the Hamiltons learned that if they cut a tree just below the borer’s entry point, most survive.

“We had to go out in January and February and cut the trees down that had suckers on them to probably an inch off the ground and let the suckers grow,” Matt said. “Then we took all those girdled trees and put them on burn piles (to avoid re-infestation).”

Remarkably, the trees survived. “The resilience of the hazelnut tree is just amazing,” Steve said. “There was a cherry orchard that got the borer in it, and it is gone.”

The Hamiltons also encountered issues with their irrigation system, issues stemming back to choices they made at planting and that compounded problems with the borer. “We were doing overhead watering and not getting good control on the weeds, and, especially when you are establishing the first-year trees, you’ve got to get good weed control,” Matt said.

“It was an education,” Steve said. “We learned that if the tree is healthy and you’ve got good weed control and you’ve got it watered and it is not stressed, the tree grows so fast that the borer can’t get into it.”

The Hamiltons also found that overhead irrigation wasn’t neighborly, given that noise from a diesel engine that powered the system elicited complaints, particularly when operating at night.

When planting their second orchard, the Hamiltons invested in drip irrigation and planted a perennial ryegrass seed crop between rows to outcompete weeds and improve soil health.

“It costs $1,200 an acre more (for the drip irrigation), but the neighbors like us again, and we aren’t watering the weeds,” Steve said.

The intercropping system also provides income while hazelnut trees are in their nonbearing stage, which typically lasts four years. And the perennial ryegrass crop helps the farm avoid issues with soil compaction.

“You can go out there and you aren’t going to cause soil compaction like you would on bare ground if you have to get in there and spray when there is some moisture,” Matt said. “It’s nice to keep the ground covered.”

Looking back, Matt said the lessons learned from their first orchard have been pivotal in the success the Hamiltons are experiencing with their second. “We learned a lot from our experiences on our first orchard,” Matt said, “and we are still learning. We are learning every day.”

Looking back, Matt said the lessons learned from their first orchard have been pivotal in the success the Hamiltons are experiencing with their second. “We learned a lot from our experiences on our first orchard,” Matt said, “and we are still learning. We are learning every day.”

The Hamiltons, Matt, Steve and Ben, in a hazelnut orchard interseeded with a perennial ryegrass seed crop. The Hamiltons interseed their orchard to protect soil health and provide a revenue source while they wait for trees to reach bearing stage.

Oregon is No. 1 in Hazelnuts

According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, nearly all of the hazelnuts grown in the U.S. come from Oregon.

Marion County, with 20,500 acres in hazelnuts, is the state’s top hazelnut producing county, according to data from Pacific Agricultural Survey. Yamhill County, with 16,100 acres in hazelnuts, is second, followed by Linn, with 9,500 acres in hazelnuts; Clackamas, with 7,200; and Polk, with 7,100.

About 60 percent of the Oregon’s hazelnut crop is exported, with China and Europe being Oregon’s largest export markets.

Q: Why native plants?
A: If you’ve been following Soil and Water Conservation Districts’ native plant sales around the valley, you know we sell out of our inventory quickly. Why is that you say? What makes native plants so desirable? Well, for one thing, once established, native plants require less care and water than most non-native plants. The Pacific Northwest climate has typically wet winters and dry summers so native plants are already adapted to the ecosystems here. They help to preserve declining habitats like mixed deciduous forests, wetlands, oak woodland, savannah, and upland prairie. They provide food sources for nesting birds, butterfly caterpillars, and other native wildlife. They provide nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds, and shelter for native amphibians and reptiles. Some native plants are the sole source of food for endangered insect species (like Kincaid’s Lupine) or have become resistant to deer and elk browse (like yarrow). They provide excellent erosion control for slopes and as understory plants in coniferous forest settings. Be mindful that we have a variety of habitats here in Polk County, so it’s important to pick the right native plant for the right habitat. We have a one-page guide we include with our native plant sales to help you choose what plants will work best for you. We source and buy the plants right here in the Willamette Valley, making them the hardest for our customers. (Adapted from: Gardening with Oregon Native Plants W of the Cascades, EC 1577, OSU ES, McMahan 2008). www.catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1577.

Q: Will native plants still need your care and attention?
A: Yes, they will! It would be nice if you could just stick them in the ground and go, but in order to establish themselves, any plant, even natives, need to grow in the soil and light conditions they have adapted to and to be watered regularly for the first couple seasons of growth. Be patient because some native plants need a few years to get going. Lastly, unlike nursery stock, native plants DON’T need much fertilizer after the first year of establishment. It is recommended that non burning organic fertilizers such as composted manure or fish emulsion be used.

