

Cultivating

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

HEDGING THE BEST FOR
POLLINATOR HEALTH | **PG. 4**

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

WHO WE ARE



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

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

OFFICE LOCATION & HOURS

289 E ELLENDALE, SUITE 301
DALLAS OR 97338 | 503.623.8395
EXTENSION.OREGONSTATE.EDU/POLK

MON-WED 9AM-12PM, 1PM-5PM
THURS 9AM- 12PM
FRIDAY CLOSED OR BY APPOINTMENT

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

ALISHA HUTCHISON | OFFICE MANAGER & LOCAL LIAISON
971.612.0022

JESSICA SHUMAKE | OFFICE SPECIALIST
503-623-8395

RACHEL GREEN | OFFICE SPECIALIST
503-623-8395

BROOKE EDMUNDS | COMMUNITY HORTICULTURE
971.612.0026

AUDREY COMERFORD | AGRITOURISM
503.689.8241

JENIFER CRUICKSHANK | DAIRY
971.600.1222

MITCH LIES | LEAD WRITER
mitchlies@comcast.net

CHRISSY LUCAS | WELL WATER PROGRAM
541.766.3556

RICHARD RIGGS | REGIONAL DIRECTOR
503.269.6389

RACHEL BRANDON | 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
971.612.0023

HAYLEY WHITE | LIVESTOCK AND FORAGES FACULTY
971.612.0027

ANDREA HUNTER | 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
971.612.0029

TODD ANDERSON | SMALL FARMS FACULTY
541-713-5007

WHO WE ARE



OUR MISSION: To conserve and enhance the quantity and quality of soils, water, and wildlife habitat in Polk County.

OUR VISION: To deliver education and technical assistance programs that measurably improve the soil, water, and wildlife habitat in agricultural and forest lands, and instill conservation and stewardship ethics in landowners, land managers and the public.

WE VALUE:

- being a committed and invested partner in conservation.
- being inclusive, equitable, and cooperative in all we do.
- partnering with tribal nations and assisting underserved communities.
- providing enjoyable, rewarding activities and events.
- being innovative, using best practices, delivering climate smart solutions, and providing long-term sustainable results.
- good stewardship of the land, and encouraging it through voluntary, non-regulatory participation.

OFFICE LOCATION & HOURS

580 MAIN STREET, SUITE A
DALLAS OR 97338 | 503.623.9680
WWW.POLKSWCD.COM
MON-FRI 8AM-4:30PM

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

KEVIN PORTER | DISTRICT MANAGER
manager@polkswcd.com

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

BETH THIEL | RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST - FARM/FOREST
beth.thiel@polkswcd.com

MORGAN NEIL | OUTREACH COORDINATOR
morgan.neil@polkswcd.com

HAYLEY IVERSON | ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
clerk@polkswcd.com

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CONTENTS

HEDGING FOR THE POLLINATOR HEALTH	4
PROTECT YOUR LIVESTOCK	6
WITH THE END OF SEEDLING PLANTING SEASON COMES SEEDLING ORDERING SEASON	7
HOW PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND LAYOFFS ARE AFFECTING POLK SWCD	8
NEW WILLAMETTE VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA	9
CHEMEKETA'S TIM RAY HONORED FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE	10
PALMER AMARANTH	11
PREPARE FOR THE 2025 SEASON	13
NEW FIELD CROPS SPECIALIST	14
POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN	15

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

MARCH

ALL MONTH – Winter Wildlife Field Days

- 13 - Polk SWCD Board of Directors meeting
- 18 – 4-H Cloverbuds – Make your own paint brushes class | 4:30-5:30, a Polk County Extension
- 22 – OSU Tree School | 8:15am – 5:45pm, Clackamas Community College
- 24 – Volunteer Bird Box install at Cornerstone
- 24-28 – 4-H Spring Break Craft Camp | 11am – 12pm, Polk County Extension

APRIL

- 10 - Polk SWCD Board of Directors meeting
- 11 - Ag Pesticide Collection, Grand Ronde (Registration required; call Polk SWCD office for details)
- 12 – 4-H Arts and Sciences Discovery Day | 9am – 1pm, Polk County Extension
- 14 – 4-H Open Art Studio | 4pm – 5pm, Polk County Extension
- 15 – 4-H Cloverbud Edible Playdough class | 4:30pm – 5:30pm, Polk County Extension
- 26 – Emerald Ash Borer workshop, Dallas Aquatic Center

