

People & Places

# Olives take root in Oregon

Dawn Monagon helps bring new crop north to Willamette Valley

By ALIYA HALL  
For the Capital Press

KEIZER, Ore. — Dawn and Larry Monagon planted the first olive trees in Oregon in 2002, defying the conventional wisdom that the trees couldn't survive north of California.

"We have a nice piece of property that can grow anything big or small, and it's suited for experimental stuff," Dawn Monagon said. "Someone mentioned olives, and my husband loves olives. So, we thought, Why not check it out?"

Despite being told by California olive growers that the crop would never survive in Oregon, the Monagons thought they'd give it a try.

"(We were told) they'll never survive a winter. Well, surely they've done that," she said.

The Monagons established Victory Estates on their five acres, and began to produce and mill olive oil. Her husband died last year.

"Our (operation) is small and different than industrial ones. We wanted it to grow and be an industry that took off," Monagon said. "We took pride in watching and seeing what worked and what didn't."

There are now 50 acres of olives for oil production in Oregon, and that number could soon multiply, with a project in the works to plant 200 acres, Bogdan Caceu, executive director of the Olive Growers of Oregon, said. He said he could not identify the growers planning the expansion.

"All I can say is it's a larger player that has its fingers in a number of crops and also in the tourism industry," Caceu



Aliya Hall/For the Capital Press

Dawn Monagon and her late husband, Larry, of Victory Estates in Keizer, Ore., were the first olive growers in Oregon. The olive industry in Oregon encompasses 50 acres, but acreage is expected to multiply in the next couple of years.

said of the people planning the expansion. "They've done a very thorough and disciplined due diligence."

The planting will be in either the Medford or Roseburg area, and data is being collected to see where the olives would grow best. Caceu said the final decision on the location will be made next spring.

Although a project of this size would barely make it on the radar in California or Spain, where olives are a major crop, Caceu said there is potential to take olive acreage to "much higher than 250 pretty quickly."

"People come over and talk to me and say, 'I've been thinking about olives and I have this many acres,'" he said. "I've had at least five to 40 (people) approach and show interest."

While there is interest in growing olives, Caceu said one obstacle gets in the way — and it's a big one.

"That obstacle is the cold-hardiness of olives and the cold temperatures in Oregon," he said.

Oregon west of the Cascade Range is famous for its mild winters, Caceu said. However, there are regularly two to four nights of below-freezing temperatures each year. When that happens, young olive trees under 10 years old can suffer damage that kills them to the ground.

"It doesn't damage the roots," Caceu said, "but effectively you're back down to zero, starting from scratch."

Oregon State University researchers are trying to overcome this challenge by studying which olive tree cultivars are the most cold-hardy, and attempting to improve propagation techniques.

Javier Fernandez-Salvador, OSU Marion and Polk County Extension agent, leads the project with his team: Neil Bell, OSU Marion and Polk County Extension agent; Heather Stoven, OSU Yamhill County Extension agent; and Victoria Binning, OSU Marion County Extension agent.

Fernandez-Salvador describes the project as his "baby," and said that they are

looking at potting the cultivars and keeping the trees in a greenhouse for the winter.

"We want to make an affordable, small structure for plants before moving them outside," he said. "We think by potting we'll get better results. We are trying to transform that into hard data."

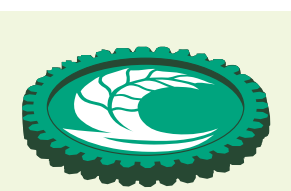
The project will also evaluate systems that haven't been successful in the past, and will be planting small trees in fields as well.

"We expect a lot of cultivars not to survive," Fernandez-Salvador said.

Beyond cold hardiness, the team will research other factors, such as dry farming versus irrigation and flat versus sloped land.

He said that because people have lost investments in the past the team wants to avoid recommending anything, but rather provide hard science to help growers decide if they want to plant the crop.

After this project, Fernandez-Salvador will apply for funding to evaluate the agronomics of growing olive



## Western Innovator

### Dawn Monagon

**Experience:** Grew up on a small farm and has been growing olives in her orchard for over 15 years.

**Hometown:** Monmouth, Ore.

**Education:** She took classes and worked at Western Oregon University for several years. Her late husband, Larry, graduated from there.