Q: Where can I buy or harvest these plants?
A: Soil and Water Conservation Districts in each county of the Willamette Valley generally host native plant sales in November and February. The Polk District has a November Bulb Sale and a February Bare Root Sale. Bulbs are better placed in the ground in November so they can establish over winter with the rain. Bare root trees and shrubs are best established in February when it is cool and wet, but not over winter, when their tender shoots might freeze. You’ll be able to place orders soon, check our website: https://www.polkswcd.com/bulb-sale.html

We give away free one-page guides at our sales to help you decide what to plant where, based on sunlight exposure, habitat type, and moisture requirements. Information on height, growth habit, and attractiveness to wildlife is also included. Other places you can find native plants include: OSU Extension’s Master Gardener’s plant sales, and native plant nurseries sprinkled throughout the valley. Some forest products can be harvested with a permit from BLM public lands. www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/forests-and-woodlands/forest-product-permits

Submit Your Questions To:
KARIN STUTZMAN
manager@polkswcd.com
PECAN stands for Polk Extension Citizen Advisory Network. They are the advisory group behind the OSU Extension Polk County services and programs, and part of the statewide Extension Citizen Advisory Network. The advisory network formed alongside the Polk County Extension service district in 2012 to help advocate for the district in the county and advise OSU Extension on needed programming.

PECAN serves as a liaison between OSU Extension, elected officials, local communities and organizations to increase partnerships, improve relationships and leverage efforts for current and future educational programs. PECAN membership represents the diversity of Polk County citizens, communities and organizations.

Past works have included advocating for a 2-year pilot of the OSU Extension Groundwater Educational program, and subsequent continuation after a successful 2 years, advising on resource development and allocation, advocating to Oregon State University for the replacement of Polk County’s livestock & forage specialist, as well as advocating for a Family and Community Health position.

PECAN is already looking toward 2019 - 2020 activities and have elected their new board. This year’s officers include Chairman Diane Ostrom, Monmouth; Vice Chairman Karin Stutzman, Dallas; Recorder Jim Clawson, Dallas; Past Chair Sue Reams, Independence. PECAN meets quarterly and all meetings are open to the public.

PECAN Priorities for the coming year

- 4-H Youth Development Engagement
- Diversify PECAN membership
- Foster partnerships
- Updating PECAN operating guidelines to reflect current staffing

Interest and questions can be directed to Polk County Local Liaison Alisha Atha at 971-612-0022 or Alisha.atha@oregonstate.edu.
When one thinks of 4-H, they typically think of kids and animals. But we have something for folks of all ages and backgrounds, and adults, too.

You get to have fun working with kids sharing what you love, whether it be farming and animals, woodworking, robotics, sewing or embroidery. You don’t even have to have the background. You can come in as an assistant leader and learn right along with the kids. Then you take on maybe fair entries and record books to help out the leader in your role as an assistant leader.

Don’t worry, we’ll train you. We have on-line learning modules, New Leader Education geared just to Polk County, and then there is ongoing training as you learn more about your project area by attending workshops, clinics, field days or STEP (short term educational programs) classes.

We’re always looking for volunteers. You can choose if you want to be a year-round club leader, a sporadic leader as you take on an occasional STEP classes or a resource leader that goes out and helps clubs with their particular project area.

You can choose from:

**Club Based Volunteer**

The Club Based Volunteer takes leadership for a group of young people to share your knowledge and skills for a particular project area. Your club might meet monthly, weekly or twice a month, whatever your schedule can handle and the topic you cover requires.

**Assistant Club Leader**

Your role is to help the club-based volunteer with coordination of the club. The assistant leader may take the leadership for a particular project or specific area of the program – like taking the lead for record books or fair coordination.

**STEP Volunteer**

STEP = Short-Term Educational Program. You have a skill or idea you would like to share with others, but don’t want to take on a club. Your idea is ideal for a single session class or 3-week, weekly session kind of project. You come in...teach your session...and we’ll see you again when you want to teach something else. It’s a great way to share a skill with others.

**Resource Leader**

The Resource Leader has extensive knowledge in a particular project area. Take horses as an example: You’ve been involved in the horse industry for many, many years. You know everything about horses from nutrition to dressage. You’re an ideal person to serve as a resource leader and help other new leaders with the subject matter expertise.

