

# Cultivating

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NRCS PROGRAM HELPING  
CREATE AN 'ECOLOGICAL  
PARADISE' | **PG. 6**

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# WHO WE ARE



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

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Due to COVID-19, OSU Extension is operating under modified office hours. Please call the office at to hear our current office hours.

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER

- ONGOING** - Polk SWCD - Online Fall Bulb and Perennial Native Plant Sale on now, pick up dates in November
- 22** - Polk SWCD - Online Living on the Land Series begins Sept 22nd through October 20th - see ad on pg. 21
- TBD** - Polk SWCD - Personnel Committee Meeting
- 22** - OSU Extension - Babysitter Training (Series 1) - Link to register at extension.oregonstate.edu/4h/polk/stay-home-youth-4-h-activities
- 23** - 4-H Girls Who Code - More info and register at extension.oregonstate.edu/4h/polk/stay-home-youth-4-h-activities
- 24** - Tree School Online: Fungal Diseases of Tree Roots and Stems - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 30** - 4-H Baking Basics: Advanced Baking (4 weeks) - Pre-register at extension.oregonstate.edu/4h/polk/stay-home-youth-4-h-activities

## OCTOBER

- TBD** - PECAN quarterly meeting
- 1** - Polk SWCD - ZOOM Finance Committee Meeting - 9am
- 6** - Tree School Online: Future of Your Forest, Passing it on - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 8** - Tree School Online: Dwarf Mistletoe - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 11** - 4-H Baking for Beginners (4 weeks) - Pre-register at extension.oregonstate.edu/4h/polk/stay-home-youth-4-h-activities
- 12** - Polk SWCD - Federal Holiday - Polk SWCD office closed
- 12** - (Deadline to register) 4-H Horse Academy - www.4hroundup.com
- 14** - Polk SWCD - ZOOM Board Meeting - 6-8pm
- 15** - Tree School Online: Defoliators - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 19** - OSU Extension Babysitter Training (Series 2) - Link to register at extension.oregonstate.edu/4h/polk/stay-home-youth-4-h-activities
- 20** - Tree School Online: Making Maps for Management Planning - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 22** - Tree School Online: The Other Insects - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline

## NOVEMBER

- POLK SWCD** - RCPP funding for Oregon white oak restoration begins - Begin taking applications
- POLK SWCD** - Online Winter Bare Root Tree and Shrub Native Plant Sale begins - Pick up dates in February
- 3** - Tree School Online: Fish Habitat and Riparian Management - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 5** - Polk SWCD ZOOM - Finance Committee Meeting - 9am
- 10** - Polk SWCD - ZOOM Board Meeting - November 10, 2020 6-8pm
- 11** - Polk SWCD - Federal Holiday - Polk SWCD office closed
- 12** - Tree School Online: Diseases of Conifers - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 17** - Tree School Online: Diamonds Under the Douglas Fir - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 19** - Tree School Online: Wildlife Damage in Eastern Oregon Trees - knowyourforest.org/treeschoolonline
- 19-21** - Polk SWCD - Online Fall Bulb and Perennial Native Plant Sale pick up dates - 8:30 to 4 p.m.
- 26** - Polk SWCD Federal Holiday - Polk SWCD office closed

## DECEMBER

- 3** - Polk SWCD - ZOOM Finance Committee Meeting - 9am
- 9** - Polk SWCD - ZOOM Board Meeting - 6-8pm
- 25** - Polk SWCD - Federal Holiday - Polk SWCD office closed

# 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

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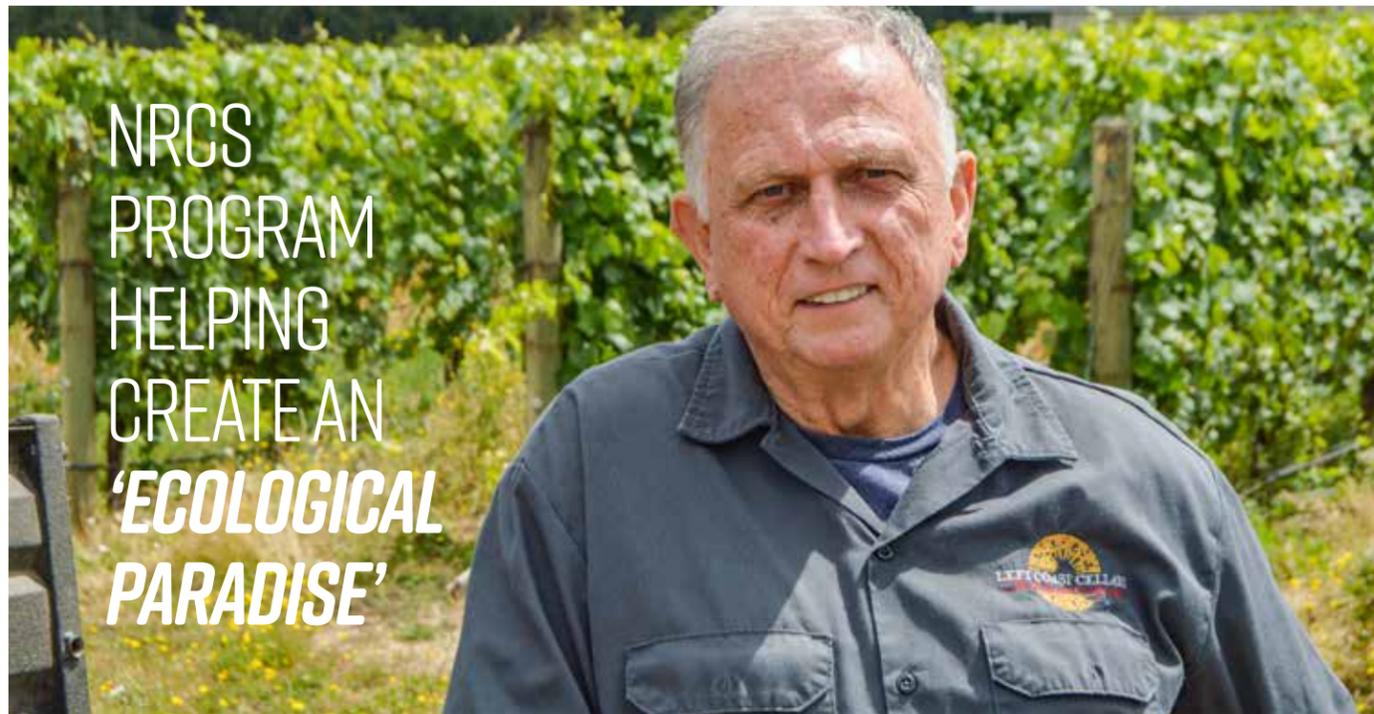
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**CULTIVATING** is a quarterly publication of Oregon State University Polk County Extension Service and Polk Soil And Water Conservation District. Included in these pages, readers can find practical information on farm and forest management, on home and lifestyle choices, and on the many programs and services available through the Service and the District.

# NRCS PROGRAM HELPING CREATE AN 'ECOLOGICAL PARADISE'



Bob Pfaff, co-founder of Left Coast Estates, at his vineyard near Rickreall is working to create what he calls an ecological paradise on the estate.

