

People & Places

Joining the battle against a pest

Virginia Bruce informs readers about fight against Japanese beetles

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

CEDAR MILL, Ore. — One of the key figures in Oregon agriculture right now is a gardener but not a farmer, writes a community newspaper but has no journalism training, and worries about insecticides but endorses a five-year state plan to kill invasive Japanese beetles.

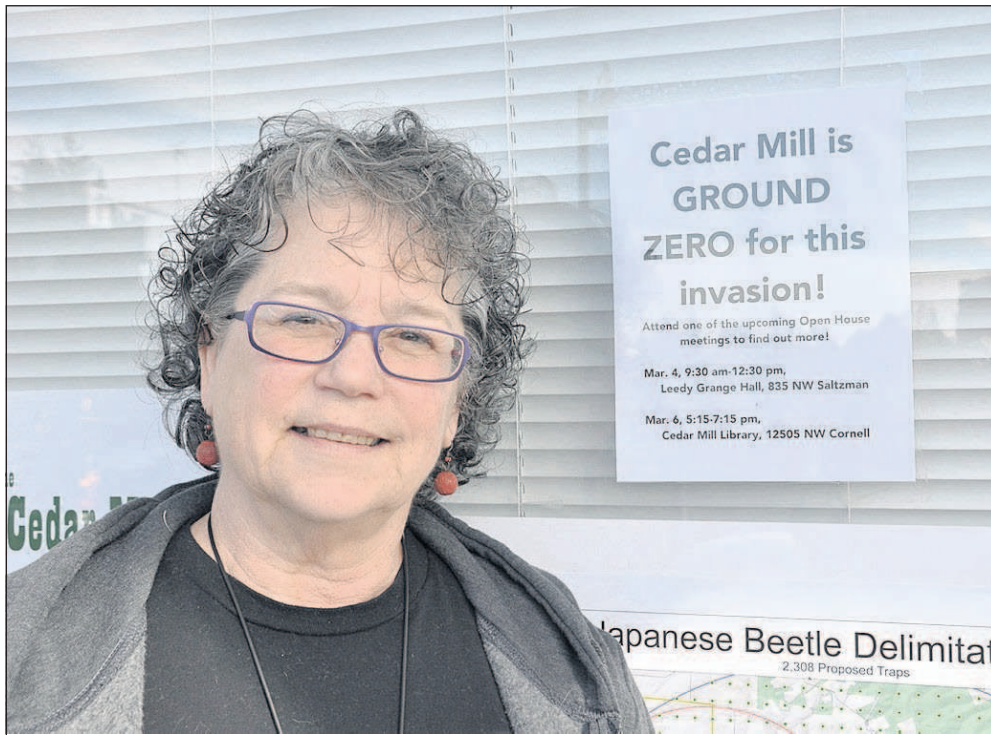
“I’m at Ground Zero,” said Virginia Bruce. “This is a huge threat.”

That it is. The Oregon Department of Agriculture proposes to treat about 1,000 acres in Washington County, just west of Portland, with annual granular applications of Acelepryn, which will kill Japanese beetles in the grub stage. But to get after the beetles, department staff will have to treat yards and flower beds at about 2,500 private homes. And they might have to come back annually for up to five consecutive years.

These days, expecting the public to believe what government scientists say isn’t a sure thing. And some people in the treatment area might question the insecticide plan if it were being pushed solely by a business group, such as the plant nurseries whose product is at risk.

Finding partners

Clint Burfitt, who manages the eradication program for the ag department, said there is something akin to an “anti-expert” atmosphere at work, and a grass-roots effort stands a better chance of reaching people. Following that line, he identified Bruce, who has extensive community connections as editor and



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Community newspaper publisher Virginia Bruce spreads the word about the Oregon Department of Agriculture’s plan to attack a Japanese beetle infestation.

publisher of the monthly Cedar Mill News, as an important ally.

“It’s pretty clever,” Bruce said. “This guy Burfitt is an expert on these beetles and ways to deal with it. He said the only way to have a successful campaign is to have community partners.”

She said Burfitt recently attended a community meeting that included members of the Aloha Garden Club, which holds an annual plant sale and gets some of its plants from members who live in what Bruce calls “Ground Zero.” It’s quite possible, Bruce said, that some plant buyers took Japanese Beetle grubs home with them.

The agriculture department decided to take action after a record 369 beetles were found in traps last year and numerous live beetles were found eating roses and other plants in the area. Japanese beetles are capable of causing heavy damage. They’ll eat nursery plants, wine grapes, cannabis, hazelnuts and cane berries

in addition to homeowners’ flowers.

High stakes

Burfitt said failure to stop the infestation would cost Oregon agriculture an estimated \$43 million a year in lost plant value, export restrictions and increased spraying and other production costs. The department says Acelepryn, the insecticide, won’t harm pets, birds, bees or people.

He’s won Bruce over, and she’s using her print edition, website and email newsletter, and her garden club connections, to help spread the word. She’s been writing about it since last August, and the windows of her office display informational fliers and maps of the affected area.