MAY

- 2-4 - Outdoor Leadership Training | Oregon Outdoor Education Center (former Oregon 4-H Center)
- 8 - Polk SWCD Board of Directors meeting
- 12 - 4-H Open Art Studio | 4pm – 5pm, Polk County Extension
- 10 - Livestock Learning Day | 9:30am 3:30pm, Polk County Fairgrounds
- 20 - 4-H Cloverbuds class | 4:30pm – 5:30pm, Polk County Extension
- 22 - Pollinator Hedgerow Workshop

JUNE

- 12 - Polk SWCD Board of Directors meeting
- 17 - 4-H Cloverbuds Fair Entries | 4:30 – 5:30pm, Polk County Extension
- 25-27 - Junior Master Gardener Day Camp | 1pm – 3pm, Polk County Extension
- 27-29 - 4-H Horse Pre-Fair | Polk County Fairgrounds

HEDGING THE BET FOR POLLINATOR HEALTH

By Mitch Lies

Lead Writer

In 2014, while planting a large-scale organic blueberry operation in an area devoid of pollinator habitat, George Kaufman, an agronomist for a farm management company, planted his first hedge-row.

“We had a client who was putting in a really large planting of organic blueberries and there were going to be portions of that planting that were going to be a long ways from any pollinator habitat,” Kaufman said. “So, they chose a row in the middle of the planting and instead of putting blueberries in there, we just dropped in native plants.”

Today Kaufman, a certified crop advisor for the farm management company AgriCare is recognized as an expert of sorts on hedgerows, someone OSU Extension turns to for presentations on the subject. He will be leading a field day discussion on hedgerows on May 22 at Hopville Willamette Farm in Independence. The field day is sponsored by OSU Extension, the USDA-Agricultural Research Service, Pollinator Partnership and the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District.

Use of hedgerows, while still relatively rare, is becoming more common on blueberry farms of late, Kaufman said, particularly as growers seek Bee Better certification from the Xerces Society. A main pillar of the certification, which is a means for farmers to show buyers that they are committed to protecting beneficial insects and enhancing pollinator habitat, is that 5 percent of a farm be



Flowering native plants that attract bees are popular plant choices for hedgerows.

dedicated to beneficial insects and pollinator habitat.

“That is a practical reason that growers are planting hedgerows,” Kaufman said. “And then some of our clients just believe in regenerative agriculture and they believe in conservation, and they want us to take care of the native flora and fauna around their farms.”

Multiple Benefits

Hedgerows bring multiple benefits to a farm, Kaufman said, including enhancing natural enemies of insect pests. “A lot of these farms that we’re working on are organic, so there’s not a lot of tools to be able to control insect pest populations,” Kaufman said. “These hedgerows help boost the amount of beneficial insects and predatory parasitoid insects in

a field. We've actually seen that the closer you are to the hedgerow, the fewer aphids there are in blueberries, because those beneficial insects are moving out to the blueberries and feeding on the aphids."

Hedgerows also provide pollination benefits, something blueberries can always use more of, Kaufman said.

"Blueberries are notoriously difficult to pollinate with honeybees," he said. "Their pollen tends to be a little bit lower in nutritional value than some crops and honeybees aren't that attracted to them. Conversely, native pollinators, especially bumblebees, are really good at pollinating blueberries. They can access the pollen easier than honeybees can, and they tend to work in cooler weather conditions than a honeybee will.

"So, we're not trying to replace honeybees, but we're trying to have a layer of insurance in there," Kaufman said. "And by planting plants that flower all summer long, we can keep the bumblebees on the farm, and we can help boost our populations that overwinter, and around the pollination time for blueberries, they will be out there pollinating."

Selecting which plants to install in a hedgerow is not something growers should take lightly, said Andony Melathopoulos, Oregon State University Extension Pollinator Specialist, who will be presenting at the field day. The wrong plant, one that produces fruit and attracts spotted wing drosophila, can in fact have negative effects on an operation.

The key is to select plants that support beneficial insects, but that don't support insect pests or plant diseases, said Melathopoulos, who is working on a project with researchers from across the country to create a user-friendly database identifying the best plants to use in hedgerows around blueberries.

Researchers from Michigan, Washington, Vermont and Califor-



PHOTOS BY GEORGE KAUFMAN

Workers plant a hedgerow in Independence, Oregon, in September of 2024. Hedgerows are becoming popular as a means to enhance pollinator health.

nia are working with the nonprofit Pollinator Partnership on the two-year project. The Hopville Willamette Farm field day is part of the project's outreach.