PHOTOS BY MITCH LIES | OSU EXTENSION

**By Mitch Lies**  
Cultivating Editor

**B**ob Pfaff, co-founder of Left Coast Estate, is working to create what he calls an “ecological paradise” at his family’s vineyard near Rickreall. To date, the work has included restoring 100 acres of oak savannah, establishing strips of native habitat around the exterior of the property, and most recently, replacing annual cover crops with a mix of perennials in an effort to minimize soil disturbance.

“We want to go to where we would only disturb the soil maybe once every five to seven years,” Pfaff said. “We want to do as little soil disturbance as possible.”

The latest project is funded in part by a Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) grant through the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. Titled “Ground Cover for Erosion in Orchards,” the CIS is available for vineyard owners and orchardists in Polk, Marion, Yamhill and Washington counties.

At Illahe Vineyards near Dallas, Lowell and Brad Ford also tapped resources available through the NRCS program, in their case to plant native flowering plants between rows. Illahe’s project involved the

purchase of what Lowell Ford described as “very expensive” native seeds from one of two nurseries in Oregon that specialize in the plants.

“It was absolutely crucial for us to have that grant, to be able to buy those native seeds,” he said.

NRCS initiated the Conservation Implementation Strategy to encourage orchardists and vineyard owners in the four-county area to utilize cover crops to preserve topsoil and improve soil health. According to a program brochure, research has shown that planting cover crops between rows in orchards and vineyards significantly reduces soil erosion caused by winter rains.

Convincing farmers, most of whom operate on a tight budget, to implement cover crops into their system, however, can at times be an uphill climb, according to Karin Stutzman, manager of the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, which is working with the local NRCS office to attract participants and implement the strategies.

It takes time and money to plant cover crops, Stutzman said, and it can take up to ten years to see benefits. “That is a big hill to climb,” Stutzman said, “but we hope to show that people are using them and getting positive results.”

Funding available through the program at times can approach 90 percent of a project’s cost, given that the NRCS provides a flat rate for projects based on a regional average. Participating growers also can tap expert advice from staff at Polk SWCD and the local NRCS office, something both Pfaff and the Fords said was invaluable in developing their projects.

“It is knowledge we don’t really have, so it is a resource we like to draw from,” said Pfaff, who co-founded Left Coast Estate with Suzanne Larson. The vineyard today is owned and operated by Bob and Suzanne’s children, Taylor and Cali Pfaff.

While not employed universally, usage of cover crops in vineyards is largely standard practice, Pfaff said, given that vineyards typically are planted on slopes that are subject to erosion and have limited topsoil to begin with. And cover crops have long been a standard at Illahe and Left Coast, both of which were established about 20 years ago. The Fords, in fact, planted their vineyard into a pasture and have largely kept the grasses and clovers in place between rows.

“Some of it has never been cultivated,” Brad Ford said, “but as we are beginning to have reduced vigor and bumpier rows, we



Pfaff and winemaker Joe Wright walk through an oat cover crop at Left Coast Estates. Left Coast is utilizing a USDA conservation program to help defray the costs of establishing cover crops in the vineyard.

are starting to cultivate them out and replant them.”

The benefits of cover crops are well documented in farm literature. They include everything from erosion control to increased soil organic matter and, in some cases, better water infiltration, which can be a bonus in dry years. Cover crops also can help prevent soil compaction and provide a better surface than dirt for farm equipment to drive on, particularly during wet conditions.

The downside to cover crops, other than the time and money it takes to install them, is they can compete with grapes and other crops for water and nutrients. In the case of Willamette Valley wine producers, however, that is not a significant issue given that the viticulturists value quality over quantity and a little loss of vigor is acceptable.

“That is a weird thing in viticulture,” Brad Ford said. “You don’t want the most growth you can get at times.”

Often vineyard managers have what Pfaff refers to as “competing interests” in selecting cover crops. While they may want to preserve topsoil, enhance soil organic matter and provide pollinator habitat, they are ultimately operating a working vineyard.

“It gets a little complicated,” Pfaff said. “We want to have as many natives as we can

in our cover crop mix and we need some grasses, because grasses have the root structure to accommodate equipment. We also want pollinators in the mix, but we don’t want them so tall that they interfere with our working the vines.”

In addition to agronomic benefits, cover crops can help vineyards meet criteria for sustainable certifications, such as LIVE, or low input viticulture and enology. Both Illahe and Left Coast are certified by the LIVE sustainable certification program.

And, finally, ecologically friendly practices, such as the flowers planted by the Fords, can provide a marketing tool.

“People love it,” Lowell Ford said. “We get comments all the time from people who come in a see these nice, bright-orange flowers growing between the rows. And they have been very successful as insectaries.

“It is not for everybody,” he added. “Some vineyard managers don’t like it because it isn’t all tidy, two-inch tall turf. But that has never been a big issue with me.”

Vineyard managers and hazelnut orchardists interested in accessing resources available in the Ground Cover for Erosion in Orchards CIS are encouraged to contact their local NRCS or SWCD office. The program expires in 2024.

## ORCHARD PROGRAM DEFRAYS COSTS OF COVER CROP INSTALLATION

**By Mitch Lies**  
Cultivating Editor

Hazelnut growers in Polk, Marion, Yamhill and Washington counties who are looking to employ cover crops in their operations have an opportunity to significantly reduce the installation costs.

The USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service is offering orchardists and vineyard managers the opportunity to apply for grants to help defray the costs of planting cover crops under a Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) titled “Ground Cover for Erosion in Orchards.”

According to an NRCS document last updated June of 2019, bare soil conditions in hazelnut orchards are creating issues with erosion and soil health, particularly because the standard practice in the industry is to eliminate orchard floor vegetation in an effort to minimize competition with trees and facilitate harvest.

With the industry growing at a significant rate in recent years, the potential for soil lost to erosion is significant. According to the document, nearly 11,000 acres of hazelnuts were planted in 2017, alone. Overall, according to a survey commissions by the Hazelnut Industry Office, there were 78,603 acres of hazelnuts in the Willamette Valley in 2018.

According to Nik Wiman, Oregon State University Extension hazelnut specialist, a high percentage of the newly planted hazelnut orchards in the valley are intercropped with cash crops that can generate revenue while the orchard is in its nonbearing stage, a stage that typically spans four or five years. And, he said, there has been an increase in recent years in the use of winter cover crops. Also, he said, a small percentage of growers today are employing permanent cover crops in their hazelnut orchards, particularly those producing hazelnuts on slopes.

“This is kind of a seed change in the industry. There are a few growers, in particular, that are pioneers in this,” he said.

Overall, Wiman said is he encouraged that the industry is utilizing cover crops more frequently in recent years, but added that he would like to see more.

“We are getting a lot of scrutiny of our industry, because people are seeing bare ground and thinking that is a bad thing,” he said. “I would like to see more orchards with cover.”

Orchardists interested in accessing resources available in the Ground Cover for Erosion in Orchards CIS are encouraged to contact their local NRCS or SWCD office. The program expires in 2024.



## Polk County 4-H holds virtual fair

### COUNTY FAIR POSTPONED TO 2021....

By Suzi Bustler  
Polk County Extension 4-H

**Y**IKES!.....NO FAIR!! What do we do now?! Well, for Polk County, that meant a bunch of Zoom meetings to look at what we can do, how we can do it, what resources are available, and what's the best way to create a fair experience in light of COVID restrictions.

Our main focus was to provide quality educational fair experiences in a healthy safe environment. We discovered that each program area needed something different. Horse show needs were totally different from a rabbit or small animal show needs; likewise static exhibit needs were far different from contests and horticulture.

