

## People & Places

# Horticulturist seeks one more hit

Pat Moore searches for next superstar raspberry cultivar before retiring

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

PUYALLUP, Wash. — Since 1987, Washington State University berry breeder Pat Moore has occupied the same office, a cubbyhole crammed with books, family mementos, worn furniture and plaques.

The plaques commemorate milestones in Moore's career. He's patented three strawberry cultivars and four raspberry cultivars. Last year, he was awarded the Wilder Medal by the American Pomological Society, a national honor given for contributions to fruit breeding.

Four or five years from retirement, however, Moore, 63, has ambitions to top his past accomplishments.

He hopes to develop the red raspberry that will succeed the renowned but aging Meeker as the king of Washington raspberries.

"The growers really want a new raspberry," Moore said. "They feel Meeker, the term they use, is 'running out.'"

Raspberry farmers have relied for several decades on the Meeker, which was released by WSU in 1967 and named for Oregon Trail pioneer Ezra Meeker, Puyallup's first mayor.

Meeker, the man, grew rich growing hops and built a mansion 2 miles from the WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center.

Meeker, the berry, was the superstar of its generation, and the next.

In the 1980s it surpassed the venerable Willamette, a cultivar released by Oregon



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington State University plant breeder Pat Moore sits in the office that he's occupied since 1987 at the Puyallup Research and Extension Service Center. Moore was nationally recognized last year for developing strawberry and raspberry cultivars.

State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1943.

Meeker provided the consistency processors crave, and nearly all Washington raspberries are sold to processors. Raspberries are a \$57 million a year business in Washington. Only California produces more raspberries, but almost all of its berries are sold as fresh fruit.

Meeker's popularity may eventually be its downfall, however. Any disease Meeker is vulnerable to spreads from field to field, Moore said.

"Meeker may be showing its age," he said.

Fifteen years ago, Meeker made up 70 percent of the plant sales in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia. Now, Meeker holds about one-third of the market, while another third is held by a relative newcomer, Wakefield, bred in New Zealand and tested in Washington.

No other cultivated variety claims more than 10 percent of

the market.

The privately developed Wakefield plants cost more than cultivars released by public institutions such as WSU, and while that works for some growers, it doesn't work for all, Washington Red Raspberry Commission Executive Director Henry Bierlink said.

"We would love to see the hot new berry come out of WSU," he said.

The commission, a financial supporter of Moore's berry breeding program, wants a high-yielding, summer-bearing, winter-hardy, virus-resistant, machine-harvestable raspberry.

"He's been very willing and able and responsive to our needs, but we also recognize he's got a big challenge in front of him," Bierlink said.

Many years ago, Moore decided to brand WSU's raspberry cultivars with the name "Cascade."

Beginning in 2003, Moore has released Cascade Gold, Cascade Dawn, Cascade De-

light, Cascade Nectar, Cascade Bounty and Cascade Harvest.

Bierlink said it doesn't appear any of the Cascades will inherit the Meeker's throne.

"I would have to say the consensus opinion of the raspberry growers community is 'no.' They have been tried and have some positive attributes, but none of those varieties will dominate in the future," Bierlink said.

A raspberry can excel in one area, but fall short in another. Moore, who fills raspberries with chocolate pudding for church socials, said Cascade Dawn, released in 2005, was particularly tasty. But the variety doesn't shake off the vine until it's too ripe, a flaw for machine harvesting.

Cascade Harvest was the cultivar most recently released, in 2013, and the first full harvest won't be until 2017. There's hope the berry will perform well, and it currently ranks fourth in plant sales. But Moore said the berry



## Western Innovator

Pat Moore

Age: 63

**Position:** Horticulturist at Washington State University's Puyallup Research and Extension Center

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in forestry, Oregon State University; master's degree in forestry, University of Minnesota; doctorate in forestry, Michigan State University.

**Background:** A Portland native, after earning his doctorate, Moore worked for International Paper Co. breeding pine trees in the South; did post-doctoral work under Michigan State University horticulture professor Jim Hancock, a breeder of popular blueberry varieties.

ry has not proven as tolerant to root rot as he had hoped.

Each new cultivar represents years of work. WSU has released 13 raspberry cultivars in 85 years. The average time between crossing parents and commercial sales has been 15.8 years.

Moore's program grows thousands of seedlings each year, looking for good prospects. Only a handful of candidates are tried in farmers' fields, usually in Whatcom County, where the state's raspberry growers are concentrated.

Moore said he has four more cultivars ready to be planted this summer. He said the failures will become apparent fairly soon, but winners will take longer to identify.

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EO Media Group  
dba Capital Press

An independent newspaper  
published every Friday.

Capital Press (ISSN 0740-3704) is published weekly by EO Media Group, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem OR 97301.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, OR, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to Capital Press, P.O. Box 2048 Salem, OR 97308-2048.

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P.O. Box 2048  
Salem, OR 97308-2048

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## Index

California ..... 9  
Idaho ..... 7  
Markets ..... 17  
Opinion ..... 6  
Oregon ..... 8  
Washington ..... 10  
World Ag Expo ..... 13-15

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We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.

