

MARCH 2023 | SPRING ISSUE

# Cultivating

HEALTHY FARMS, FORESTS, FOOD,  
AND FAMILIES IN POLK COUNTY

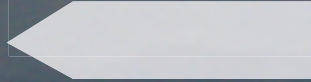
POLK SWCD BRINGS ON NEW  
DISTRICT MANAGER, NEW  
DIRECTORS | **PG. 6.**



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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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[extension.oregonstate.edu/polk](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/polk)

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Thurs 9am- 12pm  
Friday Closed or by appointment

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Learn more about OSU Extension events and register by going to [extension.oregonstate.edu/county/polk/events](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/county/polk/events)

## APRIL

4 - Succession Planning for Producers Workshop

6 - OSU Extension Calving School - Registration  
Required, Tillamook

7 - OSU Extension Calving School - Registration  
Required, Corvallis

12 - Polk SWCD Board Meeting - 6pm

14 - OSU Extension Calving School - Registration  
Required, Corvallis

17 - OSU Extension Calving School - Registration  
Required, Corvallis

19 - Conservation Spotlight Podcast, KMUZ, 8am & 6pm

22 - Polk SWCD Earth Day at Baskett Slough

## MAY

6 - Bird Walk at Cornerstone, Polk SWCD-

10 - Polk Extension District Budget Committee  
Meeting, 11:00am Polk County Courthouse

10 - Polk SWCD Board Meeting - 6pm

12 - 13 - Polk County Master Gardeners Plant Sale, Polk  
County Fairgrounds

17 - Conservation Spotlight Podcast, KMUZ, 8am & 6pm

18 - 19 - Oregon Olive School, NWREC Aurora

29 - Memorial Day: OSU Extension and Polk SWCD  
Closed

## JUNE

TBD - Polk SWCD Pollinator event at Illahe Vineyards

14 - Polk SWCD Board Meeting - 6pm

19 - Juneteenth: OSU Extension and Polk SWCD Closed

21 - Conservation Spotlight Podcast, KMUZ, 8am & 6pm

28 - Polk Extension District Budget Adoption, 9:00am  
Polk County Courthouse

# 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](http://www.polkswcd.com)  
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## STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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Oregon State University Extension Service prohibits discrimination in all its programs, services, activities, and materials on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, veteran's status, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

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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.



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**Tory Boline is the Polk County Association  
of Realtors 2021 Realtor of the Year**



## Farming for Life

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This year's theme is "**Farming for Life**," and that's just what we are doing each day as we grow the products that feed, clothe and fuel our nation. Thanks to the latest technology and innovation, the modern farm is preventing soil erosion and cutting back greenhouse gas emissions.

**40% of Oregon's**

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to US markets

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Marc Bell, Senior Resource Conservationist for Polk SWCD, speaks at an oak restoration tour on Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde property last June.

PHOTO BY MORGAN NEIL

# Polk SWCD Brings on New District Manager, New Directors

**Mitch Lies**

*Cultivating Editor*

**P**olk Soil and Water Conservation District enters the spring of 2023 with a new District Manager and three new Directors. But the nearly 60-year-old organization's charter remains unchanged.

"We are still here to assist landowners with the conservation needs," said new District Manager Kevin Porter.

Polk SWCD is one of 45 SWCDs in Oregon. The districts work side-by-side with federal and state programs to provide technical assistance and services for protecting soil health, preventing erosion, sediment control, stream-bank stabilization,

habitat restoration and other conservation practices.

Districts are overseen by an independent governing board of between five to seven elected positions.

Originally formed in 1966, Polk SWCD is funded in part by a tax levy voters approved in 2003, as well as grants and other income.

At full capacity, Polk SWCD operates with a staff of five, including a district manager, two resource conservationists, an outreach coordinator and an office assistant that it shares with the Polk County Natural Resources Conservation District, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Among programs available for landowners are those addressing

erosion control in orchards; forest management planning; forest resiliency in the face of climate change; lower Willamette North Coast animal feeding operations; oak habitat restoration; and meadow restoration.