With the Polk County Fair making the decision to postpone the fair. This meant if we wanted to have a 4-H fair-like experience we were going to have to cover A LOT of expenses

that are typically picked up by the fair operations. These expenses included things like shavings, removing manure, garbage pickup/disposal, hand wash stations and porta-potties.

Thankfully, the Polk County Livestock Association that sponsors the market auction saved us by creating a live show and market auction (photos above). Horse, dog and shooting sports helped out by postponing their events until fall. That left us large and small animal breed shows, static/horticulture and all the contests to organize and complete.

We spent lots of time researching possible solutions. Lucky for us, there are many states that have fair before us so we got to copy much of what they were doing. We then created a virtual fair. Fortunately for us, the computer platform that manages our fair entries also has a program that allows us to manage pictures and videos for a virtual fair. With lots of adaptations, wonderful, flexible fair judges and terrific 4-H families willing to do things differently....we had a fair.

Large animals were able to have their breed show using pictures and videos. The judge placed the classes and then we held follow-up

Zoom meetings with the kids and judges. The judge provided oral reasons, showmanship and fitting tips, and recommendations for qualities to look for in a sire. Small animal participants were able to participate in one-on-one interviews with the judge via Zoom and gained wonderful knowledge and answers to questions in a safe environment. Our static participants (think exhibit building – expressive arts, cooking, sewing, etc.) participated in one-on-one interviews with the judge via Zoom and learned what the judge liked about their exhibit and ways to improve without all the distractions during static judging day.

Contests required a bit more creativity and flexibility. Presentations were able to be done using Zoom and we were even able to offer contests like our Food Prep Contest with the member preparing the dish at home while the judge watches via Zoom. See judging pictures of Caleb Foley preparing pasta carbonara.

It wasn't easy. Sometimes it wasn't pretty. But we did it. And we did it successfully. Members were able to present their project work, gain valuable knowledge and feedback in a safe and healthy environment.



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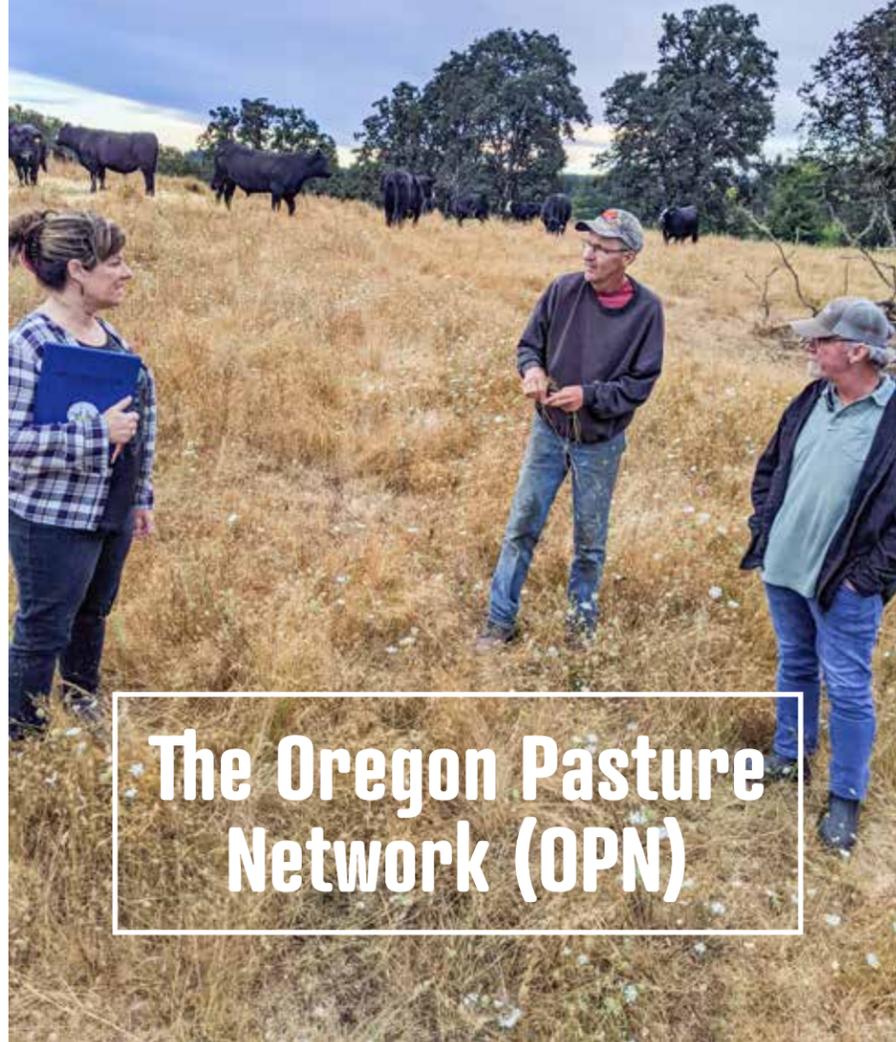
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## The Oregon Pasture Network (OPN)

OPN discussing grazing quality with ranchers.

### *A grass roots network promoting pasture based farming*

**By Karin Stutzman**  
District Manager, Polk SWCD

Short on time or cash and need help in the wide world to let consumers know you and your business exist? There are options to help you promote your sustainable and humane small farm or ranch that won't break your bank and help you reach the right audience for your animal products. In our day to day service to help promote the wise use of natural resources for landowners we came across a network that is a program of Friends of Family Farmers (FoFF), whose vision is an "Oregon where the food system is dominated by thriving, socially and ecologically responsible family farms. They believe that every person — urban and agrarian, farmer and eater — has the ability to make choices that

can help regenerate our food system." One way they contribute to this cause is by forming a program promoting pasture-based farming and ranching of animal products, helping small farmers and ranchers establish their place on the map. Farmers and ranchers who take the OPN Pasture Pledge and become pasture partner members vow to "work together to practice and promote ag practices that put a high value on family farms, animal welfare, public health, the planet, and our local rural economies."

If you have limited funds and/or time, but you know your animal husbandry values, and steward your land with future generations in mind, the (OPN) may be able to help you. There is no cost for producers to join OPN, and if you qualify to become a member, your business can be promoted on its website to help you expand who can see your products online.

For small meat producers interested in joining the network, you would need to complete an application, then schedule a site visit with a member of the OPN Advisory Committee and the (OPN) program manager. They come out and walk your operation with you to get a feel for how you manage things. They take the time to talk with you and make suggestions, ask about your best management practices, your pastures, wintering procedures, grazing plan, etc. You talk about what the operation may have looked like when you took it over, and then how you have improved upon it since then, as well as how it has changed over time.

They believe that every person — urban and agrarian, farmer and eater — has the ability to make choices that can help regenerate our food system.

