

# Trees

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will be held at GeerCrest Farm in September or October, a time when the fruit on the honored trees will be ripe.

In the orchard are 24 pear trees, four plum trees, one apple tree, one hawthorn tree, one butternut tree and one hickory tree that are believed to date to the original plantings from 1848.

The Geer family essentially abandoned the family farm for a couple decades during the Great Depression before returning in the 1950s.

While they were gone, the house fell into disrepair and the trees were free to grow.

“Things just kind of went wild and nobody was bothering these trees and they just continued to grow,” Toler said. “They just weren’t bothered, and they are close to a creek and they get water.”

A component for the grove being Oregon Heritage Tree status is the trees are used as a learning tool.

Not only is care of the trees being taught at GeerCrest Farm, but cuttings from the trees have been used to start a nursery for trees of the 1848 varieties.

“One of the things that I really love about that nomination is it is part of this farm where they are currently teaching kids about farming and about people

who pioneered in Oregon,” said Molly McKnight, a member of the Heritage Tree Committee who championed the nomination.

The Community Roots School of Silverton has started a program where its students come to GeerCrest once a month to teach students.

That the farm puts such value in agriculture with historic significance is a perfect combination for the Montessori school.

“The heritage grove just ties into the educational work that we’re doing and the work that we want students to be doing as well for stewardship,” said Susan Andree, a teacher at Community Roots.

“The idea that they can be stewarding these trees that have a historic connection into the future and caring for them and all of those pieces, it’s the ideal connection between the historical society here and the educational programming that we’re doing.”

There are already two buildings on the farm on the National Register of Historic Places. The tree known as the “Riding Whip Tree” was given Heritage Tree status in 2011 and was memorialized by the Daughters of the Revolution in 1936.

There are some trees from the 1847 stock on the property that aren’t being included in the Oregon Heritage Tree designation because they are not convenient to the public, unlike the grove,



GeerCrest Orchard as it appeared in 1870. SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

which is visible and easily accessible to the public from Sunnyview Road.

For a tree or a grove of trees like GeerCrest Orchard to be named to the Oregon Heritage Tree program, it must be available to the public, the trees must be healthy and there must be a historic significance.

The Oregon Heritage Tree program is part of Oregon Travel Experience, which also manages rest areas and signs on highways in Oregon.

The farm is under a long-term lease to GeerCrest Farm & Historical Society, which assures it will be in operation for

a long time to come.

The trees were planted so they could be used to feed a family and provide income.

That they became a major component in starting a fruit growing industry in the Willamette Valley and have survived to today was unexpected

“They filled up the valley and they brought with them all of their craft and all of their talent,” Toler said of his ancestors. “There were no stores here to trade with. They had to grow it.”

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# Parks

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stuff that don’t pay a cent towards it because they live on the other side of the line.”

According to Marion County Elections, in 1996, Silverton put a Parks and Rec Formation up in for vote in the General Election. It was defeated 60.7 percent to 39.3 percent.

The difference between then and now, according to Palmer, is the boundaries for the proposed district in 1996 were the same as for the Silverton

School District.

There was a task force formed by the Silverton City Council in 2012 about the formation of a Parks and Rec department, but nothing came from that.

Even determining what physical assets would be included as part of a Parks and Recreation department is to be determined.

The first assumption is Silverton Community Pool would be included.

The city pays Silverton Family YMCA about \$50,000 a year to operate the pool as part of a five-year levy.

One of the pieces of physical property that could come under the authority of a Parks and Recreation department is

The Oregon Garden, though that would be a long shot.

“As somebody who went through the past process, I don’t see how that would be a likely fit. Who knows? I’m only one person and it’s worth a discussion,” Palmer said.

The size and scope of the proposed district, as well as the costs to local residents, is going to be a crucial component in getting such a measure passed.

It’s much of the reason why the city council commissioned Portland State to do the study.

The part of the Portland State study has presented so far didn’t mention potential cost to local residents, only the

potential costs for surveys of residents to gauge support.

“At the council’s urging I’m going to meet with the Mount Angel mayor and the Scotts Mills mayor to see if there’s any possibility if those two communities would want to be part of a large district,” Palmer said.

“Again, I don’t think that’s all that likely.”

A Parks and Rec creation measure is aimed to be on the ballot for the November general election.

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# Council

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This year’s councilor is senior Abby Frey, and she is making good on the wish of her uncle, Mayor Andrew Otte, by asking others to now join a full-fledged teen council.

“It’s a win-win. There is no downside to it,” Otte said, after initiating the student councilor job. “I think it’s good that we’re providing another channel for the school district to get information out. For the students, it becomes a learning experience, forcing them to come, talk and vote.”

The Youth Advisory Council is open to all local 9th-12th graders who fill out applications and submit letters of recommendations by April 13.

“I just hope these youth councilors understand the impact they can make,” Frey said. “We have a great community and a great student body ... they can make great things happen, and I hope they do.”

Frey hopes to attract 5-10 student councilors who will attend the city’s May 5 meeting, take the summer off, and then begin meeting regularly in the fall. Their chairperson would be the only member required to regularly attend the city’s official council meetings, although everyone else will be encouraged to come when they can.

“As a student councilor, one thing I was surprised about is how intense everything city councilors go into is,” Frey said. I didn’t realize how many things they do and how many people they have

to deal with on a day-to-day basis.”

At council meetings, teens get to watch how their community leaders talk to each other and make decisions. Learning to share ideas in a mature way “so they’re better heard” is valuable, City Manager Amber Mathiesen said.

The Youth Advisory Council is not just a city council fan club; it’s also a direct connection for local youth to bring their concerns and ideas to the adults that can help make things happen, Mathiesen said.

“The exposure for adults is super important too,” she added. “Kids have different ideas of what issues they face in today’s world than what we think they do. Having young people trust adult leaders with their issues ... maybe we can help solve some things that way.”

Frey attended Oregon Youth Summit in Salem this winter and left inspired with an array of ideas for Mt. Angel.

With the council and police chief’s help, she’s already facilitated local participation in National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on April 28. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., people can drop off their prescription drugs and learn about medication abuse.

Because she’s under 21, Frey can’t handle any medications, but she said she’ll help direct traffic and answer questions. A new recruit with Mt. Angel Fire District, she plans to enroll at Chemeketa Community College after graduation. At the high school, she plays softball and basketball and runs cross-country.

Although she gleaned some political experience as senior class president, she’s also glad to have seen how the

“adult” world of politics functions, she said.

More information about the Youth

Advisory Council can be found online at <http://www.ci.mt-angel.or.us/general/page/youth-advisory-council>.

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Published every Wednesday by the Statesman Journal, P.O. Box 13009, Salem, OR 97309.

USPS 469-860, Postmaster: Send address changes to Appeal Tribune, P.O. Box 13009, Salem, OR 97309. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID: Salem, OR and additional offices.

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