Porter, a farmer with acreage near Pedee, Ore., started as District Manager in December, replacing Karin Stutzman, who left the district after nine years last April to take a position with the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Prior to joining Polk SWCD, Porter was general manager of a 3,000-acre investment hazelnut farm in the Willamette Valley for Raptor Ag, headquartered in Edmond, Okla. Before that, Porter worked in management for what is now Republic



Services, a waste disposal company headquartered in Scottsdale, Ariz., where he managed a small side company involved in beneficial reuse and trucking.

He found the Polk SWCD District Manager position intriguing and so threw his hat in the ring when the position came open.

"It looked like an interesting challenge, and being a landowner here in Polk County, having farmed my whole life, I've always had an interest in conservation work, in finding better ways to do things," Porter said.

Of late, according to Marc Bell, Senior Resource Conservationist, the District has been focusing on restoration work in oak woodlands, oak savannah and open grassland prairie.

"Those make up a major portion of Polk County that isn't in commercial timber, production agriculture or in urbanized areas," Bell said. "And that particular habitat has been under a lot of pressure for conversion, both historically for farmland and for production conifer forestry and more recently oak hillsides have been developed for vineyards."

The district historically has relied on residents to contact resource conservationists if interested in partaking in one of its conservation programs, Bell said.

"We rely on county residents knowing about us through our publications, like *Cultivating*, our partnerships with other agencies, including NRCS, OSU Extension and nonprofits like the watershed councils," Bell said. "We do hope that we advertise enough and that we are connected enough with other agencies so that folks that are looking for help can find us."

"We also show up at farmers' markets, the Polk County Fair and other events, so if folks want to find us, they usually can," he said.

Since bringing on Outreach Coordinator Morgan Neil in 2021, the district has increased its engagement

with community organization, started a Facebook page and performed other outreach.

"We are also active in some of the different neighborhood groups on social media," Neil said. "And we have enhanced our presence with Conservation Spotlight, a radio segment on KMUZ radio."

The district also has plans to do more outreach in the future, Porter said, particularly with farmers.

"We have a big push from the board to get out and engage with the ag community here in Polk County, and I really hope to do more of that," Porter said. "I hope to put to use my experience and contacts and go out and talk to farmers and see what they really need, and what we can provide in terms of the programs we have available."

Porter anticipates that his background in farming will be an asset as he works with landowners and staff to implement conservation strategies on farm and forest land in Polk County.

"I have a diverse experience in agriculture," he said. "I grew up on a dairy. I've worked on grass seed and row crop farms here in the Willamette Valley. And I've been on a lot of different farms and have seen many different approaches to farming."

"It helps me because I've seen what works and what doesn't work," he said.

In taking over a position that had been vacant for eight months, Porter said he has had some catching up to do.

"There are some challenges here, with Karin being gone for eight months, and our second technical position has been empty for almost a year: There is a lot of catch-up work to do."

"But I'm excited about this position," he said. "There is always something going on that is interesting."



KEVEN PORTER



MARC BELL



MORGAN NEIL



#### More Information

Polk Soil and Water Conservation District is located in Dallas at 580 Main St., Suite A.

Staff includes Marc Bell, Senior Resource Conservationist, who has been with Polk SWCD for more than 10 years; Outreach Coordinator Morgan Neil, who has been with Polk SWCD since 2021; and District Manager Kevin Porter.

The District's Board of Directors include Lindsay McClary; Eden Olsen; Donna Champeau; Chad Woods; Mike Wilson; Pryor Garnett; and John 'Jock' Dalton.

The board meets every second Wednesday of the month at the OSU Extension Office in Dallas. Call 503-623-9680 for more information.