They may also talk with you about ways you can make small tweaks to your current practice for overall improvement. Once the site visit is completed, your application is taken to the full advisory committee for review. If invited to become a member of the network, you join a respected group of small meat producers who raise their stock with the same love and care as you do, and in turn open up your business to a wider network of producers, consumers, individuals and restaurants alike. The benefits are two fold, the consumer gets high quality meat products and farmer/ranchers get access to regular advice from other OPN members. They also schedule classes with pasture management experts which members can attend at a discount and send out a monthly newsletter to keep you up to date on educational opportunities and new industry publications. New and intermediate farmers can grow their collective knowledge and make connections to build sustainable rural communities for the long haul. In today's climate, with heightened social awareness to move away from crowded factory meat plants processing thousands of livestock in an assembly line fashion; to small farms and ranches, raising their livestock on open pasture with fresh clean grass and water, with no stock yard congestion, you are helping to promote a sustainable, healthy, humane way to enjoy your next meal. Who knows, you might be pleasantly surprised. Here is the link to their website if you are interested. [www.oregonpasturenetwork.org](http://www.oregonpasturenetwork.org)

## Farms in the fall make for great family outings

**By Audrey Comerford**  
OSU Extension Agritourism

All travel and family activities are going to look different this year due to COVID-19, and while some aspects of life have drastically changed, farmers are still farming. Throughout these past months of distant learning, mask wearing, modified vacation plans, and Zoom calls, crops have been planted, tended to and harvested in order to keep communities fed. These local family farms have continued to haul their goods to farmers markets, sell directly from their property, produced and packaged CSA shares, and adapted to online platforms in order to stay afloat. Many of the farms who would traditionally sell to restaurants were forced to change their business model almost overnight when bars and restaurants were closed in spring due to the pandemic. Farms in our area will be continuing to offer great seasonal produce, meats and other farm products direct to consumer through the fall and winter as well as on-farm experiences.

Farm activities this fall will have the same charm and nostalgia as past years with a few more restrictions. Pumpkin patches and harvest festivals could look a bit different this year, but they are still the best place to pick that perfect pumpkin. In a field or corn maze, there is ample opportunity to maintain social distance while still having all the fall fun we dream about the rest of the year. Some farms will be offering limited or modified activities

while others have decided not to host a festival in 2020. Whichever route the farm has decided to take this year, know that they are keeping the safety of their staff and guests in mind so please follow the posted guidelines. Before visiting the farm, call, check their website or Facebook page for hours and updates related to COVID-19 guidance. Not only are crops and weather subject to change but so are the state guidelines farms must follow. It is also recommended you bring a face covering with you as some locations it will be required if the location in indoors or 6 feet social distance can not be maintained, per the state guidelines.

Another way to enjoy what the greater Polk County area has to offer this fall and year-round is the Great Oaks Food Trail, which has officially launched. The trail is made up of 44 members and showcases local products and businesses that make up our vibrant community. From U-picks to alpacas, craft beverages and restaurants, there is something for everyone on the trail. This easy to follow, self-guided tour allows for the visitor or local to explore the beautiful countryside at their own pace all the while tasting

and experiencing the local gems that make up the area. To visit one of these great locations, pick up a brochure at a local chamber or visitor center and make sure to check out the Great Oaks Food Trail website at [explore-polkcounty.org/greatoaksfoodtrail](http://explore-polkcounty.org/greatoaksfoodtrail) for a complete list of food trail members.

As you and your family are out enjoying fall in Oregon, consider visiting a farm for authentic fun or to buy local food. Our farms are an excellent source for seasonal produce, meats, fiber, baked goods, apple cider, and other farm fresh favorites. Farms that are open to the public can be a great place to bring the family for a day of safe fun and education, whether that be to pick the perfect pumpkin or visit farm animals. It benefits everyone in the community when we shop at the source.



As we begin to plan for fall and winter seasons the Polk SWCD and land managers in Polk County are responsible for managing invasive species to help prevent their spread not only on their property but also to prevent spreading to new areas and adjacent properties. The Polk SWCD manages two properties for wildlife habitat and implements a number of methods to control those species as effectively and affordably as possible. Two of the most invasive species commonly found in the county and how the Polk SWCD recommends dealing with them are listed below.

**Blackberry** — The most iconic herbaceous invasive species of the Willamette Valley requires a significant investment to keep from taking over large areas and can form thickets if not addressed over time. Both mowing and spray options are effective, and can each be even more effective when combined together. The Polk SWCD approaches blackberry management with mechanical mowing as well as a chemical application. Triclopyr or glyphosate in the correct concentrations are very effective chemical options — check the label to make sure a premixed container is rated for blackberry or ensure a concentrate is diluted to the proper strength. With glyphosate, in late Summer thoroughly spray the leaves and canes until they are covered but not dripping on a day with little to no wind and ideally over 80

degrees. As always wear long pants, full sleeves and follow all label instructions when spraying. Follow up this treatment with a mow later in fall 6-7 weeks after the spray application. This gives the chemical time to be transported down to the rhizomatous roots which will prevent regrowth from established roots. If you opt for triclopyr, you can switch the process and mow in the fall and spray the

wildlife prairies, and young forestry stands can be controlled with chemical treatments most times of the year but can be particularly effective when combined with mechanical clearing. Scotch broom generates an uncommonly large amount of seed per plant so mowing before fire risk gets too high in early summer is ideal to prevent seed dispersal but fall mowing will help reduce numbers as well. Like blackberry, mechanical mowing will only control existing populations, chemical additions are generally required to eliminate scotch broom. Triclopyr and glyphosate are also common chemical options and best applied when the plant is actively growing in the spring, but can be applied other times. If following a mow, a small targeted spray application on remains of the woody stem will help prevent resprout. Keep in mind seed will germinate and grow in bare soil left after mowing. When using glyphosate in particular be mindful as this chemical can also harm grasses and other vegetation

regrowth the next summer. Mowing on its own can prevent further spread but is ineffective at eliminating canes. Without chemical use, tilling will eventually work but requires painstaking removal of all plant material from the soil to prevent the rhizomes from rooting and growing back, but also damages the overall soil health.

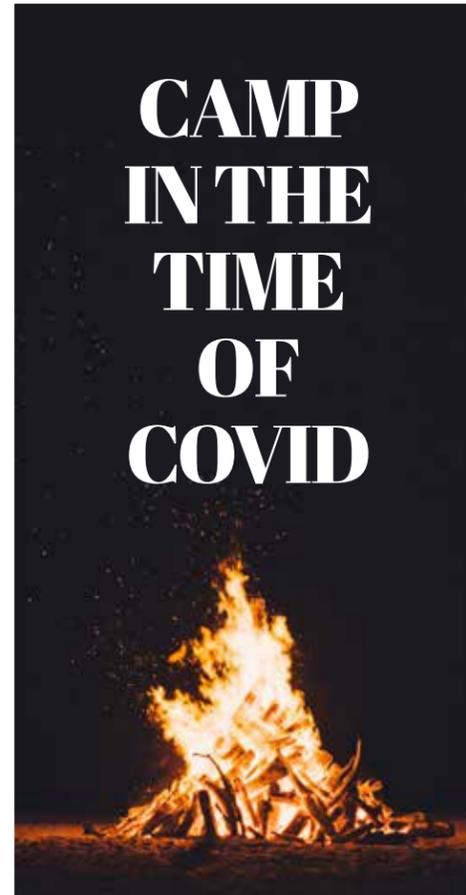
Scotch broom - A woody species that can be extremely invasive in pastures,

you may be counting on filling in and replacing scotch broom after treating it. Red Alder, rose, currants, and snowberry are all native woody species that can replace scotch broom once took up, these species and more can be purchased at the Polk SWCD's native plant sale. Watch for more information on the upcoming sale here in Cultivating and online at the Polk SWCD's web page [www.polkswcd.com](http://www.polkswcd.com) as well.