Planting Costs

Hedgerows vary widely in size and appearance, according to Kaufman. Some commercial scale growers will plant native plants in long rows with raised beds, weed

fabric and drip irrigation systems, essentially mimicking a blueberry planting. Others will clump a few native plants next to a blueberry field within minimal planting costs. In both cases, extensive benefits are attainable, Kaufman said.

"They can be any size, don't require weed fabric and expensive irrigation systems and can be tucked away in any corner of the farm,"

CONTINUE ON P. 6

CONTINUES FROM P. 5

Kaufman said. “They are especially a great option for planting in an area that is unfit for farming, such as an area that is too steep, too narrow or an odd-shaped corner.”

The return on investment of a hedgerow can be hard to quantify, Kaufman said, and has not been well documented. But, Kaufman noted that AgriCare has seen strong evidence of increases in beneficial insect populations in fields where hedgerows are in place. “And I think the conclusion to draw from that is we are seeing a benefit in pollination,” he said. “On farms where we have a lot of pollinator habitat, we have seen that one-quarter to one-third of the pollination that is done in blueberries is being done by these native pollinators. And those are free services that we’re getting from these insects.”

It is also notable that Bee Better Certification can help show the public and food companies that a farm cares about pollinator health and is doing something to enhance it, said Beth Thiel of the Polk SWCD, who helped secure a state grant that offset some installation costs of the most recent Hopville Willamette Farm hedgerow.



HEDGEROW HACKS
*farm hedgerow installation,
maintenance and benefits*

MAY 22, 9-11AM
HOPVILLE WILLAMETTE FARM
INDEPENDENCE, OR

REGISTER NOW >



Oregon State University
Extension Service

AgriCare
Agricultural Specialist

POLLINATOR
PARTNERSHIP

Protect their lives. Preserve ours.



Polk
Soil & Water
Conservation District

“Every farm is different, and they have different goals,” Thiel said. “But it is good to see when farmers’ goals overlap with goals that are beneficial to the environment and to wildlife. I mean, that is what we aim for at the Conservation District.”

In addition to OSU Extension, presenters at the field day include

representatives from Polk SWCD, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and Pollinator Partnership. Hopville Willamette Farms is located at 5340 Wigrich Road in Independence. The field day will run from 9 to 11 a.m. and is open to the public, but pre-registration is required. Find out more at PolkSWCD.com.

PROTECT YOUR LIVESTOCK

ESSENTIAL BIOSECURITY MEASURES TO COMBAT HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA AND OTHER ILLNESSES

Hayley White

OSU Extension Willamette
Livestock & Forages

You may have heard that Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (referred to as HPAI and H₅N₁) is spreading and the virus is affecting different species. It is crucial to reduce the

spread of HPAI and other diseases that can impact livestock. Every farm, regardless of size, should take measures to minimize the risk of illness among animals and have a biosecurity plan in place, whether or not they have poultry.

Diseases can spread through nose-to-nose contact, soil, bedding, fence

posts, feeding and handling equipment, and water sources, among other things. The effects of diseases, pests, and other illnesses can range from fatal to merely a nuisance, but either way, they compromise the productivity and welfare of the

CONTINUE ON P. 7

CONTINUES FROM P. 6

animals and cost the farmer money. HPAI specifically, is rapidly fatal to poultry, can be fatal for felines, and can affect and be transmitted by other livestock species as well.

Following good biosecurity practices and developing a biosecurity plan will help reduce the spread of HPAI and other diseases to your animals. We recommend that you research and develop your own biosecurity plan from trusted online resources, but here are some basic practices that every producer should follow:

- Prevent exposure of domestic poultry and livestock to wildlife, especially wild waterfowl.



LYNN KETCHUM
A laying hen from a backyard flock in Oregon.

- Limit the co-mingling of different species of livestock, especially poultry and pigs.
- Wash your hands before and after handling your animals.
- Clean vehicles, tools, and equipment.
- Limit unnecessary visitors.

- Quarantine new animals for 21-30 days.
- Sanitize shoes in clean footbaths.
- Change clothes upon contact with birds.

For more information, including symptoms of HPAI, visit <https://beav.es/Gb9>.

WITH THE END OF SEEDLING PLANTING SEASON COMES SEEDLING ORDERING SEASON!

