

Out in the Garden Nursery: A place in the shade

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

MOLALLA, Ore. — About three years into her landscape architecture degree, Carol Westergreen changed her career goals.

“I realized that growing is what I’d much rather do than designing others’ gardens and telling them what to plant,” said Westergreen, who now operates Out in the Garden Nursery. “That’s just not who I am.”

The rural Molalla, Ore., nursery, owned by Carol and her husband, Dale Poppe, specializes in perennials and ornamental grasses and carries several favorite shrubs, too.

“I’ve always been a foliage person; I look for textures and long-term attributes,” Westergreen said. “Flowers are just a bonus.”

Some of Westergreen’s favorite grasses are of the Calamagrostis genus. The cool-season grasses flower early with stalks that hold their shape as the entire plant mellows to golden brown with the crisp fall breezes.

“When the winter sun hits them, they just light up,” she said.

Out in the Garden Nursery is part of the Cascade Nursery Trail, an alliance of independent, family owned specialty nurseries in Oregon’s Willamette Valley.

With plant sales and nursery events canceled because of COVID, Westergreen realized how much she missed the camaraderie and encouragement of her colleagues.

“Nursery people are some of the finest around,” she said. “I’ve said many times that if it weren’t for them, I would probably have thrown in the towel a long time ago. I am a firm believer that together we are stronger.”

It would have been nice to commiserate with each

other more during the daunting challenges of the past year, she added.

While ash from the September wildfires appears to have supplied needed nutrients to a couple of plants that are performing like never before, February’s ice storm took out two gigantic oak trees that were a display garden focal point and the source of the garden’s shade.

“I have an umbrella over a blue hosta that’s going to get sunburnt otherwise and there are a few other plants that are going to require something for the summer until we figure out what to do.”

What sells best at the nursery changes from day to day but Calycanthus “Aphrodite” — a Sweetshrub — never fails to impress.

“It is stunning in our display garden and people always ask what that shrub with the big flowers is,” she said. “It’s a big shrub so it’s not for everybody but it is absolutely gorgeous, with flowers 3-4 inches across from Memorial Day to Labor Day.”

Despite its challenges, last year was good for the nursery. Many customers showed up, Westergreen said, simply because they needed to get out of the house.

“It’s really nice that we were able to be open last year and be a little haven or sanctuary from all the yuck in the world,” Westergreen said. “Come out and enjoy the garden, play with the animals and find some cool plants for your garden — I like being able to provide that.”



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Carol Westergreen at her Out in the Garden Nursery in Molalla, Ore.



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