**After School or School Enrichment Volunteer**

This might be someone who is already involved with their school as an aide or parent school volunteer. You have some ideas for projects for the kids or ways to enhance learning in the science area. Then you’re an ideal person to work with the teacher on using the 4-H curriculum in the classroom or after school.

So, you can see, there are lots of ways to get involved with 4-H as an adult. Grown-ups can learn too and share their knowledge and skills with others. You don’t have to let the kids have all the fun without you.
FALL NATIVE BULB SALE
Online Sales begin 09.13.19 | Until Sold Out!

We’ll have the usual list of suspects, plus a few more including: Nodding onion, Pearly Everlasting, lilies, camas, columbine, and Oregon Iris.

Pick up dates begin November 6 & 7.
Ordering arrangements can be made by calling 503.623.9680.

580 Main Street, STE A, Dallas, OR 97338
Thank you for Supporting Native Plants!!

Check our website for more info!
POLKSWCD.COM/BULB-SALE.HTML

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kw CAPITAL CITY
KELLER WILLIAMS
1900 NE 2nd Ave, Suite 700
Salem, OR 97301

Cornerstone Team

289 E. Ellendale, Ste 603, Dallas • www.yolandazuger.com
We’re excited to celebrate 10 years of Oregon State University’s Food Hero Campaign this September! Food Hero offers healthy, low-cost recipes, almost 95 percent of which contain fruits or vegetables, and builds cooking and meal-planning skills, helping families boost their fruit and vegetable consumption. Each year, Food Hero reaches millions of people in all counties of Oregon, 43 states and 198 countries. In addition, hundreds of Food Hero partnerships, developed over the last decade throughout Oregon and the United States, are increasing fruit and vegetable intake. September is Food Hero’s 10th birthday, so let’s celebrate these achievements the healthy way!

There are many ways to host healthy celebrations at home, school, work or really anywhere! Here are a few fun ideas to try during your next celebration.

• Try cutting fruits and veggies in fun shapes and sizes. Make a tasty fruit or veggie dip, such as Food Hero’s Kale Dip.
• Have fun making “Food Heroes” from a variety of healthy foods (i.e. pretzel sticks for arms, a cherry tomato for a head, celery for a body, etc.). Let kids choose their hero’s superpower!

Healthy celebrations can include non-food activities too.
• Try dancing to a favorite song or spending time with family and friends.
• Enjoy a leisurely walk as a family or do a craft together.
• Draw or color together. Check out Food Hero’s kids section to print the “Celebrate” coloring sheet.

For more healthy celebrations ideas and recipes, check out Food Hero’s Healthy and Fun Celebrations Monthly. Learn more about how Food Hero continues to work for Oregon in the most recent annual update!

By Carly Kristofik
OSU Extension
SNAP-Ed Program Coordinator

Happy birthday food hero!

Photo by Food Hero
Perrydale Parent’s Club (PPC) is requesting donations for a greenhouse at Perrydale School. The Perrydale Parent’s Club will be building the greenhouse and donating it to the school in an effort to upgrade their facilities and help make their students more competitive in the job market.

Perrydale, a rural K-12 school of 315 students, has a strong agricultural program with an outstanding FFA advisor and teacher, Christina Griffin who is certified to teach college horticulture classes. Perrydale also has a science teacher with a Master’s in Crop Science who works with OSU in their grass seed research program – he would like to expose the students to college-level science and this greenhouse would help make that a reality. Additionally, elementary grade teachers have expressed a desire to use a greenhouse for teaching science and for projects to younger youth.

This will be a well utilized greenhouse for teaching purposes. We are building a commercial quality greenhouse to emulate actual industry conditions which will be usable for many years. The school is also remodeling the shop area with up to date facilities to teach both wood- and metal- shop. Perrydale has a qualified welding instructor, so the whole program is getting geared up to provide students with marketable, hands on skills.

For several years, the PPC saved part of the income from our annual auction towards this greenhouse project. In addition, we have received $15,000 from the Oregon Community Foundation, $5,000 from Wilbur-Ellis, $2,000 from Northwest Farm Credit Services, $1,000 from International Seed Service, Inc. and $500 from West Coast Beet Seed. We also have incentives and rebates from the Energy Trust for another $3,500 and some contractors willing to help us out at reduced rates. However, we are still almost $15,000 short of full funding for the greenhouse. The plan is to get the greenhouse built soon, so it can be used later this fall. We will be recognizing our donors who are helping make this project come to fruition. The PPC is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and any donation is fully tax deductible according to the law.