## Fall and winter invasive species control tips

BY MARC BELL  
Polk SWCD



By Emily Lampe  
Oregon State University Extension 4-H

Camp often promises an adventure filled week in the forest, sleeping in a packed cabin, trying new activities, and making fast friends. However, like many things, summer camp in the time of COVID-19 needed to be reimagined and redesigned. Thankfully, 4-H Youth Development is used to adapting, and was able to do just that to ensure the Outdoor Explorers Day Camp safely went on, engaging youth in a new way.

By converting the Outdoor Explorers camp to a virtual platform, local youth were able to partake in a variety of camp activities, keeping the spirit of the summer alive and well. Thanks to the generous support from Monmouth Parks and Recreation, 4-H was able to develop and deliver camp kits containing all supplies needed to participate, making this experience just a little more magical.

The camp activities and virtual structure was organized by the new 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator Emily Lampe, in partnership with members of the Polk County 4-H Ambassadors, a teenage lead-

ership club. The teen counselors formed a camp planning committee, and together developed ideas for lessons, kit materials, and games. During each day of camp, youth in K through 5th grades were assigned a group of counselors who then led age appropriate activities in virtual breakout rooms. This allowed the attending youth the opportunity to develop camaraderie and connection within their age groups, as well as with the teen counselors leading the virtual sessions. Activities ranged from building a bird feeder to learning about wind energy and creating a homemade kite, a variety designed to engage the minds of all participants.

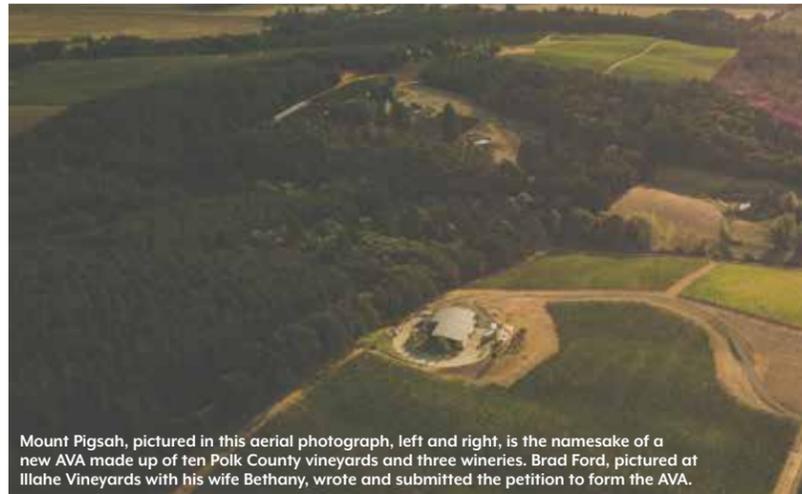
Continuing the camp tradition virtually helped to bring normalcy and excitement to the lives of the participants. The ability to safely engage with others while crafting, learning, and participating in new activities provided needed social engagement and out of school activities to Polk County youth. While this camp experience certainly looked different, it was an excellent opportunity for youth to connect with their peers and role models, engage in a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, & mathematics) learning, and truly feel the magic of 4-H in the summertime.



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Mount Pigsah, pictured in this aerial photograph, left and right, is the namesake of a new AVA made up of ten Polk County vineyards and three wineries. Brad Ford, pictured at Illahe Vineyards with his wife Bethany, wrote and submitted the petition to form the AVA.

## Local Growers Prepare to Launch Oregon's Newest AVA

By Mitch Lies  
Cultivating Editor

The prospect of joining an American Viticultural Area that wasn't particularly open to their input prompted vineyard owners on a small mountain in the foothills of the coast range south and east of Dallas to submit their own application.

Today, as of press deadline, three years after submitting its petition to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, the Mount Pigsah, Polk County AVA is on the verge of being recognized as the tenth sub-appellation in the Willamette Valley.

"We've always known that we were growing Pinot Noir in a special part of the Willamette Valley," said Brad Ford, winemaker at Illahe Vineyards, who wrote and submitted the petition. "We hope that federal recognition of our area will alert many more wine makers and consumers to the excellent grapes and wines coming from our little mountain in Polk County."

Ford and other vineyard and winery owners on Mount Pigsah decided to form the AVA, actually a sub-AVA within the larger Willamette Valley AVA, after a California winemaker that recently had purchased a vineyard south of Monmouth told them they were starting an AVA in the area.

Ford said the California winery "was not very receptive to input from the people who have been here for quite a while," prompting

the Mount Pigsah vineyard owners to look at forming their own, much smaller AVA.

"We got together and said, 'Why don't we form our own AVA?' And everyone around here said, 'Yes, we have a really neat space,'" Ford said.

With help from Jeff Havlin of Havlin Vineyard, who not long before had submitted the petition to TTB to form the Van Duzer Corridor AVA, Ford wrote the petition for the Mount Pigsah AVA.

Included in the petition are Illahe, Amelie Roberts, Ash Creek Vineyards, Croft Vineyards, Erratic Oaks, Fern Creek, Freedom Hill Vineyard, Mistletoe Vineyards and Open Claim. Chardonnay, pinot gris and pinot noir are among the top varietals grown in the area.

Ford said wine grapes grown on Mount Pigsah have a unique character deriving from several factors, including the area's marine sedimentary soils, its topography and its climate, which Ford characterized as calm and sheltered in the petition he submitted in October of 2017.

Wine grapes grown in the area are sold to some of the top winemakers in the region, including Ken Wright Cellars, Evesham Wood and Bethel Heights. Three of the ten vineyards also produce their own wine, including Illahe.

There currently are nine AVAs in the Willamette Valley. In June of this year, the TTB approved the latest two Willamette Valley AVAs, Tualatin Hills and Laurelwood District. The Van Duzer Corridor AVA, also located in Polk County, became the seventh Willamette Valley

sub-appellation in January of 2019. There are now 19 AVAs in Oregon and 248 in the U.S.

If approved, the Mount Pigsah, Polk County AVA would be the second smallest AVA in Oregon, encompassing only about 5,500 acres, with about 530 acres planted to wine grapes. Van Duzer Corridor AVA, by contrast, encompasses roughly 36 square miles and includes 18 vineyards and nine brands.

The formation of an AVA can mean very little, Ford said, or it can provide a marketing advantage, depending in large part on what the members of the AVA decide to do with it and the quality of wine produced in an appellation.

"AVAs go from being completely unimportant to extremely valuable," Ford said. "When you say extremely valuable, you are talking about Sonoma and Napa, where just having that name on your label adds 50 cents to one dollar to every bottle you sell."

"We would love to be in that category," Ford said, "but that is going to take quite a while. It is going to take a lot of recognition and it is going to take years of making good wines."

Members of the proposed AVA have yet to launch marketing plans, Ford said, but he and others are starting to get excited about doing so.

"We will start slowly," he said. "But I think that we will accelerate pretty quickly because we have high-quality growers and we have a high density of grape plantings and we have a beautiful place. So, when people start to take wine tours down here, they are going to be impressed with what they taste and what they see."



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From left, baccharis pilularis, arbutus unedo, fatsia japonica, mahonia eurybracteata, camellia, and ribes malvaceum.