Lorelle Sherman
OSU Extension Forester

Whether you are reforesting a recently harvested timberland or enhancing native habitat, it's time to get your seedlings in the ground. In the Willamette Valley, most tree planting happens from December through March when the trees are dormant and the rain is abundant. Fall planting is risky due to the uncertainty of rainfall, but one benefit is extra growing time giving tree seedlings a leg up on competing vegetation.

If you're planning on ordering more than one or two hundred seedlings, you'll need to order a year in advance. Now is the time to order seedlings for fall or winter planting. It's important to remember that seedling selection is a key component of seedling success.

Some important questions to ask yourself before selecting seedlings are:

- What species should I plant?
- What types of seedlings are suitable for my site?
- How do I order seedlings?

To help answer these questions, and guide you in selection and planting of trees that are suitable for long-term health and productivity, here are a couple publications and a check list to get you started:

Selecting and Buying Quality Tree Seedlings:

<https://beav.es/G9L>

Care and Planting of Tree Seedlings on Your Woodland:

<https://beav.es/G9b>

Sources of Native Forest Nursery Seedlings

<https://beav.es/G9E>

Handling Seedlings Checklist:

- Handle seedlings gently and as little as possible.
- Keep seedlings cool (34–36°F) and protect them from freezing temperatures or temperatures above 40°F.
- At the field site, store seedlings in the shade or under a reflective space blanket. Don't use canvas or dark-color coverings. Minimize field storage.

CONTINUE ON P. 8

CONTINUES FROM P. 7

- Protect seedlings from drying out (especially the roots) by reducing exposure to drying air and by adding water when needed during

storage as well as just before planting.

- Use bags or boxes that are constructed or coated to prevent water loss. Keep them securely closed. Use tape to repair rips and tears.

- Dip seedlings in water for 1 minute before you place them in the planting bag to provide added protection to the root system.

- Handle seedlings gently and avoid touching roots.

HOW PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND LAYOFFS ARE AFFECTING POLK SWCD

Kevin Porter

District Manager, Polk SWCD

You'd have to be well and truly under the proverbial rock if you're not aware of the recent turmoil in Federal agencies and employees. I'd like to take this opportunity to write about how that is, and may, affect the District.

Our partnership with United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) brought just under \$3,000,000 in 2024 to Polk County. Those funds supplement local landowners and managers to complete conservation, restoration, and erosion control activities on lands they own or manage. We know that those dollars largely stay in the local economy and have a multiplicative effect vastly larger than the base sum. Some studies have shown that may be up to 8 times the original value.

These projects protect and restore our rapidly disappearing Oregon White Oak habitat, improve on-farm irrigation efficiency, fund woodland meadow restoration to provide alternative habitat and lessen conflict with elk and deer, and assist small woodland operators in managing their working forests. This funding is delivered by 3 NRCS employees in the Dallas field office, when fully

staffed. As of the time I write this, two NRCS employees at the Dallas field office have been terminated by executive authority, and one is taking the delayed buyout. It is likely that the Polk NRCS office will be merged with another county, likely Marion, and any future staff may be located in Salem.

Polk SWCD's programs and funding sources, again at the time I write this, have not yet seen any effects from the federal government upheaval. The grants we often apply for, and implement, are largely funded by Oregon Lottery dollars and the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund, and less so by other State funds. Those dollars are distributed throughout the state by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), a state agency that has funded conservation and restoration projects in Oregon watersheds since 1987, (called the Governors Watershed Enhancement Board at that time).

As reference, the entire national NRCS budget is .08% of the federal budget, including additional Inflation Reduction Act funding in 2024. OWEB's budget is .2% of our state budget. This shows that conservation spending is very small, in the big picture. Everyone involved knows that the money is not enough, and we need to use it as thriftily and appro-

priately as possible. When we apply for grants, often the total ask for all applications received is 3 to 4 times more than the funding available. With that competition for money, projects must be relevant, impactful and leverage every additional resource possible.

Right now, we don't know and can't speculate on the extent and final outcomes of the ongoing change. All we can do is support our federal partners, who deliver great work every day in our community. Polk forests, farms, wildlife refuges, roads, and many other community services are affected by federal employees and funding. We support all of our partners, Federal, State and Local governments, non-profits, Tribes, volunteers, friends, family, neighbors, and countless others who work to make our community better.

