

JUNE 2023 | SUMMER ISSUE

Cultivating

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

BEE LICENSE PLATE PROVING A
HIT WITH OREGONIANS | **PG. 4**

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.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Go to extension.oregonstate.edu/events to see and register for OSU Extension events and polkswcd.com or event details

JUNE

14 - Polk SWCD Board Meeting - 6pm

19 - Polk SWCD Office closed in observance of Juneteenth

21 - Conservation Spotlight Podcast, KМУZ, 8am

24 - Herb Gardening Workshop at Inspiration Garden 10am, see info at <https://beav.es/SQW>

26-30 - 4 -H Foods Day Camp, Register at <https://beav.es/TZi>

JULY

1 - Polk SWCD Plants for Pollinators event at Illahe Vineyards

4 - Polk SWCD office closed in observance of Independence Day

12 - Polk SWCD Board Meeting - 6pm

11-15 - 4-H Wild West Camp, Ages 9-13 Register at <https://beav.es/S2A>

15 - Managing Garden Pests Workshop at Inspiration Garden, 10am, see info at <https://beav.es/SQW>

18 - Preserving Herbs Demo at Inspiration Garden, 6pm, see info at <https://beav.es/SQW>

17-19 - 4-H Junior Master Gardener Camp, Grades K-5th Register at <https://beav.es/TZj>

19 - Conservation Spotlight Podcast, KМУZ, 8am

AUGUST

9 - Polk SWCD Board Meeting - 6pm

9 - Fermentation Fun Demo at Inspiration Garden, 6pm, see more at <https://beav.es/SQW>

9-12 - Cultivating Booth, Polk County Fair

15-19 - 4-H Wild West Camp, Ages 9-13 Register at <https://beav.es/S2A>

19 - Composting with Worms Workshop at Inspiration Garden, 10am, see more at <https://beav.es/SQW>

22 - Plant ID Tour & Talk at Inspiration Garden, 6pm, see more at <https://beav.es/SQW>

31 - Polk SWCD Conservation Celebration, Salt Creek Cider House, 6 - 8:30pm

SEPTEMBER

4 - Polk SWCD office closed in observance of Labor Day

13 - Polk SWCD Board Meeting - 6pm

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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Bee License Plate Proving a Hit with Oregonians

Mitch Lies

Cultivating Editor

Andony Melathopoulos had hoped to generate the number of presales Oregon DMV requires to launch a new license plate within a year of presenting the opportunity to Oregon motorists.

Instead, in a little over two weeks after presales opened for Oregon's new Pollinator Paradise license plate – in record time – Oregon DMV had the 3,000 presales required to put the plate into production.

“When we saw the presales coming in, we were just astounded,” said Melathopoulos, pollinator health specialist for Oregon State University Extension. “I didn’t know Oregonians were so excited about bees.”

The Pollinator Paradise license plate, which includes a drawing of a honeybee and a bumblebee pollinating red clover, is expected to be available to Oregon motorists beginning this fall.

“People like the plate story,” Melathopoulos said. “It seems very Oregonian, like it’s not just a generic abstract bee. It’s a bee in an Oregon landscape that is

familiar to people. And people like bees and know they are in trouble.”

The idea for the plate arose in 2015 during meetings of the Pollinator Health Task Force, a group assigned by the Oregon Legislature to look into pollinator health. It didn’t gain traction, however, until 2019 when a beekeeper in Phoenix, Ore., put up Facebook post stating in essence: Look, there’s a whale plate: We should have a bee plate.

“And we said, yeah, why don’t we?” Melathopoulos said.

At that point, Sarah Kincaid, a research faculty assistant at OSU picked up the ball and started working out the logistics of getting a new Oregon license plate off the ground.

“That was about a year process,” Melathopoulos said.

As part of the process, Oregon DMV requires that 3,000 vouchers are sold before the state Motor Vehicle Division will put a plate into production.