“If the problem gets out of control, everybody who grows that kind of stuff will have to spray, and that’s worse,” she said. “The importance of this whole thing is just mind-boggling.”

In addition to helping

Burfitt make community connections, she helped convince the ag department to revise its outreach material. The first version urged homeowners to protect the “Rose City,” which is Portland’s nickname. But Cedar Mill and Bethany are proudly and distinctly outside the city in unincorporated Washington County, and residents don’t like to be called “Northwest Portland.”

Meetings planned

“I understand how devastating an invasive pest can be,” Bruce said. “I understand how it can affect the economy and enjoyment of the community. The damage potential of these beetles far outweighs the reservations I have about using chemicals.”

The ag department will hold a pair of open house meetings on the project. The first is Saturday, March 4, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Leedy Grange Hall, 835 N.W. Saltzman Road. The second is Monday, March



Western Innovator

Virginia Bruce

Occupation: Editor and publisher of the Cedar Mill News.

Personal: Age 70, divorced. Her son, James Bruce, is an attorney in Tigard, Ore. Her daughter, Megan Bruce, is deceased.

Ag connection: Has become the Oregon Department of Agriculture’s key community connection as it moves to eradicate invasive Japanese beetles in a 1,000-acre residential area of Washington County.

Professional development: Bruce said she fell into publishing the Cedar Mill News. Years before, when her children were young, she’d put together the Portland Family Calendar, a listing of activities and other information. In Cedar Mill, the local business association was seeking to reach more people and Bruce suggested a similar newsletter. From there, the monthly publication evolved into a community newspaper. It’s printed on high-speed copiers, with 800 copies distributed free. It also circulates by email and has a website, <http://cedar-mill.org/news/index.html>

Office partner: Scout, an active 3 1/2-year-old Jack Russell-Dachshund mix. “Everything’s her business,” Bruce said. “She takes after me.”

6, from 5:15 to 7:15 p.m. at the Cedar Mill Library, 12505 N.W. Cornell Road.

More information about the project is online: <http://www.japanesebeetlepxdpx.info/>

Calendar

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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 or emailed to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

Saturday, Feb. 25

Basic Farm Equipment Maintenance and Repair workshop. 1-5 p.m. Dunbar Farms, Medford, Ore. This class offers an introduction to farm equipment maintenance and repair, including an overview of how small gas engines and larger gas and diesel engines run, proper fluid levels and fluid change schedules, basic maintenance and tuning, identifying and troubleshooting problems and how to tell when you can fix a problem yourself and when you need to call in an expert. Cost: \$20 <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/SF-classes>

Saturday-Sunday Feb. 25-26

Second Annual Mid-Valley Winter Ag Fest. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday. Polk County Fairgrounds and Event Center, 520 S Pacific Highway W, Rickreall, Ore. This event will promote all aspects of local ag commerce and provide a family friendly event that is fun and educational for kids. Proceeds will benefit Polk County 4-H and FFA. www.mvwagfest.com

Tuesday, Feb. 28

Managing large poultry flocks workshop. 5:30-8:30 p.m. Southern Oregon Research & Extension Center, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. Demand for local eggs and poultry meat is hot, but how does one manage larger flocks of birds? James Hermes will present this poultry class with a focus on breed selection, poultry health and disease, feeding and nutrition and economics. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/farms>

Successional Planning Workshop. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Chemeketa Eola Hills Campus, 215 Doaks Ferry Road NW, Salem, Ore. This is the second part of a workshop on succession planning. If you missed the orientation, you can still attend. Presenters in the morning will be Clarie Fiegner, Green Belt Trust and Ron Marek, attorney. Afternoon presenters will be Carl Sohn, Farm Credit Services and Riley Makin, attorney. Lunch is provided. Spon-

sored by the Polk and Marion soil and water conservation districts, the Greenbelt Land Trust and the Luckiamute Watershed Council. \$50 per family <http://www.polkswcd.com/success.html>

Thursday, March 2

Pesticide education and recertification course. 8 a.m.-noon. Polk County Fairgrounds, Building B, 520 S Pacific Hwy. W, Rickreall, Ore. Four CORE credits for pesticide licensees have been requested. Sponsored by the Polk County Farm Bureau. kathyfree17@aol.com or call 503-559-5901

Thursday-Friday March 2-3

Idaho Hay and Forage Conference. Best Western Inn, 800 N. Overland Ave., Burley, Idaho. Speakers will include Dan Understander, a University of Wisconsin forage specialist; Steve Orloff, a University of California Extension adviser; and Doug Robison, senior vice president of Northwest Farm Credit Services. www.idahohay.com

Wednesday, March 8

Taxes and Succession Planning. Noon-1 p.m. Join us for a free online webinar and an introduction to how planning ahead for estate and gift taxes can help address family and business needs and meet retirement goals for the current generation. Presented by: Carol Wachter and Heather Tomsick, Deloitte Tax LLP, and the Austin Family Business Program, Oregon State University. 800-859-7609, <http://bit.ly/2gW7KjQ>

Thursday, March 9

OFRF’s 20th Annual Organic Benefit Luncheon. 10:45 a.m.-2 p.m. City National Grove of Anaheim, 2200 East Katella Ave., Anaheim, Calif. The Organic Farming Research Foundation celebrates its 20th anniversary. Keynote speaker will be Kathleen Merrigan, executive director of sustainability at George Washington University and former deputy secretary of the USDA. She helped write the law establishing national standards for organic food. Cost: \$100. <http://bit.ly/2lsre2h>

Small Farms and Community Food Systems Workshop Series. 6:8-30 p.m. University of Idaho Extension, 2200 Michigan Ave., Orofino, Idaho. This is the first of three Thursday evening workshops.