We do want to know how our community is affected by these changes. Hearing directly from those we serve is important and if the sharer is willing, we can relay that information on to others. Our national conservation organizations would sincerely like to hear about on-the-ground difficulties, successes, concerns, and issues. Please feel free to contact the district and speak with us about your concerns.



WILLAMETTE VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA, MEADOWHAWK DRONES,

Some Rights Reserved, <https://www.fws.gov/media/willamette-valley-conservation-area> | Willamette Valley Conservation Area

NEW WILLAMETTE VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA: A VITAL WIN FOR OREGON'S WILDLIFE

Marc Bell

Senior Resource Conservationist,
Polk SWCD

New Willamette Valley Conservation Area: A Vital Win for Oregon's Wildlife

The Willamette Valley, one of Oregon's most ecologically diverse regions, now has a new protected conservation area aimed at safeguarding wildlife and habitats. The Willamette Valley Conservation Area was officially established by the U.S. Department of the Interior in August 2024 as part of a broader national effort to preserve endangered species and restore dwindling prairie and oak habitats. The designation of a conservation area

identifies a region of high-value habitat, serving as a crucial tool for prioritizing long-term restoration and preservation efforts across the valley.

Historic Habitat Loss and Conservation Needs

Historically, the Willamette Valley was covered by expansive oak woodlands and open prairie ecosystems, but European settlement and agriculture led to the loss of all but the smallest fragmented habitat units. A 2017 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service study found that less than 10% of the valley's historic oak habitat and less than 2% of its prairie habitat remains. This loss has placed many native species—including Western bluebirds, Nuthatches, several butterfly species,

western meadowlarks, and Oregon white oak—at risk, with some listed as state or federal threatened and endangered species.

Restoration and Protection Efforts

The new conservation area is focused on restoring and enhancing these vital ecosystems to ensure the survival of the numerous species that rely on them. The ~600 acre Diamond Hill Wetlands, a recent acquisition within the newly designated conservation area, provides thriving habitat for shorebirds, neotropical songbirds, and migratory waterfowl. With this official designation, restoration on

CONTINUE ON P. 10

CONTINUES FROM P. 9

degraded private lands and the long-term protection of existing high-value habitat is now more feasible.

A Collaborative Effort

The establishment of the Willamette Valley Conservation Area was made possible through extensive collaboration between federal, state, and local partners. The Willamette Valley Oak and Prairie Cooperative, alongside the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, several Tribal Nations, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and watershed councils, played a crucial role in identifying and prioritizing conservation targets. Planning meetings, which began in 2014, led to the creation of this conservation area after more than a decade of effort.

A Milestone for Oregon's Conservation Efforts

The Willamette Valley Conservation Area marks a significant achievement in Oregon's ongoing efforts to protect its native ecosystems. By prioritizing some of the region's last remaining prairie and oak woodland remnants, conservationists and policymakers

have taken an essential step toward restoring the valley's natural heritage.

Wildlife refuges serve as havens for wildlife. They also demonstrate the power of collaborative conservation, bringing together landowners, local organizations, and government agencies to safeguard our natural resources.

The Willamette Valley Conservation Area is the 5th new area established under The America the Beautiful Initiative; a federal conservation strategy created during the Biden-Harris administration. This initiative emphasized community-driven conservation and the importance of public-private partnerships in protecting natural landscapes.

Future Management and Public Access

New acquisitions within the conservation area are managed similar to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which includes William L. Finley, Ankeny, and Baskett Slough refuges. Public access is determined as each site is enrolled. Partnership officials will assess how best to balance public recreation with

conservation priorities as the refuge complex evolves.

To find out more about the newly designated Conservation Area, please see the full press release and Department of Interior copy by scanning the QR code. Or if you are interested in learning more about how this conservation area was developed, please watch this presentation hosted by the Luckiamute Watershed Council which hosted USFWS Biologist, Chris Seal, to explain how this Conservation Area differs from traditional national wildlife refuges.



CHEMEKETA'S TIM RAY HONORED FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO OREGON COMMUNITIES

Alisha Hutchison

OSU Extension Service

Oregon State University Extension volunteers and partners were recognized for their dedication, innovation, and contributions to Oregon communities at the 2024 OSU Extension Association (OSUEA) Annual Cooperator Awards Banquet on December 4, 2024. Among the honorees was Tim Ray, Dean of Agricultural Sciences and Technology at Chemeketa Community College, whose commitment to collabora-

tion and community service has made a lasting impact in Polk County and beyond.

