

Hazelnuts become a family tradition

By **CRAIG REED**
For the Capital Press

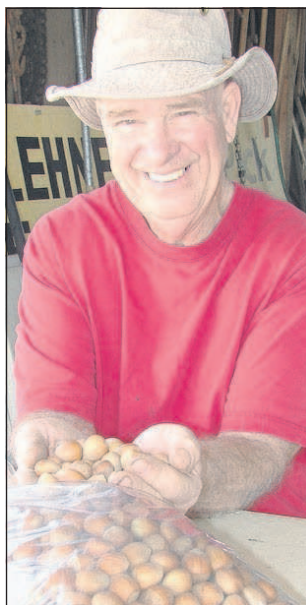
ROSEBURG, Ore. — Hazelnuts have become a family tradition for the Lehnes.

In 1989, Norm and Cinda Lehne planted 5 acres of hazelnut trees, adding that crop to their Norm Lehne Garden & Orchards business in Garden Valley a few miles northwest of Roseburg. Since then, the Lehnes have added 22 acres in hazelnuts and Norm's brother, Ray, has planted nut trees on 35 acres across the road.

More recently, the Lehnes' grown children have returned with their families and planted hazelnut trees on nearby properties. Son Glen Lehne and his wife, Wendy, have 5 acres of hazelnuts and daughter Colleen Kroeker and her husband, Nathan, have planted 8 acres in the past couple of years with plans to expand their orchard by 10 acres in the near future.

Both Glen and Colleen served in the U.S. Air Force. Glen retired in May 2014 after a 6-month deployment in Afghanistan and a 20-year career. Colleen served 8 years of active duty and has been in the Air Force Reserves since 2004.

Working in the respective hazelnut orchards has become a family activity with the young-



Roseburg, Ore., area hazelnut grower Norm Lehne shows off a bag full of Ennis nuts at his farm. Lehne, his son and daughter and their spouses and children all participate in working in hazelnut orchards owned by the families.

er third generation — Glen and Wendy's teenage daughters, Ashlynn and Kylie, and Colleen and Nathan's grade school son Timothy and daughter Noelle — helping out.

Labor, equipment and expertise are all shared throughout the different orchards.

"When we bought proper-

ty next to the family farm, we were not intending to reinvent the wheel," Colleen said of planting hazelnuts. "We wanted to benefit from the decades of knowledge my father and my uncle had gained from having their own orchards."

"It's important for operations to have more than one endeavor so you can spread out the risk if there is a problem with something," Glen said of hazelnuts being added to the family's overall farming approach.

Colleen and Nathan are working to make their hazelnut orchard organic. Nathan is a founding member of the Organic Hazelnut Growers Association.

While family members have planted hazelnut trees, they have continued to work with fruits and vegetables, the commodities that Norm and Cinda started their farm with back in the mid-1970s. Glen explained the farm now has three divisions: U-pick, farmers' markets and hazelnuts.

"Because we have those divisions, the farm is able to support more than Mom and Dad," Glen said. "It also supports two other families and our seasonal crew."

He said hazelnuts are a good crop because they put land to a

productive use, but they aren't as maintenance-needy compared to fruits and vegetables.

"If you put too many acres into vegetables then you can become too big to remain a family operation," Glen said. "Hazelnuts are good for your extra acres and is a crop that doesn't require a lot of extra hands."

Norm pointed out hazelnuts are good for the older generation because they don't require a lot of back-breaking physical work.

"There is a lot of tractor work in the orchard, and you're not having to bend over and hoe weeds," he said.

Norm, 69, doesn't mind letting the next generations tend to the fruits and vegetables. And when help is needed with the hazelnuts, he said he loves seeing his grandkids in the orchard. Ashlynn, 17, Kylie, 15, Timothy, 11, and Noelle, 10, have all been involved in digging holes when the young trees have been planted, they've painted the tree trunks white to prevent sunburn and they've helped with pruning, with spreading fertilizer and lime in the orchards, and with moving pipe and irrigating. Kylie also specializes in making cinnamon roasted hazelnuts that are sold at the Lehne fruits and vegetables booth at farmers' markets.



Photos by Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

Three generations of the Lehne family are involved in growing hazelnuts on their farms in Garden Valley, several miles northwest of Roseburg, Ore. The family members are Norm and Cinda Lehne standing in the middle of the photo taken in their hazelnut orchard, their daughter Colleen Kroeker, left, and her husband Nathan and their children Timothy and Noelle (in the tree), and their son Glen Lehne, right, with his wife Wendy and their daughters Ashlynn and Kylie.



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