# |The Gem of Polk County

*The Inspiration Garden at Mt. Fir Park, Independence, Oregon*

## Lorena Elliott

*Polk County Master Gardener  
Association, Class of 2016*

**W**hether you are traveling to see specialty gardens in the Willamette Valley, or need a day to relax and enjoy the view, please stop and take a few hours to visit the local Inspiration Garden at Mt. Fir Park. This specialty demonstration garden is within a few blocks of downtown Independence. Bring a picnic to enjoy at one of the picnic tables or under the small covered area.

What is so special about the Inspiration Garden? It is managed by the Oregon State University Polk County Master Gardeners Association (PCMGA) and has been called a local “gem” due to the many beautiful and accessible garden rooms. It also boasts an amazing variety of plants including a vegetable garden, annuals, perennials, trees and shrubs. In addition, each “room” is a practical example of home horticulture principles that are the foundation of the PCMGA Program.

To improve public access, the City of Independence has wonderfully paved the main path, making the gardens accessible to all. The garden also contains the Gathering Place, which is a classroom structure where PCMGA meetings and workshops are held. There

is also a shed and detached hoop greenhouse, which are used for storage, educational outreach and growing vegetables for the Polk County Master Gardener’s annual plant sale.

If you are one of the daily visitors to the garden, you may have noticed the recently completed project, which included digging long trenches to upgrade our irrigation system. This much needed addition was made possible by three sources of funding, including the City of Independence, PCMGA chapter funds and private donations.

During the drier months and hotter weather in the summer and fall months, considerable time was required to adequately water the thousands of plants in the 22 themed gardens. Our new automated system consists of 32 zones with 4 to 6 emitters in each zone, and covers approximately three of the 7.3-acres of Mt. Fir Park. The new system will allow the gardeners to dedicate more time and effort to maintaining and refurbishing the demonstration garden, and also will provide greater educational opportunities to the community.

The Inspiration Garden is a fairly new garden, with the PCMGA celebrating a decade of work on the property, which started in 2013 with removing debris and many, many yards of overgrown brier. Each year, the gardeners

have added more garden rooms, with the Peace Garden being the latest. When you visit this scenic garden, the expressive nature of each garden room will contain plants that are adapted to our area in the valley, with most containing identification tags to assist the visitor. The garden is not stagnant and will be ever-changing as our climate changes and new introductions are added. The Polk County Master Gardeners invite you to wander the Garden’s trails and discover the many hidden treasures. The setting is relaxing and natural with arbors, benches, art, paved and soft-surface trails.

i

## Location:

799 F St. Independence, Oregon  
Parking is available and the Inspiration Garden is FREE to the public

## Hours:

Open everyday Dawn to Dusk

Driving access through the Garden for handicapped only

## Tours:

Group Tours: by special arrangement call 503.623.8395





OSU Extension Polk County Master Gardeners have transformed and maintain a seven-acre parcel of land in Independence's Mt. Fir Park. The Inspiration Garden at Mt. Fir Park is a demonstration garden that promotes sustainable gardening practices and provides educational outreach to Polk County residents and home gardeners.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY POLK COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS BECKY JAY & LORENA ELLIOT



# | Polk Extension Welcomes New Staff

## Mitch Lies

*Cultivating Editor*

**P**olk County Extension has brought on new faculty and staff of late, with Andrea Hunter joining as 4-H Program Coordinator on Dec. 29 and Julianna Pilafian joining as SNAP-Ed and SNAP Outreach Education Program Assistant on Jan. 23

Hunter grew up on a hobby farm in Grand Ronde where she raised rabbits, sheep, chicken for eggs, and participated in 4-H from fourth grade on.

"I did a lot of state and international 4-H leadership," Hunter said. "I was a county ambassador, a state ambassador, a youth advisory member, 4-H National Congress Delegate, 4-H International Youth Exchange Delegate to Australia and have been an adult leader in Yamhill County since 2016."

Hunter graduated from Whitworth University in Spokane in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in cultural sociology before coming back to Oregon to work in the wine industry, all the while volunteering as a 4-H Leader.