Tim Ray has been a steadfast partner to OSU Extension Service, embodying the spirit of collaboration and community leadership. His deep commitment to the community and tireless work across multiple organizations that OSU Extension routinely works with make him a truly deserving nominee for the OSUEA Cooperator Award. As Dean of Agricultural Sciences and Technology at Chemeketa Community

College, Tim is the epitome of a collaborator. He is a frequent partner linking to workforce initiatives, economic development opportunities and farmer success – a true champion. Partners say he is often the first person they call when they have an outside-the-box idea and need to bat it around. Tim is singularly focused on getting the job done well and never looks for credit, but rather puts business, industry, and students at the forefront of his work.

CONTINUE ON P. 11

CONTINUES FROM P. 10

His dedication to connecting with the region's students puts him at the center of the higher education pathway for many, and he frequently looks to collaborate with OSU, knowing that many of his students have a future here. His connectivity and connections are vital to the work that we all do. He always says 'yes' first and sorts out the details later – a true asset as a collaborator.

Tim's service to Polk County extends far beyond his professional commitments. Since joining the Polk Extension Citizen Advisory Network (PECAN) in 2017 and the Extension Service District Budget Committee in 2019, he has advocated for OSU Extension funding and served as a liaison between OSU Extension, the Polk County Fair Board, and the County Commissioners. Tim has served on the Polk County Fair Board since 2018, becoming the board Chair in 2020, as well as on the Polk County Fairgrounds Finance Committee and as the Dallas Rotary club president. He

has been integral in leading the Polk County Fair's Youth Steering Committee since 2021, cultivating a collaborative environment between 4-H, FFA, the Fairgrounds and the various individuals and associations who work to put on the county fair, always ensuring that youth growth and development is at the forefront of every conversation and decision.

At the Polk County Fair, Tim is a familiar and friendly face, working directly with barn superintendents and the Livestock Association. He approaches his work with kindness, always keeping youth in mind—not only in 4H & FFA but for all young people in the community—as they prepare to transition into adulthood.

Tim's impact on youth development began well before his career in higher education. As the Career and Technical Education Director in the Dallas School District and an Ag Science and Technology Instructor & FFA Advisor, he has helped shape the future of thousands of students, guiding them toward pathways suited to their indi-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Tim Ray serves breakfast at 2024 Dallas Rotary Breakfast in the Park.

vidual needs. His ongoing commitment to creating attainable pathways for youth demonstrates his dedication to student success and development.

By seamlessly bridging industry, education, and community needs, Ray exemplifies the mission of OSU Extension. His recognition at the OSUEA Awards Banquet highlights not only his contributions but also the lasting effect of strong community partnerships.

PALMER AMARANTH

NOT YOUR REGULAR PIGWEED

Beth Thiel,

Resource Conservation Planner,
Polk SWCD

Palmer amaranth belongs to the plant genus *Amaranthus*, composed of 60+ members. Several domesticated species are ornamental and add color and texture to gardens, while some species are cultivated for edible greens or seeds. But there are a few invasive members of this group, commonly called pigweed, that are aggressive



CLARKE ALDER, AMALGAMATED SUGAR

Palmer Amaranth seedling. Notice the long petiole stem between the leaf and main plant stem.

CONTINUE ON P. 12

CONTINUES FROM P. 11

weeds.

Research shows that Palmer Amaranth has one of the highest invasiveness ratings of any plant, giving it the potential to cause damage in agricultural crops throughout most of the United States. It has recently become a nuisance in eastern Oregon sugar beet fields. You might think that the difference in climate and soil type means Willamette Valley landowners don't need to worry about Palmer Amaranth, but in 2023, this vigorous plant was found in Marion County, and fortunately was destroyed before it created seeds. One plant can produce half a million seeds.

Additional plant qualities make this pigweed worth scouting for. It has shown resistance to ten different herbicide modes of action. Palmer Amaranth can grow 2-3 inches per day and can reach heights of 6-8 feet tall. It is allelopathic, meaning it releases chemical compounds that inhibit other plants' growth, and high nitrates in the leaves can make it toxic to some livestock.

Like other plants in the pig weed or amaranth family, Palmer Amaranth is an annual, meaning it starts from seed and grows through its lifecycle in one growing season. There are a few easy ways to distinguish Palmer Amaranth from other pig weeds.