# SHRUBS FOR FALL BLOOM

By Neil Bell  
Community Horticulture OSU

Once the leaves have fallen off the trees and been raked up, gardeners will often “put the garden to bed” for the year. With the arrival of short days, the yard could be forgotten for the season until spring arrives again. However, this can be the time of year when some visual interest and bright spots in the garden can really add some cheer. Fall is an opportunity to highlight some structural aspects of the garden, as well as provide habitat and food for wildlife at an otherwise “lean” time of year. We are fortunate in the Willamette Valley to be able to grow a number of plants that brighten up the garden with blooms and sweet fragrance as the days grow shorter and cooler. This list of shrubs are selections that will reliably bloom and add interest in Valley gardens in the fall.

## COYOTE BRUSH (BACCHARIS PILULARIS)

Coyote brush is native to the Oregon Coast and ranges south into California. It is usually seen as a medium to large, rounded shrub, although most cultivars are mounding,

spreading groundcovers. Although it is in the daisy family (Asteraceae), the inflorescence consists only of inconspicuous disc flowers, not the showy ray flowers characteristic of many family members. Coyote brush is dioecious, meaning it has separate male and female plants. Male plants are preferred in cultivation, as female plants produce large numbers of wind-blown seeds. On male plants, the yellowish flowers are produced in September and October and have a subtle, pleasing scent. The flowers are very attractive to honey bees and a wide variety of late-season bees and moths. Coyote brush is susceptible to injury in very cold winters and is best grown in a sheltered location. Cultivars include ‘Twin Peaks’, ‘Pigeon Point’ and ‘Pistol Pancake’.

## STRAWBERRY TREE (ARBUTUS UNEDO)

Strawberry tree is native throughout the Mediterranean basin. It gets its common name from the spherical red fruit, which are produced in the fall. The fruit are produced from previous season blooms and ripen on the plant at the same time as the new blooms occur. Strawberry tree forms a dense,

rounded evergreen shrub with leathery, dark green leaves. Depending on the cultivar, the flowers are white to pink in color, urn-shaped and occur in 2” long clusters on the plants in the fall. The flowers attract honey bees, bumblebees and hummingbirds. Cultivars include ‘Elfin King’, ‘Compacta’ and ‘Oktoberfest’.

## JAPANESE FATSIA (FATSIA JAPONICA)

Japanese Fatsia is native to Japan and South Korea, where it occurs as an upright-growing shrub in woodlands. The leaves are large, dark green and conspicuously lobed, which gives the plant a tropical appearance. The flowers are white and produced in November in spherical clusters about the size of a golf ball, which are borne in large panicles above the foliage. The flower display is very unique, but they are sensitive to cold and a hard freeze usually brings flowering to an end. Some variegated cultivars are available which make this unusual shrub suitable for protected, shady spots in the landscape where the flowers might be better protected from cold. The flowers are

attractive to flower flies. Cultivars include ‘Variegata’ and ‘Spiders Web’.

## HOLLY TEA OLIVE (OSMANTHUS HETEROPHYLLUS)

Holly tea olive is one of several fall-flowering Osmanthus, but O. heterophyllus is the hardiest, most commonly grown species. It is a native of Japan where it forms a dense, upright oval shrub. The leaves are shiny dark green and unusual in that juvenile leaves are notably spiny while adult leaves, produced near the top of the plant, lack the spines. The flowers are small and white and highly fragrant and the scent can be detected from many feet away on warm November days. The flowers are attractive to flower flies and somewhat attractive to honey bees. There are many cultivars, which include ‘Purpureus’, ‘Goshiki’, ‘Rotundifolius’, ‘Gulftide’, ‘Variegatus’, ‘Ogon’, and ‘Sasaba’.

## MAHONIA EURYBRACTEATA

This evergreen shrub is native to China and is distinctive due to its narrow and smooth-edged leaves, separating it from

some of the other spiny-leaved mahonias. The foliage can appear tropical with the fine texture of the leaves. This plant prefers partial to full shade. In late November this shrub sends up bold yellow spikes of flowers which are attractive to bees. The flowers attract honey bees and late-season bumble bee queens preparing for winter. Silver-blue berries follow the flowers later in winter. Cultivars include ‘Soft Caress’ and Indigo Flair™.

## SASANQUA CAMELLIA (CAMELLIA SASANQUA) AND TEA (C. SINENSIS)

The sasanqua camellias are a diverse group that are sometimes referred to as “Sun” camellias because of their tolerance of full sun. The many cultivars of C. sasanqua vary in growth habit as well as flower characteristics. In general, they have dark green foliage and a habit that varies from upright and spreading. Flowers vary from single to double and white to red in color. Camellia sinensis is the tea of commerce and is hardy in the maritime Northwest. In addition to the use of the leaves for tea, the species is autumn-blooming and offer single white or

pink flowers. Honey bees and hummingbirds are attracted to single-flowered cultivars. There are many, many cultivars of these species.

## CHAPARRAL CURRANT (RIBES MALVACEUM)

Chaparral currant is a native of California that is related to the spring-blooming PNW native flowering currant, R. sanguineum. It has a distinctly upright habit and produces leaves and shoots that are noticeably aromatic. It is completely drought tolerant and will go almost totally deciduous in summer, a characteristic that does take some getting used to. With the onset of rain in fall it begins leafing out and flowering. Although not as showy as flowering currant, it produces clusters of pink flowers over an exceptionally long period from early December through April. The flowers are a magnet for overwintering hummingbirds as well as longer-tongued bees, particularly early emerging bumble bee queens on warm January and February days.

# POLK COUNTY OAK HABITAT RESTORATION CONTINUES

By Karin Stutzman  
Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District manager

**P**olk County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is partnering with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to protect ancestral lands and implement forest management practices with a \$1.7 million grant awarded through NRCS' Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

The efforts aim to enhance and restore Oregon white oak habitat and associated wildlife species on private lands in Polk County, in part by creating habitat corridors and adding wildlife forage. The plan also includes acquiring three permanently conserved Tribal ancestral lands through the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program and connecting the public to Tribal practices for maintaining oak habitat.

Historically, this area was oak and prairie habitat due to the Kalapuyan fire practices.

"They were maintaining this kind of habitat for over 400 years, before anyone else got here. Their management techniques were accomplished without using chemicals or machines. That's a very valuable set of knowledge to know."

**KARIN STUTZMAN**  
Polk County SWCD District Manager

"They were maintaining this kind of habitat for over 400 years, before anyone else got here. Their management techniques were accomplished without using chemicals or machines," Polk County SWCD District Manager Karin Stutzman said. "That's a very valuable set of knowledge to know."

About 1,900 acres total will be impacted by the RCPP project, including 740 acres of privately-owned land. Enhancements include creating habitat corridors that provide unobstructed travel for wildlife throughout the county and connecting to other similar corridors in neighboring counties. Restoration of the privately-owned land includes acreage in the Grand Ronde Community, the county, and the Airlie-Haybeck Oaks Conservation Opportunity Area.

Nearly \$2 million in contributions from partners will support permanently protected conservation easements and state grant

funding will complement oak restoration work. There also will be technical assistance and outreach activities.

"There's a desire by constituents in the county that want to preserve that ecology," Stutzman said. "It's unique, it's historical, and it's greatly in decline."

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde will provide education on their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in managing oak habitat conditions and uses. Modern techniques modeling TEK will include the use of fire crews and brush burns.