Hunter then joined the Peace Corps with her husband in 2019 and focused on primary English education with curriculum review and implementation and youth development in Lesotho, South Africa, until the Covid pandemic cut

short her two-year commitment.

"I'm very excited to be here," Hunter said of her new position. "4-H has been my happy place since I was in the fourth grade. 4-H is very near and dear to my heart and I have benefited greatly from 4-H."

"It means a lot to me to be back and working in 4-H," she said.

As SNAP-Ed and SNAP Outreach Education Program Assistant, Pilafian said she will be working extensively with community partners in Polk County to determine their needs, and try to meet those needs related to nutrition, food access and physical activity.

"It is the perfect job for me," Pilafian said. "It has all of the things I am passionate about and I get paid to do it."

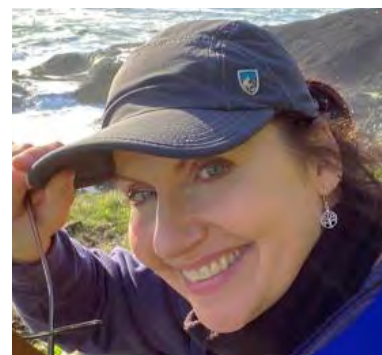
Pilafian graduated from OSU in 2013 with a bachelor's degree in nutrition dietetics.

She has extensive experience working in social services, including at Head Start as a regional manager and at Chemeketa Community College, where she helped high school and college students with financial aid and academic planning.

SNAP-Ed, which stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education, is a federally funded grant program that helps people lead healthy, active lives by partnering with state and local organizations.



ANDREA HUNTER



JULIANNA PILAFIAN



**For SNAP-Ed Information**  
contact SNAP-Ed Program  
Coordinator Carly Kristofik at  
[carly.kristofik@oregonstate.edu](mailto:carly.kristofik@oregonstate.edu)  
or at 503-373-3769.



# Cornerstone Conservation Practices & Cornerstone Prairie Blooms



## Marc Bell

Senior Resource Conservationist, Polk SWCD

It is the early stages of blooming season by the time this edition of *Cultivating* is published, and this will be an exciting turning point in the management of a special project on one of the Polk SWCD's managed properties, Cornerstone. The property which the district took ownership of in 2016, has been involved in two multi-site, multi-county efforts by partner organization Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE) since 2020. These projects focus on two of our most imperiled, and paired, Willamette Valley prairie species: Kincaid's lupine and Fender's blue butterfly. The second project expanded focus to include Willamette Daisy, also a listed species.

These two projects were sponsored by Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board grant funds, matched by IAE, the Polk SWCD and other partners to help battle non-native invasive herbaceous and woody species, like blackberry, scotch broom and English hawthorn, but also controlling the non-native grass species across approximately 15 acres of Cornerstone's 87 acres of wildlife habitat. These are critical steps to establishing

Willamette daisy and Kincaid's lupine as exotic grasses often create dense thatch, and without fire or mechanical removal, exotic grasses can continue to limit growth potential of native species.

This coming fall, the areas prepared for these projects at Cornerstone will finally be ready to be seeded and planted not only with these critical target species but also with mixes of other more common native flowering species. Early blooming forbs are critical resources that support hundreds of insect species, ground nesting and other prairie adapted bird species.

## Watch for Early-Blooming Species

There are seven early blooming Willamette valley native species you can watch for while you're outside, or augment your own native planting areas with, as you explore this spring and early summer periods. Most of these species are perennial but not all. Our all-star species to watch for are California poppy, River lupine, and Rose checkerbloom.

California poppies can dominate an area quickly due to being an annual so

mix poppy seed lightly if mixing with other species; though its orange flowers have staying power all the way through the dry late summer while the others have begun to seed already. River lupine can dominate an area if its sun and moisture conditions are met, as well as fixing nitrogen in the soils. Rose checkerbloom's pink flowers are only out in the early bloom season, like River lupine, but is a true perennial and will come back yearly and can be grown from seeding or container stock planting equally well.