**Family:** She and Larry Monagon had one son, Michael. Her extended family helps her run the olive orchard.

trees. He said it's hard to sell the crop fresh, and milling olives for oil provides added value.

Paul Durant of Red Ridge Farms in Dayton, Ore., operates the state's largest commercial olive oil mill. He said olive oil is a niche product that works best sold directly to the consumer market.

"That drives more awareness and that's where the growth will be," he said. "The food industry here in the Northwest elevates the food experience and connects to growers. It is really limitless in a lot of ways."

Monagon said she thinks the industry will continue to grow, and hopes she and her husband helped inspire people to start planting olive trees.

"I would like to keep farming viable and interesting in Oregon, and if the olive industry can do that, that would be great," she said.

# Interior chief wants smaller monuments, but not at home

By MATTHEW BROWN  
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has closely followed his boss' playbook, encouraging mining and drilling on public lands and reducing the size of national monuments that President Donald Trump called a "massive land grab" by his Democratic predecessors.

Except, that is, in Montana.

In Zinke's home state, the former congressman who has long harbored higher political ambitions is recommending Trump create a new national monument out of the forests bordering Glacier National

Park, to the disappointment of a company that wants to drill for natural gas there.

A couple hundred miles away, where rocky bluffs line the Missouri River, he decided to leave intact a 590-square-mile monument that for 16 years has stirred the kind of impassioned local opposition that Zinke cited in justifying changes to monuments elsewhere.

And he wants to curb mining along Montana's border with Yellowstone National Park. That could discourage development of two proposed mines that supporters say would offer higher paying jobs than tourism.

The decision was based on Zinke's belief that "some places are too precious to mine," his spokeswoman said last month.

Zinke, a rumored candidate for U.S. Senate in 2018 or governor in 2020, appears to be carving out an exception for Montana from Trump's agenda to open more public lands to natural resources development. Whether it stems from Montana pride or political ambition in a state where conservation has bipartisan appeal, the results have ruffled both sides in the debate over managing millions of acres of public lands in the U.S. West.

"It's totally favoritism," said Land Tawney, president of the conservation group Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

Tawney is a friend of the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., and his group threw its support behind Zinke's nomination last winter.

But he said the Interior secretary's recommendations to scale back four large monuments in the West, including Bears Ears in Utah, represent a "sellout to industry" that's putting public land and wildlife at risk. Zinke also called for shrinking two marine monuments in the Pacific Ocean.

"We're happy he recognizes the importance of the Badger Two-Medicine," Tawney said, referring to the 203-square-mile area south of Glacier that Zinke recommends be a monument. "Places that are very similar in fashion, like Bears Ears, he's not quite protecting. ... You can't talk out of both sides of your mouth."

Zinke spokeswoman Heather Swift declined to comment on how he came to recommend a monument designation for Badger-Two Medicine or whether he was treating public lands in Montana differently than elsewhere.

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### Saturday, Oct. 7

Oregon's Bounty: A Celebration of the Harvest. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Oregon State Capitol, 900 Court St. NE, Salem. The Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon State University will again team up to offer a taste of locally grown food and an opportunity to purchase from local vendors. The "Crop Up Luncheon and Market Showcase," held at Salem's State Capitol Park, climaxes a series of similar events held around the state this summer. ODA will also present a Farm to School Producer Award to Rickreall Dairy for its dedication to providing nutritious food to schools and educating kids in the process. Cost: \$10 for the luncheon. Tickets must be purchased by Oct. 6 at <http://bit.do/CropUp> Website: [www.oregon-capitol.com](http://www.oregon-capitol.com)

Hood River Hops Fest. Noon-8 p.m. Columbia Lot, Fifth and Columbia, Hood River, Ore. The family-friendly event features more than 50 breweries with more than 60 fresh-hop beers, plus a variety of food vendors, live music and a

collectible mug. Sponsored by the Hood River County Chamber of Commerce. Website: [hoodriver.org/hops-fest/](http://hoodriver.org/hops-fest/)

