

People & Places

Vegetable variety adds to bounty of berries

By JULIA HOLLISTER
For the Capital Press

WATSONVILLE, Calif. — Apolina Yerena's experience in agriculture began as a strawberry picker and has led to owning an organic farm.

"My father and grandfather started growing conventional strawberries and started to convert a plot of conventional berries to organic," said Apolina's son, Adrian, who operates the farm with his father and his brother, Ricardo. "We have two small farms that make up 22 acres, one in Watsonville and the other 5 acres in Castroville."

Their wide variety stands out among other growers, as they bring Chandler, Seascape, Albion and Mara Des Bois strawberries, along with tayberries, blackberries and raspberries to two farmers markets in San Francisco.

They also grow dry farm tomatoes, green beans, tomatillos, yacon, summer squash, cranberry beans and squash blossoms.

"Yacon is the most unusual and interesting crop we farm," Adrian said. "It is a root crop that comes from Colombia and Peru. We originally started growing it for personal use after we found out my mom was diagnosed with diabetes. We found that the tubers have a lot of beneficial health properties."

As organic farmers, they



From left, Adrian, Apolina and Ricardo Yerena, who own and operate Yerena Farms in Watsonville, Calif.

use beneficial insects to control pests and plant wild flowers in the middle and end of the strawberry rows to attract pests with their sweeter pollen and scent.

The Yerenas have innovated and diversified their operations over the years. For example, they started creating produce boxes during the pandemic.

The unique "Farm 2 Fridge" program began in 2020 in partnership with other local organic farms. The payments from sales go directly to the farmers.

The four California participants are Yerena Farms; Green Thumb Organics, Salinas; Knoll Farms, Brent-

wood; and Alfieri Farms, San Joaquin.

The statewide drought has been felt by almost everyone in California agriculture, but the Yerenas say they are fortunate.

"We live and farm close to the ocean, which helps with the temperature and climate of the crops," Adrian said.

But the maritime climate has its challenges, he said.

"We also have to be smarter on when we plant our crops, which pushes back our seasonal timeline, and in some cases it makes the season shorter," Adrian said.

Dry farm tomatoes are popular among farmers market shoppers. They are

watered only until they start to flower.

"This makes the tomatoes more flavorful and makes our tomato season go farther into fall," he said.

Christine Farren, executive director of Foodwise, the nonprofit that operates several farmers markets in the Bay Area, recognized Yerena Farms as a mainstay of two of San Francisco's largest markets.

"Yerena Farms, and specifically Apolina and Silvia Yerena, have been a part of the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market for over 25 years, and helped found the Mission Community Market," she said. "They are beloved by home



APOLINA YERENA

Occupation: Farmer

Owner: Yerena Farms, with locations in Watsonville and Castroville.

Acreage: 22 acres.

Hometown: Watsonville, Calif.

Family: Wife, Silvia, and sons, Adrian and Ricardo.

Quote: "We are a different breed. Not everyone is made for this work. If it is cold, we go out to work. If it rains, we go."

cooks and professional chefs alike for their delicious berries, which we are lucky to enjoy from March through November in the Bay Area."

Farren said the Yerenas have established a trajectory that Foodwise hopes can become more common for growers in California, as owning land can provide much-needed stability and build generational wealth to be passed down.

32 farmers, ranchers saluted by Oregon State University

By DICK MASON
EO Media Group

COVE, Ore. — Dale Case, a Cove-area farmer and agricultural leader, has joined a select circle.

Case, 80, was saluted for a lifetime of achievements by Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences, which has named him to its Diamond Pioneer Agricultural Achievement Registry.

"It was a big surprise," Case said of his selection. "It was totally unexpected."

He added that it is gratifying that some of the work he has done is being remembered.

"It is nice to be recognized," Case said.

Case received an award commemorating his selection to the registry on April 19 at a ceremony at OSU in Corvallis.

He was among 32 diamond pioneers who were honored as 2021 and 2022 recipients at the event, hosted by Staci Simonich, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences.

"It is because of the dedication of people in this room that we honor today that we can commit with confidence to make tomorrow better for everyone," she told the honorees and their families.



2021 and 2022 Diamond Pioneer Agricultural Achievement registry honorees.

Case was nominated for the registry by the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center in Adams.

"Dale has a long history of service to Oregon's and the region's agriculture," the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center said in a press release.

John Howard, a La Grande businessman, noted that Case also has a history of service to the Northeastern Oregon community.

"Dale is an all-around great person who has great community values and is always willing to help others," Howard said.

A number of Case's contributions to agriculture were made while serving in many roles as a member of the Oregon Wheat Growers League and the Oregon Wheat Commission. He served on the Oregon Wheat Commission from 2010 to 2019 and was

2022 RECIPIENTS

- Craig Anderson, Turner
- John Breese, Prineville
- Lynne Breese, Prineville
- Bill Brewster, Corvallis
- Keith Cyrus, Sisters
- Connie Cyrus, Sisters
- Glenn Fisher, Corvallis
- Adriel Garay, Portland

- Dan Hane, Kennewick
- Connie Hatfield, Sisters
- Tom McCoy, The Dalles
- Nan Scott, Yachats
- James Thompson, Corvallis
- Don Wirth, Tangent
- Larry Zweifel, Tillamook
- Pam (Hanson) Zweifel, Tillamook

its chair in 2012 and 2013. During his tenure with the Oregon Wheat Commission, he was heavily involved in helping the commission fund research on the development of types of wheat that grow best in the Pacific Northwest. He also worked to open new markets for Oregon wheat.