Another fast establishing annual that blooms early is Rosy plectritis, developing globe shaped blooms of dense pink flowers. It can coexist in the same areas as native Iris (and other bulbs like tulips) and is capable of handling full sun through part shade, making it quite versatile.

Starting the bloom season with as many productive native grasses and forbs going into action helps support both pollinators and keystone food sources for threatened butterflies and bird species of concern. So, look around this spring every chance you can and evaluate if there are enough early season resources available to your land management goals as you watch the spring season begin and move into its prime this year!





Participants learn about raising sheep during the Growing Farms Series hosted by OSU Extension in 2022.

PHOTOS BY HAYLEY WHITE

# Thinking of adding livestock

*Here's where to start.*

**Hayley White,**  
OSU Extension Small Farms  
Program

**T**hinking of adding livestock to your farm? Here's where to start.

Livestock animals can be a rewarding and sometimes profitable addition to a farm or rural property. To ensure a smooth and beneficial experience for you and the livestock, I recommend clear goals, research, and preparing for basics before you look for livestock.

## What are your goals?

Setting clear goals before bringing animals to your property will help you navigate decisions when planning for livestock. A combination of goals and motivation is likely, and a passion for animal husbandry is necessary.

- Do you want to have livestock as pets?
- Do you want to raise your own food while having a hobby for your family?
- Do you want to cover your costs or make a profit?

There are many possible scenarios and different reasons for having livestock, but here is an example: You enjoy goats and have invasive blackberries and other weeds on your property that you would like the goats to manage for you.

What will the goats require in terms of resources and your time? Calculating those costs and comparing them to the cost of managing the weeds without the goats (labor, fuel, herbicide, etc.) will give you an idea ahead of time on budgeting. Raising livestock for enjoyment is rewarding, but clear goals and realistic expectations on what they need upfront will lead to less disappointment.

## How can you prepare?

When animals do not have the adequate nutrition, environment, and medicine they need, there can be fatal consequences. Key places to start in your research process should include:

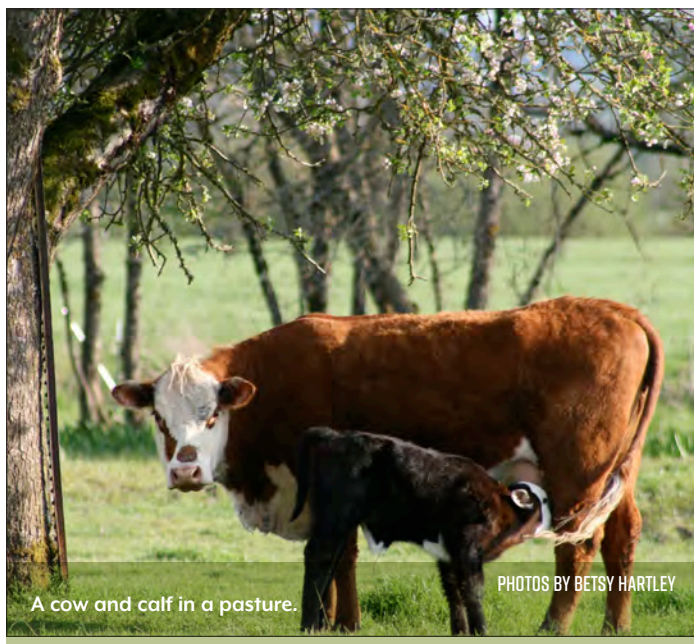
### Location

Plan for a designated area for your livestock based on the space requirements for your species and size of group. Fencing must be secure for your particular animals, and many will require shelter from rain and wind. If you use pasture, familiarize yourself with proper pasture management and create an overwinter area to prevent overgrazing and damage to the soil. Don't forget the about manure! Animals produce manure, and by removing it and creating a covered compost area, you will reduce parasites, foul odors, and





PHOTOS BY BETSY HARTLEY  
A ewe and lambs from the Oregon State University flock.