To identify Palmer Amaranth, notice the leaf stems called petioles which link the leaf to the main plant stem. The petiole of Palmer Amaranth is equal to or longer than the leaf. This is even apparent at the seedling stage. The stems are smooth, with relatively few hairs. The leaves are diamond shaped and have a singular hair at some of the leaf tips. Unlike its close relatives, this amaranth is diecious, meaning plants will have either male or female flowers or seedheads and the seedheads can be up to 24" long. The male seed heads



The petiole of Palmer Amaranth is longer than the leaf

CLARKE ALDER, AMALGAMATED SUGAR

will have a more feathery appearance, while the female seedhead will be more course and bristly.

Palmer Amaranth is a problem weed in cotton fields in the southern US and is possibly being spread through cottonseed meal fed to cattle. No crop is immune to this pigweed, and it also grows in the road or railroad right-of-way. The seedlings start to emerge in late spring (April/May), but Palmer Amaranth is adapted to temperature extremes and has a very wide germination window compared to other pigweeds and will see multiple germination flushes over the season.

While this weed has not yet established itself in the Willamette Valley, it can spread quickly and once established Palmer Amaranth can reduce crop yields by 90% in some cases. This is why Oregon Department of Agriculture labels it an A-listed invasive species, targeting it for Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR).



Palmer Amaranth Plant Structure
CLARKE ALDER, AMALGAMATED SUGAR

If you suspect Palmer Amaranth on your property, please report it on the Invasive Species Hotline at <https://oregoninvasiveshotline.org/> or call the Polk SWCD office.

DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL AGRITOURISM BUSINESS IN OREGON



This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2018-70027-28587.

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Oregon State University



Register at: beav.es/wYh

[SMALLFARMS.OREGONSTATE.EDU/SMALLFARMS/AGRICULTURAL-TOURISM](https://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/smallfarms/agricultural-tourism)

PREPARE FOR THE 2025 SEASON WITH THE OSU EXTENSION ONLINE AGRITOURISM COURSE

Audrey Comerford

OSU Extension
Agritourism Coordinator

Winter and early spring are a great time to prepare for the coming growing season. Are you looking to diversify your farm or ranch markets with on-farm sales? How about adding activities or events that take place on your property? Make sure you take this time to learn all you can about what these on-farm activities, or agritourism, entails.

Agritourism involves welcoming visitors onto a farm or ranch to sell products, engage with customers, offer various activities, enhance the visibil-

ity of local farms, and build connections in the community. It provides a new source of revenue and boosts sales of products, possibly employs a family or community member, helps with farm succession, and educates the public about agriculture.

The online course was developed by OSU Extension, along with Oregon partners, to help producers learn about the possibilities and complexities of opening farms and ranches to the public.

As a participant, you will learn about the types of agricultural tourism and determine if it is a good fit for your whole farm business. The course also includes sections about

managing risk, understanding legal requirements, marketing your business and customer service and hospitality. As you work through the curriculum, you'll start an action plan that will help you begin to assess, plan and develop an agricultural tourism business.

The course is self-paced, includes text, videos and worksheets and is anticipated to take several hours to complete. Course registration is \$20 with scholarships available upon request. For more information and to register, visit beav.es/wYh. Any questions or requests can be directed to Audrey Comerford at Audrey.comerford@oregonstate.edu.

NEW FIELD CROPS SPECIALIST FOR NORTH WILLAMETTE VALLEY BRINGS FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Francesca Lear

OSU Communications Student

Hana You's first six months as an Extension field crops specialist for the north Willamette Valley have involved not just learning about the area's agriculture but learning more about the communities she serves.

"I enjoy talking with growers and hearing their stories," said You, who joined the Oregon State University faculty as an assistant professor of practice in July 2024. "I am so excited to learn this industry and ask growers where I can be helpful."

Based at the Washington County office in Beaverton, You will serve Polk, Washington and Yamhill counties, bringing her extensive expertise and fresh perspective to the region.

You, originally from South Korea, holds a master's degree in environmental horticulture from the University of Seoul. She furthered her education at the University of California, Davis, where she earned a doctorate in horticulture and agronomy, specializing in the effects of organic management on root growth in almond production.

"I am new to Oregon, so I am still learning the specific issues in crop production, but when you have the foundational knowledge, it prepares you well," You said.

You's primary focuses are grass seed, clovers and wheat, which are significant crops in the region. The Willamette Valley is known

as the "grass seed capital of the world," producing a substantial portion of the United States' cool-season forage and turf grass seed.

"I spend most of my time working with grass seed, clovers and wheat," said You. "I am very interested in conducting new research. I have heard growers here have issues with slugs and voles and I am interested in research that addresses those needs."