Case is credited by the Columbia Basin ARC with playing an instrumental role in helping to get grain loaded

and transported by rail out of the Grande Ronde Valley. This helped reduce transportation costs by reducing the need for trucking grain.

The Grande Ronde Valley farmer is also being recognized for work he has done to help make crops such as canola become more viable in the Pacific Northwest. The Columbia Basin ARC noted that Case was among 10 agricultural producers who

2021 RECIPIENTS

- Dan Carver*, Maupin
- Dale Case, Cove
- Robert Dettwyler, Salem
- David Doerfler, Silverton
- Clyde Douglas, Pendleton
- Ronald Hathaway, Klamath Falls
- Verl Holden, Silverton
- Arlene Kovash, Monmouth
- Paul Kovash, Monmouth
- James Males, Corvallis
- Mina McDaniel, Corvallis
- Robert Newton, Helix
- Alfred Pohlschneider, St. Paul
- George Pugh, Shedd
- Clinton Reeder, Pendleton
- Dale Wilkins, Pendleton

Applications open for Idaho Young Cattle Producer Conference

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

The University of Idaho is accepting applications for the 6th annual Idaho Young Cattle Producer Conference, which provides an in-depth education about the cattle industry in Idaho.

The conference is scheduled for June 6-8 in Pocatello. Applications are due May 6.

Participating in the conference will provide valuable tools that will help young producers be successful in the cattle business, according to organizers.

The program is offered to young producers between the ages of 18 and 40. Only 20 participants are selected to attend the conference each year.

The conference will feature speakers from different segments of the cattle industry in Idaho, including representatives from the packing, feedlot, stocker, cow-calf and purebred industries. A marketing panel, beef-cutting demonstration and taste panel will be featured.

Participants will also hear from speakers discussing current issues in the industry and topics such as how to finance a cattle operation, risk manage-

ment tools, grazing management and genetics.

A tour featuring a packing plant, backgrounding yard, a cow-calf operation and a purebred operation will provide participants a chance to visit and learn from industry leaders in Eastern Idaho.

Attendees will also meet with members of the Idaho Cattle Association and attend portions of the ICA mid-year summer meeting. A sample agenda, an online application form and additional information on the conference can be found on the YCC website

www.uidaho.edu/ycp.

The Idaho YCC is free of charge to participants who are selected to attend, thanks to industry sponsors. Selected participants will be notified by mid-May.

For more information, contact Carmen Willmore, University of Idaho Extension educator at (208) 589-1389 or cwillmore@uidaho.edu, or a local UI extension office.

To become a program sponsor or to donate to the Idaho YCC, contact Jim Church at (208) 983-2667 or jchurch@uidaho.edu.

CALENDAR

Website: <https://bit.ly/36o2wMD>

SATURDAY APRIL 30

Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event in Ontario: Simplot Grower Solutions, 1700 SW Fourth St No. 4344, Ontario, Ore. The Oregon Department of Agriculture through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership is sponsoring a Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event. This event is an opportunity for landowners, farmers and other commercial pesticide users to rid storage facilities of unwanted or unused pesticide products. Registration for this event is required by April 15. Contact: Kathryn Rifenburg, 971-600-5073, kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov Website: <https://bit.ly/3K8Eo5>

burg@oda.oregon.gov Website: <https://bit.ly/3K8Eo5>

Lane County Master Gardener Plant Sale:

10 a.m.-3 p.m. Lane Event Center, 796 W 13th Ave., Eugene, Ore. Great selection of annuals, perennials, natives, berries, trees, shrubs and \$2 tomato and vegetable starts. Website: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/lane>

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY MAY 4-5

Western Food Safety Conference (in-person and virtual): Hartnell College, Salinas, Calif. The conference will focus on fresh produce safety. Website: www.hartnellfoundation.org

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY MAY 11-12

Animal Agriculture Alliance Stakeholder Summit: Intercontinental at the Plaza, Kansas City, Mo. The summit will share insights into advocacy and consumer and activist trends. Website: <https://animalagriculture.org/>

THURSDAY-SATURDAY MAY 12-14

92nd Washington FFA Convention: Location to be determined. Join us for the live, in-person 92nd Washington FFA Convention. Website: <https://www.washingtonffa.org/>

SATURDAY MAY 14

Agricultural Pesticide Collection Event: There will be a free Agricultural Pesticide Collection Event on May 14 in Clackamas, Ore. This is an opportunity for forest landowners, farmers and other commercial and institutional pesticide users to search out their barns, sheds, and basements for old, restricted or unusable pesticides. Participation is free and anonymous, but participants must pre-register for an appointment. Pre-register for the event by May 1 at <https://conservationdistrict.org/>.



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Index

Markets 10
Opinion 6

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