THE ARTIST

Melathopoulos got to know the plate’s artist, Marek Stanton of Eagle Rock, Ore., while engaging with him in the Extension Service’s Master Melittologist program.



PHOTO BY ELLEN SILVA

Marek Stanton, a bee enthusiast from Eagle Rock, Oregon, created the artwork for the Pollinator Paradise license plate. He was 15 years old at the time.



For the latest information on the plate or to see the research it supports, visit www.oregonbeeplate.org

“We were online during the pandemic, and this person named Marek asked detailed questions of bee biology, and I was sure he was 65 and retired or something,” Melathopoulos said. “He turned out to be this 15-year-old kid.”

Melathopoulos later learned that Stanton was an illustrator and the two started working on art for the plate.

“We said we wanted three things,” Melathopoulos said. “We told Marek that there has to be a clover field in there, there has to be a honeybee and there has to be a bumblebee.”

Melathopoulos wanted clover depicted on the plate because of its importance to bee diversity, a theme he hopes resonates with Oregonians.

“We are such a major clover seed producer for the nation, and the bumblebees are part of the reason for the success of that,” Melathopoulos said. “But the reverse of that is true as well. The clover is why we have so many bumblebees. We really wanted to get across that connection between our bees and our crops.

“I think for most people who live in the city, they don’t quite realize how important and precious this agricultural landscape is to bee diversity,” he said. “We hope the plate will be an educational entry point into that and that people will recog-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED
Oregon's new Pollinator Paradise license plate.

nize that we have to maintain this agricultural profitability and the success of these farmers if we’re going to keep these bees doing well.”

So far, Melathopoulos said the plate is accomplishing all he had hoped. The story of the Pollinator Paradise plate has been covered by multiple media outlets, including the Oregonian and other urban newspapers.

“We have been able to go into the heart of Portland and show people that the agricultural industry really matters when it comes to bee health,” Melathopoulos said.

And, because most of the plate’s surcharge is dedicated to bee research, the presales have started what Melathopoulos hopes is long-term funding for honeybee research and a bee biodiversity project that is the biggest in the nation.

“We are documenting these

strange bees all over the place through the Oregon Bee Atlas,” Melathopoulos said. “And this (funding) is going to make sure that we hold on to that and that it grows over time.

“If we are able to bring in \$100,000 a year, that would cover the expense of a bee taxonomist and make this program robust into the future,” he said.

If sales to date are any indication, researchers should have no problem achieving their goal. The Oregon Coastal Playground license plate, for reference, which features a gray whale and her calf, has generated approximately \$1.5 million in sales and renewals since its release in February of 2019, according to the Hatfield Marine Science Center.

The Pollinator Paradise plate will cost an extra \$40 on top of regular title, registration and plate fees, with \$35 of that going to bee research.

Medusahead Grass Snakes its Way Further into Polk County.

Marc Bell

Senior Resource Conservationist,
Polk SWCD

Medusahead grass (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*) is a relative newcomer to the western side of Oregon but has been a problem invasive species across the west for decades. Typically adapted to dryer parts of the west, Medusahead's new inroads to western Oregon is a testament to the hot dry temperature extremes seen over the last decade. As a winter annual of the Mediterranean, it is well suited to invade Polk county's oak woodland, savannas, and pastures. Seed germinates in the first fall rains like most native grasses but will continue to germinate throughout the winter and spring, leading to much stronger initial growth than desired grasses. Medusahead seeds are small but grow large, long silica scaled awns which make them incredibly easily transported in animal fur, clothing, and machinery. There is no evidence small mammals or birds disperse the seeds, invasions originate significantly from larger herd animal and human transportation of seed.