"Tribal people are the best stewards of the land," Stutzman said. "The Tribal elders and members will provide valuable information about historical oak habitat conditions and uses. Workshops will be held to train anyone who wants to know about this. It will help landowners manage savanna and oak habitat by building skills to implement another option to increase sustainability and create ecologically based practices."

"If there's less invasive and less harmful ways to improve habitat, then everyone needs to know that," Stutzman said.

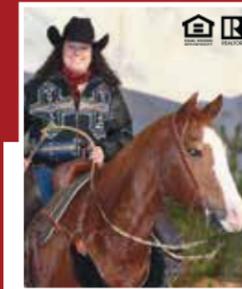
The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has a fire crew that can implement the underbrush burning on their lands and incorporate that on private lands, as warranted, Stutzman said. There also will be thinning cuts to rid the areas of Douglas firs, cherry trees, English hawthorn and poison oak, blackberries and other weedy species.

Treatments will take place over a five-year period, and will include chemical spraying and mowing, logging and creating slash piles, seeding of native species, forbs and grasses, and some spot spraying.

Cleaning out the uplands and planting grasses — even some non-native — will help keep elk in their own habitat instead of roaming down to farms for commercial wheat and grass to feed on, she said. Thinning will allow the oaks room to grow with more resistant bark, and will assist in maintaining the correct habitat for wildlife such as elk, fox and deer.

"It's a rare and declining habitat that provides a lot of value in our county," Stutzman said. "With this funding and this partnership, we will have integrated conservation efforts."

Sign-ups for this funding begin in Fall 2020, with the first contracts implemented in January 2021.



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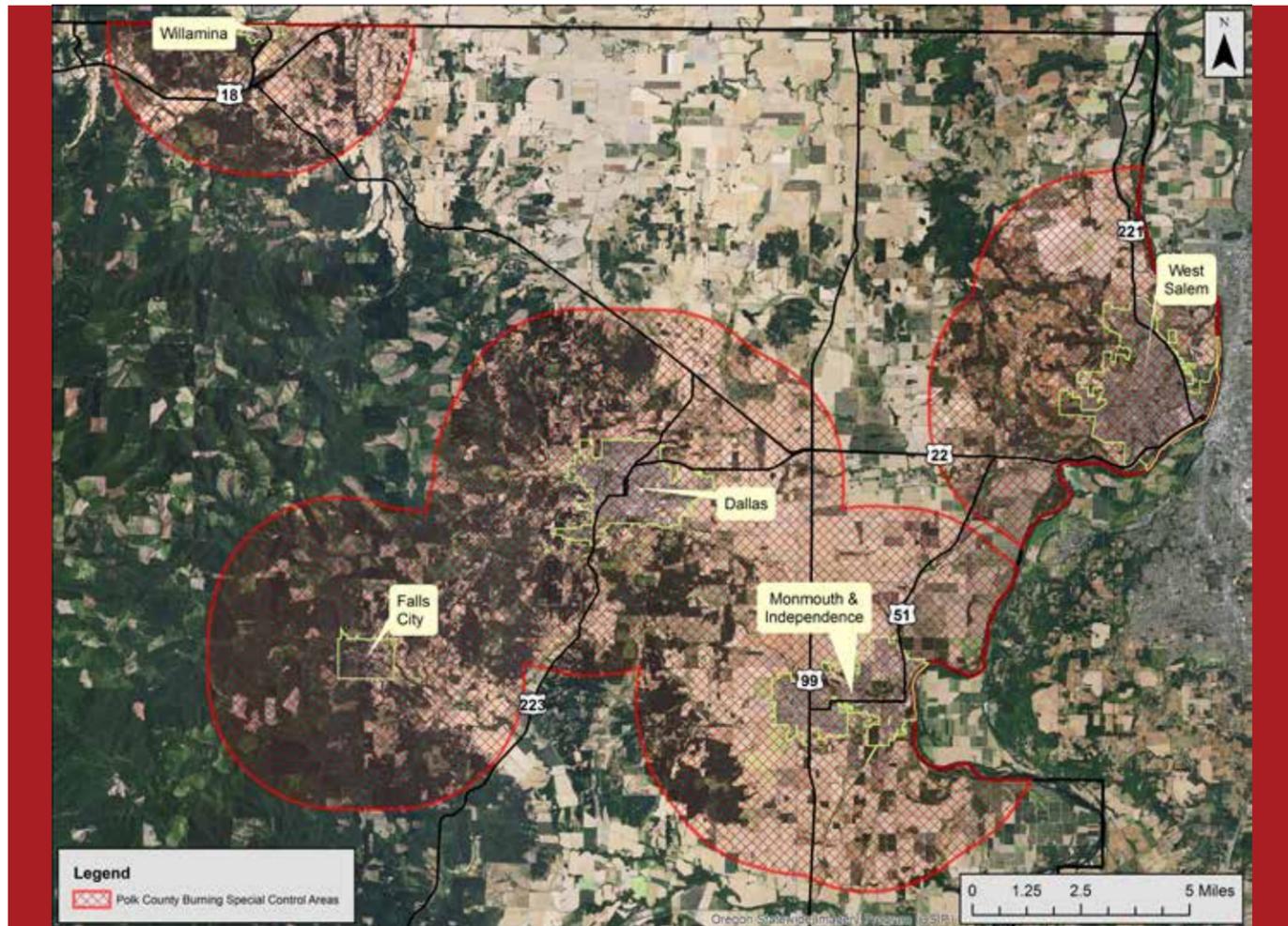
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## THE RULES, REGS, DO'S, AND DON'TS OF BURNING IN POLK COUNTY

By Jackson Morgan  
Polk SWCD, Farm Specialist

While it has been official for some time now, the fires in the Gorge, the Opal Creek Wilderness, and the devastating lightning storm and fires in California serve

as a brutal reminder, that fire season is here, and likely, sadly, only just beginning. While many of the fires that the West deals with are indeed naturally caused, it seems a greater majority are human caused. What Smokey the Bear says is true, “Only you can prevent forest fires,” and one of the easiest things for any of us to do is to pause on and properly plan all of our burning activities at a more appropriate time of the year.

When it comes to burning in the Willamette Valley, and Oregon in general, there are several regulatory agencies that exist in a hierarchy and regulate different aspects and types of burning. Starting with the Oregon State Fire

Marshal, who serves as the principal fire authority, the order is as follows: Oregon DEQ (which is responsible for things such as demolition burning, construction burning, residential burning, etc.), Oregon Department of Agriculture (which regulates/permits field burning) and the Oregon Department of Forestry (which regulates/permits slash burning). These agencies share equivalent authority over their associated territories, followed by your local fire district (who are responsible for emergency fire response, and are the first point of contact regarding backyard burning and Agricultural Burning, inside of a special control area).

As far as burning goes, in the eyes of the

State, there are three main types: backyard burning, agricultural burning, and slash burning. Backyard burning is defined as the burning of debris in an outdoor fireplace, burn barrel, backyard incinerator, or piles of yard debris that is not in support of an agricultural operation. Backyard burning (within a special control area, discussed below) is typically allowed between the periods of March 1 through June 15 and Oct. 1 through Dec. 15, though the local fire district may be more restrictive. Outside of a special control area, burning may occur on any day that is approved by the local fire district. Special control areas are defined as: any area within three miles of a boundary of a city with a population more than 1,000, but fewer than 45,000; or any area within six miles of the boundary of a city with a population of more than 45,000 people. Inside of a special control area, only the burning of yard debris is allowed. Outside of a special control area, however, the burning of construction waste and demolition waste (including land-clearing debris), are allowed, as well. Campfires or recreation fires, are not subject to backyard burning rules, but are still regulated by your local fire district.