Hoop House Production Workshop. 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Western Nevada College Fallon Campus, 160 Campus Way, Fallon, Nev. Taught by a seasoned professional with a background in research and commercial production, the workshop is ideal for intermediate or advanced growers. Attendees will learn about best practices that apply to all hoop house production, the eight most profitable crops, best practices for vining, fruiting and leafy crops and advanced practices and techniques for hoop house production. Website: [www.wnc.edu/specialty-crop-institute](http://www.wnc.edu/specialty-crop-institute)

### Saturday-Sunday Oct. 7-8

Alpaca Harvest Fest. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas of Oregon, 21345 SW Aebischer Road, Sherwood, Ore. Help EasyGo Farm and Alpacas of Oregon celebrate the bountiful harvest of colorful alpacas and beautiful fleece. Get up close to the alpacas — hand feed them and meet the babies, females, herdsires and "fiber boys" — less expensive alpacas for fiber artists, companions and pasture mowers. Shop for sweaters, gloves, scarves and more. Website: [www.easygofarm.net/AOOHarvestFest](http://www.easygofarm.net/AOOHarvestFest)

### Tuesday, Oct. 10

Living Peacefully with Beavers. 6-8 p.m. Cabela's in Marysville, Wash. Beavers, and how to live with them, will be the topic of three seminars in October sponsored by Snohomish Conservation District and Beavers Northwest. While beavers can cause headaches for landowners, they can also be invaluable for protecting and preserving water resources and wildlife habitat. If beavers are causing issues on your property, there may be solutions available to help you to live peacefully alongside them. The October seminars are taught by local beaver experts Alex Pittman and Ben Dittbrenner and will cover the benefits that resident beavers provide, cost-effective devices that can help you manage the impact of beaver flooding on your property, and technical and financial assistance available from Snohomish Conservation District and Beavers Northwest. Cost: Free. Website: <http://sdcbeavers.eventbrite.com>

### Tuesday-Thursday Oct. 10-12

Oregon Vegetation Management Association, Seaside Civic and Convention Center, 415 First Ave., Seaside, Ore. Hours for the event are 10-6 p.m. Tuesday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesday and 8 a.m.-noon Thursday. Website: [ovma.net](http://ovma.net)

### Wednesday, Oct. 11

Sustainable Community Stewards Volunteer Training. 6-9:15 p.m. McCollum Park, 600 128th St. SE, Everett, Wash. Cost: \$30 Website: <http://bit.ly/2hlyXC4>

### Thursday, Oct. 12

Living Peacefully with Beavers. 6-8 p.m. Stanwood PUD, 9124 271st St. NW, Stanwood, Wash. Beavers, and how to live with them, will be the topic of three seminars in October sponsored by Snohomish Conservation District and Beavers Northwest. While beavers can cause headaches for landowners, they can also be invaluable for protecting and preserving water resources and wildlife habitat. If beavers are causing issues on your property, there may be solutions available to help you to live peacefully alongside them. The October seminars are taught by local beaver experts Alex Pittman and Ben Dittbrenner and will cover the benefits that resident beavers provide, cost-effective devices that can help you manage the impact of beaver flooding on your property, and technical and financial assistance available from Snohomish Conservation District and Beavers Northwest. Cost: Free. Website: <http://sdcbeavers.eventbrite.com>

### Saturday, Oct. 14

Northwest Farmers Union 2017 Convention 8 a.m.-11 p.m. Walla Walla Community College, 500 Tausick Way, Walla Walla, Wash. The Northwest Farmers Union annual convention, which hosts producers and supporters of agriculture from around Washington, Idaho and Oregon, is an event that has a multitude of educational speakers, farmer/rancher speakers/attendees, honorary awards and general networking and camaraderie. The event is our gathering for our membership to come together and enact our grassroots policy for the upcoming year as well as help guide the many programs that we work to implement for our membership. Members can vote on changes to the policy and structure of the organization as well as take part in leadership opportunities and network with other leaders from around the region. Cost: \$50 Website: [www.nwfu.org](http://www.nwfu.org)

### Sunday, Oct. 15

St. Boniface Annual Chicken Dinner. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sublimity School cafeteria, 376 E. Main St., Sublimity, Ore. The church's annual chicken dinner fundraiser will include children's games, a country store, crafters and vendors in the gym. The church archives and museum will also be open. Cost: Adults \$14, children 6-12 \$5

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