Medusahead is not only invasive, but it is considered an ecosystem transformer, altering the local community conditions to better favor its survival at the expense of the health of the ecosystem as a whole. Medusahead accom-

plishes this by forming a thick thatch that does not break down easily – high silica content slows normal decomposition. The dense thatch allows the smaller seed to fall to the ground, and germinate, while shading out desired grasses shrubs and trees. The medusahead vegetative growth is nutritionally average but is poor feed due to the silica content impacting palatability. The persistent thatch also increases fire hazards both as an initial fuel source and as a latter link between grass and shrub and tree crowns.

Fortunately, Polk County is at the extreme wet side of Medusahead's precipitation tolerance, which makes it easier to control than it can be in dryer parts of the West. If soil conditions allow Medusahead can be mowed or otherwise removed in the late spring before seeds mature, they typically will not be able to set seed at all for the year. The Polk SWCD has found Medusahead can be significantly reduced through regimented chemical treatments (including pre-emergents) over at least a two-year period, with a third and fourth year to ensure the most effective reduction, especially when paired with new plant material and seed to compete. Integrating these treatment types and possibly together with grazing animals during appropriate times can keep a minor invasion from becoming a major infestation and remediation. As we all know, an ounce



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Medusahead seedheads ripen from green to reddish, then finally to straw-colored.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Medusahead thatch remains recognizable long after seed drop

of prevention is worth a pound of cure, but when it comes to invasive species, a pound of cure applied when the patch is small is worth at least 17 barrels of cure after it has established. If it has taken over larger portions of land harrowing, tillage, or other soil disturbing methods may be necessary to first remove established thatch so desired species have the opportunity to germinate later. Even after, seed will germinate out of former patches; emphasizing the need for unbroken multi-year treatments. Check the Polk SWCD's website's resource tab for more detailed documents about Medusahead ecology and effectiveness of various management techniques and specific species of grasses that can replace Medusahead as it is reduced and eliminated.

New Polk SWCD Conservationist Schooled in Conservation

Mitch Lies,
Cultivating Editor

Born and raised on a family farm in Idaho, holding a degree in bacteriology, and having worked for the Bureau of Land Management and a land trust in Walla Walla and Umatilla counties, Beth Thiel should be right at home in her new position as resource conservationist for Polk Soil and Water Conservation District.

“Yes, I know a little bit about a lot of things,” Thiel said, “including habitat, water quality, raising livestock, manure management. And then I come from a farm background. So, I think that probably is helpful.”

Add to that, the fact Thiel is excited to have landed the position, and it is likely Polk County landowners have a good resource on their hands for helping them tap into state and federal conservation programs and stay abreast of the state’s agricultural water quality requirements.

“I’m really excited about this position,” she said, “and it’s a wonderful group of people in that office. I’m excited to be part of a team all working towards similar goals.”

“And I’ve always been a nature enthusiast and impressed with the complex interactions in nature and how important all those natural ecosystems are to one another,” she said. “And so, I’m very interested in helping landowners achieve their conservation goals.”

Thiel’s work history includes a botany position with the BLM, launching a Farm-to-School program in Walla Walla, and a six-year stint helping Blue Mountain Land Trust get off the ground, a stint that plays well into her current position.

“I became very knowledgeable about land conservation, including the different conservation tools and financial incentives available for landowners to preserve agricultural lands, as well as other resources on their land,” she said.

Thiel and her husband, Brian Wol-



PHOTO BY MORGAN NEIL

Beth Thiel, the new Resource Conservationist with Polk SWCD.

cott, moved to the Willamette Valley from Idaho, where they spent the past two years working on her family farm, in March after Wolcott took a position with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Thiel started with Polk SWCD April 17.

She and Wolcott have two grown children.

Interested parties can reach Thiel (pronounced ‘Teal’) at the Polk SWCD Office, 580 Main St. in Dallas, or by calling 503-623-9680.

New 4-H Coordinator at Home in Polk County

Mitch Lies
Cultivating Editor

Rachel Brandon always thought she would end up working on her family farm. Then she interned with Polk County Extension.