PHOTOS BY BETSY HARTLEY  
A cow and calf in a pasture.

# Livestock to your farm?

animal health problems.

## Nutrition

Nutritional needs vary widely between species and sizes but also between sexes, life stages, and time of year. For example, a lactating sow may require more than three times more calories per day and different protein levels than a pregnant sow. You will need to know the specific requirements for your animals and that it will change during the year to account for the animal's physiological stage, plant stage if using pasture, and the environment. Energy (calories), protein, minerals, vitamins, and water requirements should be included in a nutrition program and plan for the cost to align with your budget.

## Animal Health

We have all heard the phrase;

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” this is true with animal health. Investing up front by reducing exposure and providing preventative care will lead to less problems. You will need to know the vaccination recommendations for your animals and common health problems that may occur so you can recognize symptoms. Organize an animal first aid kit to have supplies ready for emergencies. Problems like bloat, pink eye, scratch wounds, and more will happen and having supplies on hand and monitoring tools like a stethoscope and thermometer will be helpful. Lastly, having a client relationship with a livestock veterinarian before you have an emergency is essential. Livestock vets can be hard to find, and if you have a client relationship set up beforehand, you can get help when you need it.

A timely tip for people raising livestock for meat is to reach out to processors before you get livestock.

There is a nationwide shortage of small, custom meat processors, and scheduling might be over a year out. Plan ahead and find a processor who can take on a new client.

## Do your research!

With all of the information on the internet, it is necessary to find research-based and non-biased sources. I recommend searching for publications connected to the Extension Service and universities. There are also hands-on opportunities and education available locally. In our area, the OSU Extension Service, Polk Soil & Water Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and livestock associations like the Oregon Sheep Growers Association often have resources and events to share. With the right resources and preparation, your livestock will be healthy and happy, and you can meet your goals.



# | Earth Day is Every Day

## *3 things you can do for conservation*



**Morgan Neil**

*Outreach Coordinator, Polk SWCD*

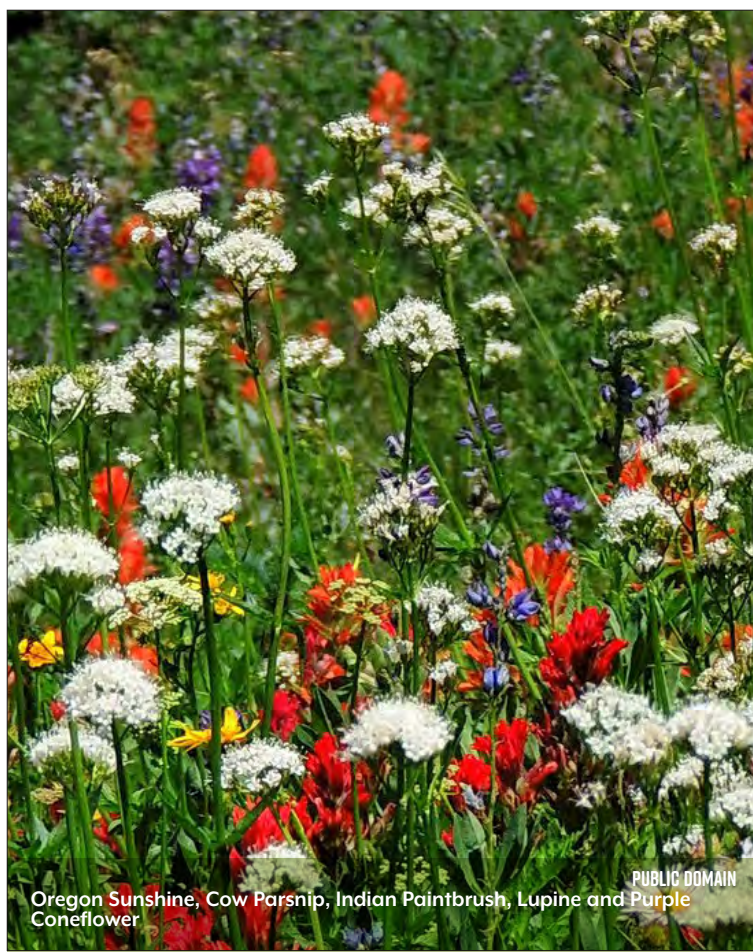
**E**arth Day is observed globally every year on April 22, bringing environmental concerns to center stage. At the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, Earth Day is every day as we work to promote environmental stewardship and share best land management practices to conserve our beautiful natural resources. Conservation is a collective effort and every day is an opportunity to make a difference. Everyone has a role, from youth to backyard conservationists to land managers. Here are three things you can do to support conservation:

