

Horticulture fundraiser draws community

STORY AND PHOTO BY JEANETTE WRIGHT
NEWS EDITOR

With the weather getting warmer, and green things sprouting up everywhere, what better way to spend your weekend than planting a garden?

The annual Horticulture Club plant sale at Clackamas Community College started on Friday, and people lined up outside Clairmont Hall to buy student-grown plants for as low as 1 dollar for single starts.

The sale started at noon, but by 10 a.m. people were already lining up, bringing lawn chairs and smiles, happy to talk with other gardeners about plants.

About 500 people came to the sale and purchased about 14,000 plants, according to Frank Kilders, the Horticulture Instructor.

The plant sale proceeds go towards supporting the horticulture club and student scholarships.

Tables, stands and tents covered half the Clairmont parking lot and the walkways in front of the greenhouses, filled with pots and flats of herbs, vegetables, both annual and perennial flowers, fuschias, ornamental grasses and shrubs.

Booths from the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District and Clackamas River Water Providers were set up next to the sidewalk informing buyers about pollinators, invasive and non-invasive plants and water conservation.

Christine Hollenbeck is part of public education outreach at Clackamas River Water Providers and has been coming to the sale for 11 years.

Hollenbeck finds the sale a great time to talk with people about water use.

"These are the gardening people," Hollenbeck said. "It's like a captive audience; it's so cool!"

Hollenbeck has bought plants from the sale many times before, and finds the plants up-to-par with those from high-end greenhouses.

"The students here do a really good job," Hollenbeck said.

The sale being a fundraiser is an added bonus. "That makes it another really good thing, right?" Hollenbeck said. "So you feel good about where your money went."

Debby Acuardi, owner of Gino's Restaurant and Bar in Portland stood in line, knitting while waiting for the sale to start.

Acuardi buys basil starts from the CCC plant sale for the low prices and quality of plants.

"I can buy all my plants here and I don't have to plant again, they are such hardy plants. I get basil all summer from them," Acuardi said.

This is Acuardi's fifth year buying from the sale, and was introduced to it by her friend, who died of cancer a few years prior.

"Now, it's kind of a memorial: to come and shop and think about her," Acuardi said.

The variety of plants available is always slightly different.

"I love seeing when there's one or two of something," Acuardi said. "I've found wild roses here, you know, just kind of those random things. You never know what you're going to find."

La Donna Cox has been coming to the plant sale for 16 years, mostly to buy heirloom tomatoes, herbs and sometimes perennials.

Cox thinks being able to buy plants and support the club is great.

"I think it's really important," Cox said. "I know that just within our community, there's been a push for sustainability and being able to have more hands-on [experience]. A lot of schools are seeing the benefits of gardening, and working with, like, chickens."

Some people come to the sale in search of organic, sustainable plants that give back to the environment.

Michelle LaVina only buys non-GMO plants and seeds, and prefers to buy local, so the CCC plant sale is a great place to go.

"I know that they use local soils and they use special seeds, so that is important to me and the ability for their plants to propagate new plants, so I look for these plants as well," LaVina said.

Growing plants that support the ground and provide for future plants is vital to having a healthy environment, LaVina said.

"Our community's growing and so I think it's important to have a strong horticulture society in the area," LaVina said.

Large companies treating seeds and plants and spreading them throughout the market is dangerous to the future of the earth, said LaVina.

"It's not an organic situation. It's just killing out soil and drying us out," LaVina said. "Of course, we all want to live on a farm in a big area where there's no water, and so it's just a whole big conglomerate of stuff we're doing to



Held on May 11 and 18, the sale offers a large selection of flowers and plants, while also offering an opportunity for members of the community to gather and discuss their hobby.

the earth that isn't good. And we're depleting out seed supplies."

Supporting the green future and raising funds aren't the only benefits of the sale, though.

April Chastain, the department chair of the Horticulture Department at CCC, helped oversee the holding area, where people could leave their first picks and continue shopping.

"Really, it's kind of a learning experience for students to get to understand growing for a certain date," Chastain said. "They kind of had to work backwards, and kind of decide 'Okay, well, I wanna be ready by this date, when do I have to seed my crop, when do I transplant it, how do I get it ready by that date, how do I organize a retail nursery.'"

"It's kind of the byproduct of learning that we're selling," Chastain said.

Landscape Club will be holding "best of the rest" sales for their club and to raise funds towards the Annual Collegiate Landscape Competition.

The final sales will be May 11 and 18, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Clairmont Hall Greenhouse #2.



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Editorial

Editor-in-Chief

Autumn Berend

chiefed@clackamas.edu

Managing Editor

Ian Van Orden

chiefed@clackamas.edu

Copy Editor

Victoria Durling

copyed@clackamas.edu

News Editor

Jeanette Wright

newsed@clackamas.edu

Arts & Culture Editor

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aced@clackamas.edu

Sports Editor

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sportsed@clackamas.edu

Photo Editor

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photoed@clackamas.edu

Multimedia Editor

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webeditor@clackamas.edu

Ad & design Editor

William Farris

admgr@clackamas.edu

Reporters

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Mason Crawley

Adviser

Crystal Kang

crystal.kang@clackamas.edu

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