“I was thinking I would get some easy school credit, and I really enjoyed it,” Brandon said. That internship has since turned into a full-time job, first as an office specialist and beginning on March 24, as 4-H coordinator.

Brandon, who has a bachelor’s degree in animal science from Oregon State University, brings considerable experience to the position, having started in 4-H in the fourth grade and then volunteering with the organization after high school.

“Once you are involved in the 4-H

world, it’s hard to leave,” she said.

Brandon has worked with large animals and small animals and on “almost every static exhibit possible,” she said, including sewing, photography, art, baking and woodworking, to name a few.

“People think animals when they think of 4-H,” she said. “But it is also art, photography, sewing, baking. It can be sports or line dancing and mechanics. If people show an interest, we’ll provide that programming.”

Brandon added that her experience in 4-H “definitely helps.”

“Just having that little bit of experience in everything helps immensely,” she said. “It would be really hard for someone to jump into this job without any 4-H experience.”

Ironically, Brandon noted, it is her husband, Logan Brandon, a former reporter for the Yamhill County New



PHOTO BY MITCH LIES

Rachel Brandon

Register, who is now working on the Villwock-Brandon Family Farm in Dallas, a position she always thought would be hers.

“He left his job last year. Now I’m the office person and the 4-H coordinator and he’s the one out in the field,” she said.



PHOTO BY MORGAN NEIL

Beth Thiel, Resource Conservationist for Polk SWCD and Derek Godwin, Extension Watershed Management faculty with OSU doing water quality monitoring at Salt Creek. Salt Creek (right side photo)

Salt Creek Water Quality Monitoring Continues

Beth Thiel

Resource Conservationist – Farm/
Forest, Polk SWCD

Oregon's farmers and ranchers are stewards of land and water and play a key role in protecting the state's natural resources for current and future generations. Every area across the state of Oregon is included in an Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan overseen by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. These plans, created by Local Advisory Committees, aim to prevent water pollution from agricultural activities through a combination of edu-

cational programs, monitoring, and management activities.

Polk SWCD is continuing a project focused on the water quality of Salt Creek. Efforts from the first two years of the project concentrated on gathering and addressing concerns of the stakeholders in the Salt Creek basin. Outreach events were held to gather and share ideas about the issues and potential solutions to water quality and flooding. One of the primary ideas that rose to the top after landholder meetings was the implementation of an OSU water quality research project in the basin to better inform the landowners about current conditions.

The pandemic *and* staff changes caused delays in many activities, but gathering data through monthly water monitoring on Salt Creek did endure. In partnership with OSU, we will continue to collect data monthly on water temperatures, turbidity, nitrates, and pH. We also plan to share analysis of the collected data with the landowners in the Salt Creek basin in the fall of 2023.

Depending on how they are managed, agricultural lands can protect or impair water quality. Below are examples of agricultural practices that area landowners and farmers apply to help ensure high water quality.



Promote healthy streamside vegetation to capture harmful runoff, provide water cooling shade, and improve habitat for wildlife including pollinators and beneficial insects.

In grazing systems, consider stocking intensity, frequency, and duration of grazing to promote and maintain adequate vegetative cover.

Orchardists maintain cover plants between trees and along waterways; irrigate at low rates to conserve water, and prevent leaching and runoff of fertilizers.

Row crop growers rotate crops, apply mulch and plant cover crops to reduce water runoff, erosion, and nutrient loss.

Dryland farmers use direct seed drills and leave crop residue on fields to enhance soil health, reduce runoff and minimize field erosion.

Penned livestock owners place feed, water, and minerals away from streams and store manure far away from streams and under cover of a tarp or roof to keep nutrients in the manure and to prevent nutrients or bacteria from running off into water.

Polk SWCD is here to assist

technically and financially with projects to help improve or maintain water quality.

Consider contacting Beth Thiel at the District if you are interested in projects that could enhance water quality in Salt Creek or any streams in Polk County (503-623-9680, beth.thiel@polkswcd.com).