## Control Invasive Plants

Controlling invasive species is crucial. After habitat loss, invasive species are the second greatest threat to biodiversity globally. Invasive plant infestations result in degradation of water and soil quality, increased use of pesticides, and rising agricultural costs and crop losses. Because weeds do not recognize boundaries, everyone's help is essential for effective management.

Polk SWCD is part of The Mid-Willamette Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA), which is a partnership of organizations, agencies, and non-profits dedicated to combating invasive weeds across the region. The Mid-Willamette CWMA includes 2,657 square miles of land, including Yamhill, Marion, and Polk counties.

There are great resources out there to learn more about invasive plants and how to manage them, including: the Mid-Willamette CWMA webpage and Oregon Department of Agriculture's noxious weed profiles. You can also go to the Oregon Invasive Species Online Hotline to report anything suspicious in your backyard or neighborhood.



Oregon Sunshine, Cow Parsnip, Indian Paintbrush, Lupine and Purple Coneflower

PUBLIC DOMAIN



## Support Pollinator and Wildlife Habitat

Help restore native plant communities, an essential component to sustaining biodiversity. Native plants are part of a resilient landscape, lessening extreme weather impacts such as: wildfire, drought and flooding. Incorporating native seeds will attract pollinators and other wildlife. You can choose mixes for habitats such as oak woodland, upland prairie, and wet prairie. Go to our website ([polkswcd.com](http://polkswcd.com)) to see the recommended mixes and contact information for several local growers.

The Xerces Society is offering free habitat kits that contain native milkweed and pollinator-friendly wildflowers and shrubs at no cost to Oregon farmers and community partners. This unique program offers carefully selected, climate-smart, native and regionally appropriate plant materials directly to project partners who are willing to provide the time, labor, and land to develop these habitats. Go to [Xerces.org](http://Xerces.org) and apply by April 3.



## Get Involved

If you're like me and don't have several acres of land, don't fret! There's still so much that you can do to support conservation in Polk County. The City of Dallas will be hosting an Ivy Removal Work Day along the Rickreall Creek Trail on April 29. The Friends of Trees has a planting event at Eola Park in West Salem on Saturday, March 25. Polk SWCD is partnering with Andante Vineyard to do an Earth Day litter pick up at Baskett Slough. All these events are open to the public and still need volunteers. Most importantly, please take time for nature and enjoy the beautiful landscape in Polk County!





31st Annual Polk County  
Master Gardener Association™

# Plant Sale



Perennials  
Annuals  
Herbs  
House Plants  
Vegetables  
Trees  
Shrubs  
Native Plants  
Hanging Baskets  
Country Store



## Mother's Day Weekend 2023

Friday, May 12th 9am-4pm

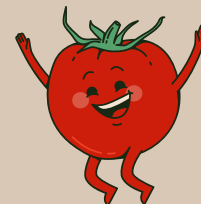
Saturday, May 13th 9am-2pm

Polk County Fairgrounds

Rickreall, OR

Online presales April 17th-30th

[www.polkmgma.org](http://www.polkmgma.org)



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**Oregon State University**  
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