You is working with other grass seed faculty in the Willamette Valley to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of the industry to address emerging issues for the industry.

You collaborates with other OSU Extension agents and faculty throughout the Willamette Valley to tackle the issues growers face. She is eager to meet with growers individually to introduce herself and understand the current issues they want her to address.

"I appreciate that everyone is very welcoming and open to talk," You said.



PHOTO BY HELLE RUDDENKLAU

Hana You's primary focuses are grass seed, clovers and wheat.

Agriculture & Commercial Pesticide and Empty Container FREE Collection Event!

Where:

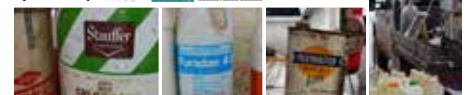
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Procurement Building V
9635 Grand Ronde Rd
Grand Ronde, OR 97347

When:

Friday, April 11, 2025
12 noon to 4 pm



Sponsored by:



POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SW Polk Fire District, with support from a grant provided by the Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM), has contracted SWCA Environmental Consultants to develop the 2025 Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This project is coordinated through the Polk County Fire Defense Board, which consists of all fire service agencies in the county and plays a vital role in the CWPP by overseeing wildfire preparedness, response, and mitigation efforts among local agencies, landowners, and emergency services. The board helps identify high-risk areas, develop fuel reduction strategies, and ensure effective resource allocation to protect communities from wildfire threats.

A CWPP is designed to identify and mitigate wildfire hazards to communities and infrastructure within the wildland-urban interface (WUI)—the transition zone between wildland areas and human development. The plan provides recommendations for hazardous fuel reduction, public outreach and education, structural ignitability reduction, and enhancements to fire response capabilities.

In 2009, Polk County completed its first CWPP. The development of the County CWPP has facilitated collaboration among local, state, federal officials, and tribes, as well as non-governmental stakeholders

and private citizens. The 2025 Polk County CWPP reviews, verifies, and identifies potential new priority areas where mitigation measures are needed to protect irreplaceable life, property, and critical infrastructure in the County, from wildfire.

Through this CWPP effort, Polk County and partners have formed a Committee aimed at planning and implementing successful wildfire mitigation actions, including hazardous fuel treatment projects on public and private land; organizing public outreach and education; and better preparing communities that are at high to extreme risk of wildfire by utilizing the Fire Adapted Community concepts. Much of this work will be achieved through interagency collaboration, working with communities and across ownership boundaries to develop landscape-level wildfire mitigation solutions.

This Committee is continuing to work together to review and revise the original CWPP to ensure the plan is applicable to the communities it is designed to serve. The goal is that all recommended projects are designed to greatly reduce wildfire risk to residents and ensure that communities can live safely in this fire-prone environment.

Now it is time to review, revise, and refocus previously proposed implementation measures to ensure

that the Polk County CWPP remains active and effective. Additionally, we want to hear from you to understand how Polk County can better plan and prepare for potential wildfires in your community. We kindly ask you to complete this brief survey: <https://arcg.is/1WHqTCo>. This fall, the public will be invited to provide feedback on the Draft Plan.

The CWPP will be a guiding document for fire and emergency managers, as well as agencies who manage land within Polk County. The CWPP is designed to serve County residents, and we encourage your interest and engagement in the process.

For more information, please contact Dean Bender, Polk County Emergency Management at bender.dean@co.polk.or.us, Matt Cook Project Manager, at matthew.cook@swca.com or Lexi Roberts, Assistant Project Manager at lexi.roberts@swca.com.



33RD ANNUAL POLK COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Polk County
Master
Gardener™
Association



PLANT SALE

Mother's Day Weekend 2025

WWW.POLKMGA.ORG



*On-site Vendor for Garden Tool Sharpening:
Restored Edge Sharpening*

FRIDAY, MAY 9TH: 9 AM - 4 PM
SATURDAY, MAY 10TH: 9 AM - 2 PM

LOTS of Annual Flowers & Beautiful Hanging Baskets

Kids can pot up a marigold & collect a packet of seeds!

First marigold free per child. Additional pots can be planted for \$1.

Polk County Fairgrounds

RICKREALL, OR



- PERENNIALS
- TREES & SHRUBS
- BERRIES
- HERBS
- HOUSE PLANTS
- VEGETABLES
- NATIVE PLANTS
- COUNTRY STORE

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