Projects could include:

- Restoring native streamside or wetland vegetation
- Creating off-stream mineral and watering systems for livestock
- Fencing along streams to restrict livestock access
- Assessment and assistance with weed management
- Irrigation efficiency projects

Chemeketa Students Pitch in for Plant Sale

Mitch Lies

Cultivating Editor

An arrangement between Chemeketa Community College and the Polk County Master Gardener Association that was kicked off Mother's Day weekend could be the start of a long-term relationship.

The arrangement involved students in Chemeketa's Horticultural Department growing and delivering plants for the Polk County Master Gardener Association Plant Sale, held at the Fairgrounds in Rickreall May 12th and 13th.

The beneficiaries were all who purchased tomato and pepper plants and hanging baskets. And you might count Master Gardeners and Chemeketa horticultural students in that mix, as well, given that students were able to gain some valuable experience all the while taking some of the workload off the Master Gardeners.

Preparations for the annual plant sale have grown to be quite extensive on the part of a handful of gardeners who end up doing the bulk of the work, said Lori Hineman, president of the Polk County Master Gardener Association.



PHOTO BY LORENA ELLIOTT, POLK COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Chemeketa Community College horticulture students supplied 60 percent of the vegetable plants and 100 percent of the hanging baskets for the Polk County Master Gardener Association's Plant Sale, May 12 and 13 at the Polk County Fairgrounds in Rickreall.

"It is a lot of work," Hineman said. "We grow over 10,000 vegetable plants and some of our growers were getting burnt out. So, when we heard the Chemeketa horticulture program was looking for customers to help their students learn about the actual process of growing and selling plants, including budgeting for all the costs involved and the delivery aspect, we were like, 'We really need to take advantage of this.' We realized it would take a lot of the load off and we can still focus on growing other types of vegetables and other aspects of the plant sale, and at the

same time give the students experience of filling a large order."

According to Patty Korn, chair of the Plant Sale, the students supplied approximately 60 percent of the vegetables and 100 percent of the hanging baskets. "And the plants they grew were of excellent quality," Korn said. "The hanging baskets were beautiful, and everything was delivered to the Master Gardeners on time and in perfect condition."

"The arrangement was a win-win for both parties," Hineman said.