Please contact Helle Ruddenklau, President of the Perrydale Parents’ Club, 503-932-0558 for more information.
Oregon State University field crops Extension agent Nicole Anderson has received the 2019 George R. Hyslop Professorship for Oregon Grass Seed Research and Extension.

Anderson, an associate professor in the College of Agricultural Sciences, serves Polk, Yamhill and Washington counties, and growers throughout the Willamette Valley rely on her research and Extension activities.

OSU Extension Weed Management Specialist Andy Hulting previously held the five-year professorship.

Anderson, who came to OSU in 2009, said she is honored to receive the award.

“It is extremely rewarding to be recognized by the Hyslop family, a family that was instrumental in developing the Oregon seed industry, and also current seed industry members, who were part of the selection process,” Anderson said.

“It is really important to me that I received recognition from them,” she said.

She added: “This sort of acknowledgment would not have been possible without support from OSU colleagues, growers and the many people in the seed industry who have supported my work over the years.”

Anderson said she plans to use the award to enhance research, Extension and teaching work she currently performs for the industry. She identified three research areas she plans to focus on, including reducing pest problems, increasing seed yield potential and improving harvest efficiency.

“Basically, having known and solidified funding for the next five years will help me fill in any gaps that might have been missing on those projects,” she said. “It allows me to focus on bringing those projects to completion and adding on some components to enhance the outcomes of that work.”

“I also hope to develop some new educational activities and involve several undergraduate students in our research activities over the course of this professorship,” Anderson said.
Take a drive anywhere in the Willamette Valley today, and you are almost guaranteed to see hazelnut orchards in some form; from the freshly planted to the old, established, and even struggling. Oregon growers produce close to 100 percent of the total U.S. Hazelnut crop, making them incredibly important to the state, with an Oregon Department of Agriculture estimated 2017 crop value of ~$73.6 million. While hazelnuts, or filberts as many Oregonians know them, have been grown in the Valley since the 1850s, plantings and production began to boom in the mid-2000s and is continuing today. Research commissioned by the Hazelnut Industry Office, and completed by Pacific Agricultural Survey (PAS) in 2018, showed that in 2017, 10,881 acres had been newly planted in Hazelnuts, contrasted with 2007 data, which showed only 207 newly planted acres; all data indicate this trend of growth is likely to continue.

All told, PAS data showed 78,603 acres of hazelnuts are currently planted in the Valley, with Marion (20,496 ac), Yamhill (16,067 ac), Polk (7,098 ac) and Washington (6,519 ac) counties constituting the majority of this acreage at 50,180 ac, roughly ~64% of the valley total. Of these 50,180 acres, PAS research further specifies that approximately 24,134 acres are orchards ranging from 1-5 years old. Hazelnut orchards, in general, are typically bare beneath the canopy to make harvesting via sweeping more efficient, cost, and time effective. However, while easier for mainstream methods of harvest/production, leaving orchards bare and exposed comes with costs as well, in the form of reduced soil fertility and soil loss via wind and water erosion. This exposure is greater in these younger (1-5-year-old) orchards, as a canopy has yet to develop that would help to protect the soil from various weather/storm events.

As the general push for education and awareness regarding the complexities of soil health continues to grow, so does the number of growers looking towards implementing practices that both allow them to complete harvest, as well as to protect the precious medium through which they obtain that harvest, their soil. Implementing cover crops is not a new and noteworthy practice. Plenty of research has been done on the topic showing both the pros and cons in various agricultural settings. Implementing cover cropping, in any form, within a hazelnut orchard setting, is fairly new. Some producers have been having luck planting rows with creeping red and fine fescues, mowing several times a season to reduce water competition, others have been harvesting grass seed from row plantings, etc., but these early adopters are few and far between.

This is something the NRCS hopes to change, by introducing “Cover Crops for Hazelnut Growers” EQIP funding. Available in 2020, eligible producers may be able to receive between 75 percent and 100 percent cost share to implement the following practices: conservation cover-permanent vegetation between rows, cover crops, mulching, field borders, and critical area planting. Implementing any of these practices would put any producer on a path to better soil health, and likely to better plant health and production. When it comes to soil health, keeping it covered, minimizing disturbance, maximizing diversity, and maximizing the presence of living roots will ensure that you’re on the right track.
One of the most common calls we get in the Small Farms program is something along the lines of “I just bought property, what can I do with it?” Many people are coming to farming after another career or as a first-generation farmer and have questions about where to begin. Luckily, helping beginning farmers navigate those questions is what we do! Below are our top six pieces of advice for those just starting out.