Topic is growing and marketing tree fruits, berries and table grapes featuring Mike and Joan Mount, Green Things Nursery. Please mail registrations with payment to UI Extension Workshop Fund, 2200 Michigan Ave., Orofino, ID 83544 prior to the workshop. Sign-in will begin at 5:30 each evening. Seating is limited to 25 people. Cost: \$5 per workshop or \$10 for all three.

Thursday-Sunday March 9-12

Natural Products Expo West, Anaheim Convention Center, Marriott and Hilton hotels, 800 W. Katella Ave., Anaheim, Calif. www.expwest.com

Saturday, March 11

Northwest Bison Association annual meeting. 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Forest Grove Senior Center, 2037 Douglas St., Forest Grove, Ore. The NWBA annual meeting will focus on small-scale bison ranching and facility setup and lots of stories from ranchers that have seen everything from tires as a fence to our setups and everything in between. Dr. Richard Veeman with Veterinary Services of Oregon will speak on his experience with bison along with Pat Fitzgerald with Fitzgerald Corral. A ranch tour of the L Bar T Bison Ranch is included. Pre-registration is preferred but not required. www.nwbisonassociation.com

Wednesday, March 15

Agricultural Biodiversity on Farms: Conservation Practices Working for Western Farmers. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. McMinnams Edgefield, 2126 SW Halsey St. Troutdale, Ore. A first-of-its-kind conference on the benefits of agricultural biodiversity in Western farming systems and the practices that support it. Sponsored by the Oregon State University Integrated Plant Protection Center, the Xerces Society and Oregon Tilth. <http://bit.ly/2KpWRsK>

Thursday, March 16

Small Farms and Community Food Systems Workshop Series. 6:8-30 p.m. University of Idaho Extension, 2200 Michigan Ave., Orofino, Idaho. This is the second of three Thursday evening workshops. Topic is beekeeping, honey production, pollination and bee biology featuring Pat Ball, Ball Honey Co. Please mail registrations with payment to UI Extension Workshop Fund, 2200 Michigan Ave., Orofino, ID 83544 prior to the workshop. Sign-in will begin at 5:30 each eve-

ning. Seating is limited to 25 people. Cost: \$5 per workshop or \$10 for all three.

Building Family Business Value from the Inside Out. 7:30 to 9 a.m. BridgePort BrewPub, 1313 NW Marshall St., Portland. Much can be done to build the value of the business from inside the enterprise, and the earlier the process begins, the more sustainable the results will be. In addition to building value, most businesses become more efficient and profitable along the way. Presented by Francis Brown, Key Private Bank and the Austin Family Business Program, Oregon State University. 800-859-7609, <http://bit.ly/2gR3KCO>

Sunday, March 19

Home Orchard Society 42nd Fruit Propagation Fair. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Clackamas County Fairgrounds Main Pavilion, 694 NE Fourth Ave., Canby, Ore. Hundreds of varieties of free scions and cuttings. If you graft this is paradise, or you can choose custom grafting by experts for \$5. Free with your admission are hundreds of varieties of apple, pear, cherry, plum and persimmon scions; cuttings of grapes, kiwis, and figs to root; and experts to answer fruit growing questions. Cost: \$7 per person (family \$12) www.homeorchard-society.org/events

Thursday, March 23

Small Farms and Community Food Systems Workshop Series. 6-8:30 p.m. University of Idaho Extension, 2200 Michigan Ave., Orofino, Idaho. This is the last of three Thursday evening workshops. Topic is marketing ag products in Northern Idaho featuring Iris Mayes, UI Extension. Please mail registrations with payment to UI Extension Workshop Fund, 2200 Michigan Ave., Orofino, ID 83544 prior to the workshop. Sign-in will begin at 5:30 each evening. Seating is limited to 25 people. Cost: \$5 per workshop or \$10 for all three.

Friday-Sunday March 24-26

18th Annual Northwest Horse Fair and Expo. 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday. Linn County Fair and Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road, Albany, Ore. Three days of clinics, seminars and performances for horse enthusiasts. Cost: Adults \$12 a day, children ages 6-12 \$6 a day. Parking \$4. www.equinepromotions.net

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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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Clarification

A Feb. 17 story on Page 18 about wine packaging needs to be clarified. TricorBraun WinePak’s facility in Fairfield, Calif., has a 126,000-square-foot automated repacking facility plus warehousing, for a total of 360,000 square feet.

Correction policy

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We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.