Easy Pollinator Plantings

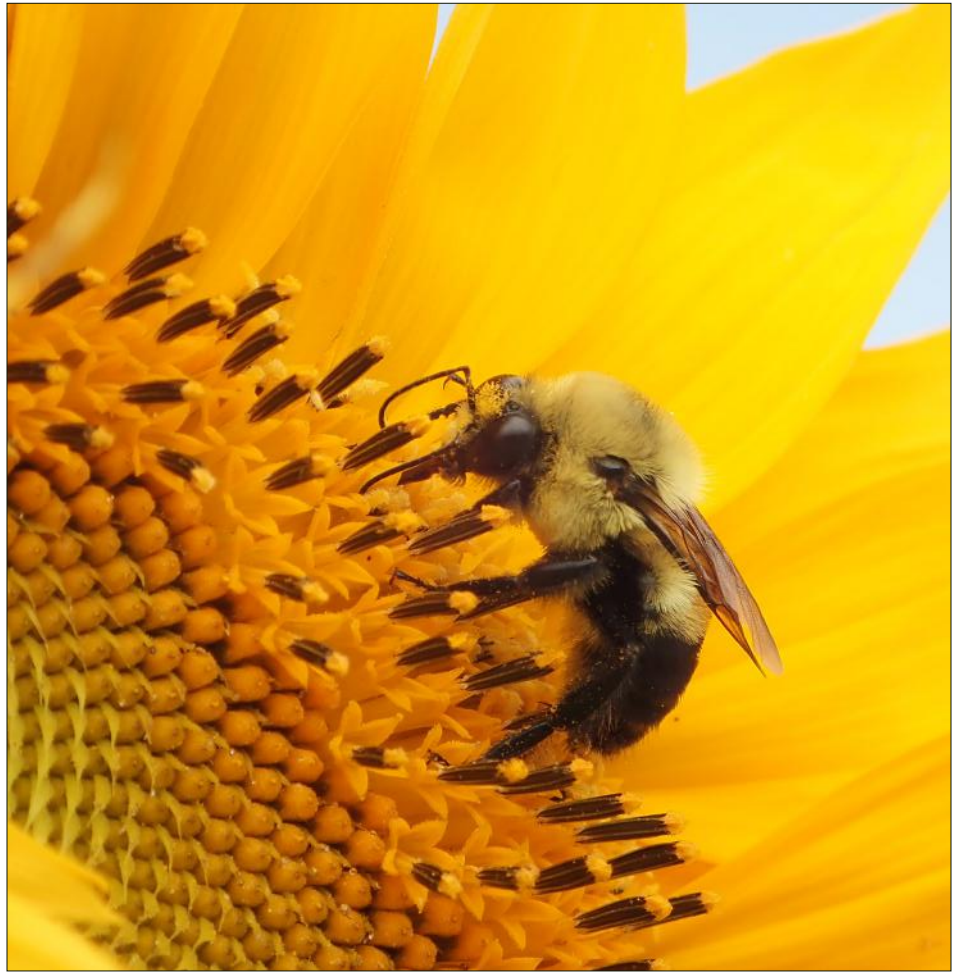
Kevin Porter

District Manager Polk SWCD

Western Oregon is home to a great variety of pollinators, and there are some easy-to-grow plants that will give them a boost during the summer months.

Peonies are very deer-resistant and will attract and feed butterflies in the late spring and early summer. Once peonies are established, they take little care other than digging and dividing the tubers every few years. You can keep them confined to a relatively small area, or plant the extra tubers and fill in large areas over several years.

Sunflowers are a fun, easy to grow addition to the summer garden, or any yard or field edge. They will attract many different species of pollinator insects, bumblebees, beetles, wasps and honeybees are all commonly seen on sunflowers. Regular black-oil seed sunflowers can be planted, and are relatively low-cost. They will have a short bloom period, for longer and showier blooms, there are about as many varieties and colors of sunflowers available as your imagination allows. It's easy to save seed from sunflowers for your next years planting, and if you have several different colors and head sizes the resulting crosses can be a fun multi-year project for kids and adults.



bumblebee foraging on a sunflower

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Phacelia tanacetifolia (lacy phacelia, purple tansy, scorpionweed) is one of the best flowering plants for attracting pollinators. It is native to the desert SW and California and will grow well in our warm summers. *Phacelia* seeds are very small, a few ounces will seed a large area. If *Phacelia* can be planted on a yard or field edge and left alone, it will reseed itself for several years. It may need a little water to get going but once it does it won't need much attention. *Phacelia* can be used as a green manure or cover crop,

and has gained widespread popularity in Europe as a quick growing catch crop between row crop plantings.

Coneflowers (echinacea) are easy to grow perennials that will provide benefit for pollinators, hummingbirds and seed eating songbirds like goldfinches. Coneflowers are fairly deer-resistant and are available in a variety of showy colors. When combined with other perennial flowering shrubs like lavender, salvia, and sedums, you can have a broad spectrum of color and bloom period.

Community Science

Turn your curiosity for the natural world into positive, meaningful impact!

Morgan Neil

Outreach Coordinator, Polk SWCD

Community science is for people that are inspired by the world around them. It is a form of research that provides everyone—regardless of their background—the opportunity to contribute meaningful data to further scientific understanding of key issues. Although trained scientists play a vital role in conservation, the wider community has the opportunity to be engaged and make important contributions. The study of nature is for everyone! Here are some opportunities for local community science. Find out more at: polkswcd.com/community-science.html.