# Pierson selected as new dairy princess-ambassador

By GEOFF PARKS  
For the Capital Press

SALEM — Sara Pierson of St. Paul was chosen the 2016 Oregon Dairy Princess-Ambassador at the 57th annual coronation banquet Jan. 23 in Salem.

Gina Atsma of Amity was chosen first alternate.

Both of their families have been in the dairy business five generations.

Passing the crowns to their successors were the 2015 Oregon Dairy Princess-Ambassador, Emma Miller, and last year's first alternate, Megan Sprute.

Pierson, 20, is the daughter of Steve and Susan Pierson, owners of Sar-Ben Farms of St. Paul. She and her two brothers represent the youngest of three generations actively working the family's 165-acre, 350-cow organic dairy, along with their parents and grandfather, Marlin. She represented Marion County in this year's ODPFA program.

Her jobs at the dairy still include chores such as moving the cows among different pastures and moving irrigation pipe.

Atsma, 19, represented Polk County, and was raised on her family's dairy farm, Atsma Dairy of Amity, and still works



Geoff Parks/For the Capital Press

Sara Pierson of St. Paul, the 2016 Oregon State Dairy Princess-Ambassador, takes a bow before the audience at the coronation banquet at the Salem Convention Center. At back is master of ceremonies Jim E. Chonga.

there between college studies and other activities.

In their speeches, both Pierson and Atsma celebrated their families' long histories in the dairy industry.

Pierson spoke about her family's dairy history and her part in it under the theme of "Where I Come From."

Atsma likewise spoke of the

longevity of the Atsma Dairy with a theme of "Cows Come First In Our Family."

Pierson and Atsma were chosen over a field that included four other young women:

Olivia Miller of Independence, representing Linn and Benton counties; Chelsey McFalls of McMinnville, representing Yamhill County; Stephanie

Breazile of Cornelius, representing Washington County; and Lucy Kyle-Milward of St. Helens, representing Columbia County.

Pierson is a 2014 graduate of St. Paul High School and currently is a sophomore studying agricultural business management at Oregon State University with the hopes of

## Calendar

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

### Monday, Feb. 1

Native Tree Identification Class, University of Idaho Extension Office in Kootenai County, Coeur d'Alene, 208-446-1680.

### Tuesday, Feb. 2

Spokane Ag Expo & Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Spokane Convention Center.

### Wednesday, Feb. 3

Spokane Ag Expo & Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Spokane Convention Center.

### Thursday, Feb. 4

Spokane Ag Expo & Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Spokane Convention Center.

Klamath Bull & Select Ranch Horse Sale, Klamath County Fairgrounds, Klamath Falls, Ore. Admission tickets for the Event Center are available for purchase at several local retailers and online at www.klamathbullsale.com.

### Friday, Feb. 5

Klamath Bull & Select Ranch Horse Sale, Klamath County Fairgrounds, Klamath Falls, Ore., www.klamathbullsale.com

Nevada Small Farm Conference, Nugget Casino Resort, Sparks, 775-250-1339.

Swine Information Day, Pillar Rock Grill, Moses Lake, 509-754-2011, ext. 4313.

### Saturday, Feb. 6

Klamath Bull & Select Ranch Horse Sale, Klamath County Fairgrounds, Klamath Falls, Ore., www.klamathbullsale.com

Nevada Small Farm Conference, Nugget Casino Resort, Sparks, 775-250-1339.

### Sunday, Feb. 7

Klamath Bull & Select Ranch Horse Sale, Klamath County Fairgrounds, Klamath Falls, Ore., www.klamathbullsale.com

### Thursday, Feb. 18

WAFLA Annual Labor Conference, Central Washington University, Ellensburg.

### Wednesday, Feb. 24

Southern Idaho Direct Seed Workshop, Shiloh Inn Conference Center, Idaho Falls, (208) 334-2353.

### Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 27-28

Mid-Valley Winter Ag Fest, Polk County Fairgrounds, Rickreall, Ore. 503-428-8224. The Winter Ag Fest will have events promoting local ag commerce.

### Tuesday-Wednesday, March 1-2

22nd Fruit Ripening & Ethylene Management Workshop, Postharvest Technology Center, University of California-Davis.

### Friday, March 4

Ag Chemical Collection Event, Redwood Transfer Station, Grants Pass, Ore., 541-690-9983. Pre-registration is required by Feb. 18.

### Saturday, March 5

Ag Chemical Collection Event, Rogue Disposal Transfer Station, White City, Ore., 541-690-9983.

Pre-registration is required by Feb. 18.

### Saturday, March 12

Spring into Gardening, McMinnville Community Center, McMinnville, Ore., 503-434-7517. The 4th annual Spring into Gardening event's theme will be "Home Landscaping — Small Changes Big Impact." Nine speakers will discuss a variety of garden and landscaping topics. Presented by Oregon State University Extension Service and the Yamhill County Master Gardeners Association.

### Friday-Sunday, March 18-20

Northwest Horse Fair & Expo 2016, Linn County Fair and Expo Center, Albany, Ore. 765-655-2107 The 17th annual Northwest Horse Fair and Expo is the largest equine expo in the Northwest.