1. Invest in good soils and water.

So much of crop selection is dependent on what your soils will allow you to grow. It is worth it to have good soils that allow you to choose what crops you want! A few acres of good soil are a better investment than many acres of poor soil. Check out the Web Soil Survey to determine what soils you have. Water is essential for plant growth, be it vegetable or pasture grass. Having irrigation and having a water right will give you more options and improve the productivity of your soil. Remember, older water rights are always better than newer ones! In the event of a drought, younger water rights are shut off first.

2. Set realistic goals.

It’s all well and good to have the farm of your dreams mapped out in your head, so long as it is attainable! Remember that establishing a farm, gathering equipment, and building infrastructure takes time and you shouldn’t expect to be a superstar farmer with all the bells and whistles in year one. Set goals with a timeline in mind. Who has the skills? What investments are needed? How will we reach this goal?


The time to start thinking about marketing is before the seed is planted or before the calf is born. Early on! Visit farmers markets, local grocery stores, other farms’ websites to get a sense of who has what, how much they’re selling it for, and where the holes in the market are. Spend some time on an eye-catching logo or brand, a website, and make sure your customers know how to get in touch with you.

4. Match the farm enterprise to family desires and abilities.

Farming is a team sport. Each team player brings different abilities and interests. In order for the farm to truly shine, each player should fill a role that fills them up. Send the extroverts to the farmers market. Encourage those good with numbers to take over the books. Make sure everyone is invested. Also make sure that your income streams match your needs. It might make sense for someone to have an off-farm job for the health insurance and benefits.
5. Learn from others by networking.

Nothing compares to farmers sharing tips, tricks, and useful information with other farmers. Make sure you're in the know by attending conferences, courses, and workshops. Apprentice on another farm or find a farmer-mentor. You'll learn a lot and you'll also become connected to the “culture” side of “agriculture”.

6. Have a passion for what you do!

If you hate growing garlic, don’t grow garlic! If you hate traveling to farmers markets, don’t go to farmers markets! This is your farm business and you can tailor it to suit your desired lifestyle. Plus, if you’re not invested in what you’re doing, burnout is a very real consequence. Farming is not quite “love what you do and you’ll never work a day in your life” because every day is hard work, but if you have a passion for what you’re doing, that passion will keep you going through the hard times.

If you have questions as you go, please don’t hesitate to contact the Mid-Willamette Valley Small Farms program. We provide production help, troubleshooting, and can help connect you to people and resources that will help you achieve your small farm dream. Farm on!
E ach year on the last Friday in January, the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Polk Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) hold a Local Working Group (LWG) Meeting to discuss natural resource concerns in Polk County and to help prioritize funding committed to addressing priority concerns. The meeting is designed to solicit input from conservation partners representing a broad spectrum of natural resource groups, agencies, landowners and land managers working together to improve natural resources in Polk County.

For many years the topic of water quality and water quantity has come up. There is an initiative to provide funding through NRCS called the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) that is designed to address and improve agricultural sources of water pollution; specifically, nutrients, sediment, and pathogens. The improvements can be directed toward a watershed with an affected group of private wells tied to a single source of ground or surface water, or to a drinking water provider’s source water (like the many water co-ops we have in Polk County). The initiative would provide monetary incentives to the affected area participants to promote best management practices to improve a documented water quality concern.

For instance, is the area already on the state’s 303(d) list of impairment or have a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan? Section 303(d) requires identifying waters that do not meet water quality standards and where a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) pollutant load limit needs to be developed. https://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/assessment/rpt2012/search.asp Impairments include elevated levels of nitrate, phosphorus, sediment, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, or pesticides from sources such as crop growing operations, animal feeding operations, septic system leaching, wastewater lagoons, or active and non-active landfills. Or is there another documented impairment that is not part of the state required assessment for water quality standards? Like results from a private test by Edge Analytical, or similar private water quality testing center showing elevated levels of nitrate, phosphorus, sediment, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, or pesticides.

Eligible projects would work to improve the area around where ground or surface water intake happens- pastures, crop fields, grape, nut, fruit or berry orchards; dairy headquarters; or a group of rural properties with aging septic systems, before it is drawn from a well intake pipe or delivered to a processing center. For instance, if you have a grape, nut, fruit or berry processing plant on acreage and you want to make sure to have good clean water for processing, this funding may work for you. Project areas must be more than 10 acres. Area must already be developed or in production as no new agriculture can be put into production with these funds.