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The Oregon Bee Atlas

This program was the first of its kind in the world to train citizen scientists to both collect AND curate specimens for a university-led study. In just a few short years, the program has created one of the largest data sets on native bees and their floral associations in the world, and has led to countless new discoveries for the Pacific Northwest. The success of the Oregon Bee Atlas rests on the shoulders of committed volunteers. The Master Melittologist program is about Oregonians boldly going where no amateur melittologist has gone before! Specimen records are added annually to newly digitized historic records from the Oregon State Arthropod Collection to build the first comprehensive account of the native bee fauna of Oregon.



Dragonfly Larvae as Indicators of Mercury Impairment

Oregon State University is partnering with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Geological Survey to monitor mercury contamination in the Willamette Valley and engage community members in collaborative science. Using dragonfly larvae as indicators of mercury impairment, they will monitor 100 sites and assess how mercury exposure risk changes across the complex landscape of the Willamette River Watershed. At each site, they will collect observation habitat data, water chemistry data, and 15 dragonfly larvae for mercury concentration analysis. They are seeking interested landowners with water bodies on their property (ponds, wetlands, or streams) that would be interested in learning more about the project and potentially giving permission to collect data on their property. Field work must be completed by **November 2023**. Please contact Cailin Sinclair at cailin.sinclair@oregonstate.edu for more information!



iNaturalist

iNaturalist is a joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society. Every observation can contribute to biodiversity science, from the rarest butterfly to the most common backyard weed. Your findings are shared with scientific data repositories like the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to help scientists find and use your data. All you have to do is observe.



The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Exploring and Conserving Nature

eBird

eBird is among the world's largest biodiversity-related science projects, with more than 100 million bird sightings contributed annually by eBirders around the world. Your sightings contribute to hundreds of conservation decisions and peer-reviewed papers, thousands of student projects, and help inform bird research worldwide. eBird plays an increasingly important role in science and conservation. Applications of eBird data range from research and monitoring to species management, habitat protection, and informing law and policy. eBird is managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Planting for Pollinators Event Scheduled July 1

Mitch Lies

Cultivating Editor

Home gardeners can learn about pollinator-friendly plants in a picturesque setting and maybe even sip wine afterward at the second Planting for Pollinators event, scheduled on July 1 at Illahe Vineyards and Winery.

In presentations from Jen Hayes and Nicole Bell, both OSU graduate students, attendees will gain a better understanding of the common bees in Oregon and the benefits native plants provide pollinators, in addition to hearing highlights of their bee research.

Among other areas of research, Bell is looking into nesting strategies, forage sources and other life history traits of bee species observed in urban areas. And Hayes is researching what plants best attract bees and why certain

plants are better for pollinators.

“We are looking at native plants and then one to three native cultivars developed from those natives and trying to see if there is a difference in pollinator visitation between them,” Hayes said. “And if there is a difference, we are trying to figure out what traits might be driving that change. Is it because one is a different color, or does one bloom longer than another? Does one have less flowers or less nectar, or is the pollen composition different? We are tackling it from a lot of different angles.”

The presentations will be followed by a tour of the native plants growing in Illahe Vineyards and a search for bees. “There will be plenty of walking around trying to find bees and other pollinators present at Illahe,” Hayes said.

The presentations are designed primarily for backyard conservationists, according to Morgan Neil, Outreach Coordinator of

Polk SWCD, but anyone interested in incorporating native plants in their landscape to support pollinators is welcome to attend. Organizers plan to cap attendance at 25.

The event is sponsored by Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, the Luckiamute Watershed Council and OSU. The sponsors provided a similar event four years ago and had planned to bring it back the next year, but those plans were sidelined because of COVID 19, according to Suzanne Teller, Outreach Coordinator for the Luckiamute Watershed Council.

Organizers ask interested attendees to register ahead of time at www.polkswcd.com.