Agricultural burning covers the burning of wastes generated by an operation that uses, or

intends to use, land primarily for the purposes of obtaining a profit by raising, harvesting and selling crops, or raising and selling animals, or the products of animal husbandry. Agricultural burning may include brush cleared from land if an agricultural commodity will be planted or livestock raised for profit,

What Smokey the Bear says is true, **“Only you can prevent forest fires,”** and one of the easiest things for any of us to do is to pause on and properly plan all of our burning activities at a more appropriate time of the year.

but does not include the burning of debris removed for construction of buildings. Often, more lax than backyard burning windows, agricultural burners can burn on any day approved by ODA and the local fire district. Field burning of grass seed and cereal grain fields, is a subsection of agricultural burning that is highly regulated and requires permitting from ODA. Slash burning is the burning of debris from logging and is limited to burning on forest lands. Should a landowner need to burn slash, they can opt to call and discuss

the project with the ODF office in their area, or they can simply use the online FERNs permit/notification system setup by ODF to do so.

As with any burning operation, there are several things that should be kept in mind with all of the aforementioned scenarios. Always keep water and other fire suppression materials present onsite, no matter what. It is better to have suppression means, and not need them, than need them and not have them. Avoid using accelerants to start any and all fires, not only is the burning/use of fuel, used oil, etc. illegal, it can be highly dangerous. Opt instead for something like a propane torch, which when a section of the pile, burn barrel, etc. has been covered appropriately and is therefore dry (or at least moderately drier) should get the pile going in no time. Finally, strive to be mindful not only in when you're burning, but in what you're burning. It should go without saying, but things like tires, plastics, chemicals, petroleum products, common house garbage, etc. are illegal to burn, and can harm not only the environment, but the health of those immediately adjacent. For those of us here currently, and the future generations, let's all do our part to keep the state we love and call home green.



Elevated garden beds are the newest physical addition to the Inspiration Garden. These beds are specifically designed for those who want to garden while standing or seated. Two rectangular boxes, set at right angles, showcase the wooden structure. One box is three feet in height and the other two feet. A wooden plank provides seating for the gardener. The second structure is made of stacked blocks laid in a circle to a two foot height. A small seat con-

nects the two 'silos'. Two trough shaped cedar boxes provide a third demonstration for elevated beds. These structures provide additional examples of raised and vertical gardening techniques. Garden guests have expressed considerable interest in these models. Presently, they are planted with a blend of late season vegetables and annual flowers. Polk County Extension funded the cost of materials for these beds. Polk County Master Gardeners extend our thanks to Extension.

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# TANSY RAGWORT: 'IT'S EVERYWHERE'

Infestations of tansy ragwort, pictured here in a field south of Salem in August, were reported in Western Oregon this summer.

By Mitch Lies  
Cultivating Editor

**P**olk Soil and Water Conservation District Farm Specialist Jackson Morgan typically fields a couple of calls a month during the summer about the noxious weed tansy ragwort. Not this summer.

"I had five or six calls just in the last few days," Morgan said in a phone interview in late July. "It is everywhere."

Introduced to Oregon in the 1920s, tansy ragwort is poisonous to livestock, spreads rapidly along roadsides, pastures and in wildlands and is widely considered one of Oregon's worst invasive weeds. For most of the past four decades, the weed has been kept in check by biocontrol agents released by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, the last of which were released in the early 1980s. But, according to Morgan and OSU Professor Emeritus Gene Pirelli, the weed has become more widespread in recent years; and the weed's enemies, the cinnabar moth and tansy ragwort flea beetle, have not kept up.

"The insects are still there," Pirelli said, "but unfortunately, they have not built back up enough, and I'm not sure they will."

Morgan said he has seen some cinnabar moths in walking fields in recent weeks, but not at the numbers needed to control the weed. "Are they around in the numbers that are needed to be truly successful in helping to manage and eradicate the tansy problem we have? I don't think so," he said.

A biennial weed in the sunflower family, tansy ragwort can spread rapidly if left unchecked. At one point, in the late 1970s through mid-1980s, according to Tim Butler, manager of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Noxious Weed Control Program, "Pretty much everywhere in Western Oregon that wasn't being actively farmed had tansy."

Controlling the weed in landscape and

non-pasture settings, according to Pirelli and Morgan, largely involves either spraying it out in the fall or early spring, when it is in its rosette stage and most susceptible to treatments, or digging it up.

"I think the most effective way to control it that doesn't cost a lot is just pulling it out in that rosette stage," Morgan said. "Obviously there are some people who will spray it out, but for the average landowner who doesn't have access to or doesn't want to use chemicals, going out there with a shovel and determination is the best way to get rid of it. And make sure that if you do that to dig deep enough to get some of the roots."

"It is kind of frustrating (to see its proliferation)," Morgan added. "In terms of all the invasive weeds that we have to deal with, tansy ragwort is one of the ones that I think is easier to control and maintain, although it takes a major expenditure of effort."

Controlling the weed in pastures takes a more nuanced approach, according to Pirelli, a former Extension livestock/forage specialist, but it still comes down to removing it in the fall or early spring.

"I would say after the first good rain in the fall, give it two or three weeks to germinate and grow and then walk your pastures and see what you have for rosettes," Pirelli said. "And, you are not going to get all of the seed germinating in the fall. Some will come on in the spring. So, around mid-March take another walk and look before the grass gets growing, because the grass will overtake the rosettes and you won't be able to see them and then all of a sudden you've got all these mature tansy plants bolting up out of the pasture."

Chemical control is not recommended once tansy is mature, Pirelli said.

"It is a tough plant to kill when it is bolted up and flowering," he said. "In those situations, what I've recommended is that people at least mow it down and stop the seed production. But the risk is, if you have animals,

they are more likely to eat the dry tansy ragwort than the green, so the animals have to be removed until all traces of that dried tansy are gone. And sometimes that takes months."

Pirelli added that when spot treating or hoeing the weed in the fall, a landowner should look for evidence of the tansy ragwort flea beetle and leave tansy plants that are being fed on by the beetle.

"You don't want to remove anything that the beetles are working on because that will enhance their population," Pirelli said. Look for holes in lower leaves of rosettes for evidence of the beetle, he said.

"We need to be diligent about watching for this weed," Morgan said. "If you are diligent, go out and pull as much tansy as you can, within five years, you will notice a difference in regard to the amount of tansy in your fields."

"It is not fun work, by any stretch of the imagination," he added. "But making the effort every year for multiple years in a row, you will see the results."

## REPORT INVASIVE WEEDS

Jackson Morgan, farm specialist for Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, would love it if people would report sightings of tansy ragwort and other noxious and invasive weeds to the Oregon Invasives Network.

Hosted by the Oregon Invasive Species Council, the network helps organizations identify hotspots where invasive weeds are abundant.

Concerned residents can report sightings by calling the network's hotline at 1-866-invasider (or 1-866-468-2337). Online reports can be made to <https://oregoninvasiveshotline.org/reports/create>

"I would love it if more people used that organization's network," Morgan said. "It is just good to get an idea of the spatial distribution of any and all invasive weeds in Polk County and statewide."

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