If your operation is concerned about the potability of irrigation water, or water needed for cleaning and preparing fruits and vegetables or other crops that will be consumed by the public, there may be a solution available for you. We would like to utilize part of our LWG meeting, on January 31, 2020, to solicit comments and ideas from growers who irrigate or those concerned with their drinking water sources.

Please contact Karin Stutzman at: manager@polkswcd.com to reserve a spot for you.
Delivery – Building site delivery services small and large – call for rates.

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Free Nitrate Screenings Offered

The OSU Extension Service is offering free well water nitrate screenings for well owners.

While it is especially important for households with pregnant women or newborns to test for nitrate because of a rare type of blue-baby syndrome, all homes with private wells should be aware of their nitrate level.

For a free nitrate screening, bring ½ cup of untreated well water in a clean, water-tight container to the Polk 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.

Polk County Office is normally open Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 12:00pm and 1:00pm to 5:00pm. They are located at 289 E Ellendale, Suite 301 Dallas, OR 97338

For additional information on well water and septic systems, free Rural Living Basics classes, and other nitrate screening events visit the OSU Extension Service website http://wellwater.oregonstate.edu or for more information call 541-766-3556.
Meadow Restoration

PROGRAM FUNDING OPENING

By Marc Bell
Resource Conservationist
Polk SWCD

The close of the 2019 fiscal year marks the end of five years the SWCD and NRCS of Polk county has funded the Regional Conservation Partnership Program for oak habitat restoration. Due to the high demand for the funding of that program that wasn’t able to provide before the program expired, the local NRCS office will be opening a new program: “Meadow Restoration in Declining Habitats” which will continue the heavy investment in oak habitat restoration and enhancement throughout the county with some additional focuses.

This new program provides nearly identical solutions and help with oak and prairie habitat systems, as well as creates opportunities to attract elk herds to the uplands, away from low lying croplands. Moving away from the former program’s singular focus on Fender’s Blue Butterfly habitat, this new initiative will also target Roosevelt elk, black-tailed deer, monarch butterfly and grassland bird species such as western meadowlark, Oregon vesper sparrow and slender billed nuthatch.

Food, cover, and shelter continue to be inadequate and declining for the targeted species due to development, fir encroachment and delayed management of woodlands within the Willamette Valley and Polk county. Particularly, the loss of open meadows forces elk herds to travel to lower elevations onto agricultural lands and other developed areas. In turn this also has secondary effects: risk of vehicle collisions with elk increase and herds are not able to move around the county and surrounding areas through wildlife corridors, putting additional strain on the local habitat resources.

The program will have two funding phases, starting with the 2020 fiscal year in October and going through 2024, followed by a second phase from 2025 to 2029. Phase One high priority lower elevation oaks and upper elevation conifer areas extend east to west across the county north of Hwy 22 east of Hwy 99W and north of Hwy 223 west of Hwy 99W. Phase Two priority areas cover the land south of Hwy 22 and east of Hwy 223. Further details of these two priority hillsides across the county can be seen on the map figure.

Land managers who have been interested in this kind of restoration work but have not been able to enroll in the previous Oak program, should consider contacting the district and the NRCS in early October to discuss the application process. Through Phase 1, the NRCS will be able to request up to $150,000 of total financial assistance each year, so please come ready to discuss the scope and scale of the projects you think might best fit the property. Contact Marc Bell, Sue Reams and Evelyn Conrad at the Polk SWCD and NRCS offices in Dallas for more information.
Living on the Land
- STEWARDSHIP FOR SMALL ACREAGES -

CLASS SERIES OFFERED IN POLK COUNTY

By Chrissy Lucas | OSU Extension | Groundwater Education Coordinator

Living on the Land is a workshop series tailored for small acreage landowners and those new to managing land. OSU Extension Service of Polk County is sponsoring the five-part series.

The classes will be held on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m., beginning November 5th and concluding on December 3rd at the OSU Extension Service of Polk County Conference Room located in Dallas at 289 E Ellendale. Topics include Stewardship Planning, Woodlands & Riparian Area Management, Pasture and Manure Management, Wells & Septic Systems, Soils and Weed Management.

The registration fee for the entire series is $30.00 per person or $45 for two partners from the same farm or property. Registration is required prior to workshop. Registration information will be available on October 1st.

For more information or to request a paper registration form, contact Chrissy Lucas at the OSU Extension Service 541-713-5009 or Chrissy.Lucas@oregonstate.edu
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