The event will run from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., with an optional wine tasting to follow. Illahe Vineyards and Winery is at 3275 Ballard Road, Dallas.



PHOTO BY MITCH LIES

From left, Morgan Neil, Suzanne Teller, Nicole Bell and Jen Hayes are spearheading a Planting for Pollinators event, July 1 at Illahe Vineyards and Winery.

Blueberry Industry Loses a 'Giant in the Field'

By Mitch Lies

Cultivating Editor

Bernadine Strik, who reshaped how blueberries were grown in Oregon and around the world during a 34-year career at Oregon State University Extension, died April 14 from complications of ovarian cancer. She was 60.

Strik is survived by her husband of nearly 30 years, former Polk County Extension horticulturist Neil Bell, and their two daughters, Nicole and Shannon.

"We are extremely saddened to learn of Bernadine's passing and extend our condolences to our colleague Neil Bell," said Alisha Hutchison, office manager of Polk County Extension. "Bernadine touched people around the world with her research and personality. Her passing is a huge loss for both the berry industry and for us personally."

In the fall of 1987, when Strik started as Extension Berry Specialist at OSU, the industry standard in blueberries was to plant bushes four feet apart in the row. Nobody to her knowledge was using trellises, and growers either mulched in the row with sawdust or grew blueberries on bare ground.

Today, largely resulting from Strik's research, blueberries are grown two-and-a-half to three-feet apart with the aid of trellises, and the use of weed mat is common. Strik's research also has resulted in changes to the way growers prune and fertilize blueberries.

Dave Brazelton of Fall Creek Farm



PHOTO BY MITCH LIES

Bernadine Strik provides a presentation at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora as part of 2018 Oregon Blueberry Field Day. The annual field days were attended by people from around the world.

& Nursery, of Lowell, Ore., a world leader in blueberry production with operations in six countries, said he was constantly impressed with Strik's ability to listen to grower concerns and address production issues in research projects.

"She had a unique ability to carefully listen to the questions that growers were asking and designed power-packed research that brought data to those key questions," Brazelton said. "And then her delivery and her ability to put so much into a research project and then organize it so well and deliver the information in that great professional yet very entertaining way was exceptional."

"Whenever she spoke, the rooms were always packed," Brazelton said. "Nobody was going to miss Dr. Strik's presentation, because you were going to learn something."

The International Blueberry Organization in a tribute to Strik on April 17 wrote: "Through her

ground-breaking research and trials over more than 30 years, Strik helped transform the way in which blueberries are grown."

Among many milestones, Strik was elected a Fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Science in 2007 and a Fellow of the International Society for Horticultural Science in 2021, which is its highest honor. She received the OSU Alumni Association Distinguished Professor Award in 2014 and the Chad Finn Ambassador Award from the American Pomological Society in 2021.

Strik also co-released 38 berry cultivars, authored or co-authored 150 scientific journal articles, 71 extension publications, 39 proceeding papers and 24 book chapters. During her academic career, Strik also taught three undergraduate courses and two graduate courses, as well as advised 21 graduate students.

"We've lost a giant in the field and someone who was respected globally," Brazelton said.

Summer in the Garden

Free Classes at the Inspiration
Garden

Saturday Workshops (10- 11:30 am)

May 27th Gardening in Raised Beds
June 24th Herb Gardening
July 15th Managing Garden Pests
August 19th Composting with Worms

Evening Tours & Demos (6 – 7 pm)

May 31st Plant Propagation Demo
June 14th Pollinator Plants Tour & Talk
July 18th Preserving Herbs Demo
August 9th Fermentation Fun Demo
August 22nd Plant ID Tour & Talk

All events are free; donations welcome.



Visit our events calendar
for class descriptions

<https://beav.es/SQW>



Inspiration Garden in Mt. Fir Park
799 F St., Independence
Meet at the Gathering Place building



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Questions?

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