

## Tree Walks Highlight Value of Trees

Arbor Week, a celebration of the value and importance of trees, is approaching, and many Oregonians will have a chance on April 3 to learn firsthand about the trees in their own communities.

At 2 p.m. on April 3, nearly 30 simultaneous "tree walks" are planned in cities, gardens, arboreta, forests, and parks across the state as a kick off to Arbor Week 2005.

These informational tours are free and open to the public. They generally will last an hour to an hour and a half, and will involve easy walking.

Tree walks are scheduled to take place in Albany, Ashland, Beaver-creek, Benton County, Cannon Beach, Clackamas County, Cottage Grove, Echo, Eugene, Forest Grove, Klamath Falls, La Grande, Portland, Roseburg, Salem, Silverton, Silver Falls State Park, Shore Acres State Park, Tillamook County, Tillamook State Forest, and Wilsonville.

Public agencies, non-profit groups, and local chapters of the Society of American Foresters are among the organizers of the local tree walks.

"Trees are part of our culture here in Oregon, where we have some of the most productive forestland in the world," says

Paul Ries, who manages the Oregon Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Program. "The tree walks are a great opportunity to learn more about the trees in your community, and to find out how trees make our lives better."

Trees and forests enhance quality of life in many ways, including by providing wildlife habitat, shade, wood and other products, and clean, healthy streams, Ries said.

The Oregon Legislature has designated the first full week of April as Arbor Week, expanding on a national Arbor Day tradition of honoring the contributions of trees.

To learn more about Arbor Week, visit [www.arborday.org/oregon/](http://www.arborday.org/oregon/).

More information on the April 3 tree walks, including a current list of scheduled walks, can be found at [www.oregoncommunitytrees.org](http://www.oregoncommunitytrees.org).



## 2005 Guide to Oregon's Retail Nurseries Available

Gardeners in search of quality plants and gardening supplies – and helpful, professional, and knowledgeable advice – will want to get the fourth edition of the *Guide to Oregon's Retail Nurseries*.

The free guide features 200 retail garden centers throughout Oregon and southwest Washington, as well as 17 public gardens in Oregon.

As with past editions, the 2005 guide provides names, addresses, and contact information for each retail operation, sorted alphabetically by city. Each listing has a designated number that corresponds to a plot on the guide's map.

New this year is an alphabetical cross-reference of all the centers. So if a friend recommends a nursery but is not sure where it's located, use the alpha listing to find the retailer's city and map number that you can use to look up the address or phone number in the by-city listing. It's easy!

Even the mapping has improved. A blown-up view of the Portland metropolitan area features pinpoint locations of retail nurseries.

The wider state-view map still includes general listings of garden centers, all of which are members of the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN). OAN, a non-profit trade association representing the state's nursery industry, produces the guide.

More than 11,000 guides were handed out during OAN's Yard, Garden, & Patio Show last month. Copies are available at the Oregon Garden in Silverton, at agricultural events such as Salem's AgFest in April, at OAN retail garden centers, and through the OAN office. Realtors and chambers of commerce also are distributing guides.

Anyone wishing to receive a free guide can send a request to OAN "Retail Guide," 29751 S.W. Town Center Loop W., Wilsonville, OR 97070, or send an e-mail to [info@oan.org](mailto:info@oan.org) with "Retail Guide" in the subject line. Please include a name and address with mail or e-mail requests. A guide will arrive by mail.



## State Launches Prescription Drug Discount Program

Low-Income Oregonians to See Discounts of 15-55 Percent

SALEM, Ore. – In March, state officials launched the Oregon Prescription Drug Program, which gives low-income, uninsured Oregonians the opportunity to participate in a prescription drug purchasing pool.

Once enrolled in the pool, members can receive discounts on prescription drugs not generally available to the uninsured.

State Sen. Bill Morrisette was the chief sponsor of the 2003 bill that established the program.

"The high cost of prescription drugs is creating such an extraordinary financial burden for Oregonians – especially seniors – that some are cutting up their pills to make them go farther. In the worst cases, others are forced to choose between food and medicine," said Morrisette (D-Springfield).

According to Bruce Goldberg of the Oregon Health Policy & Research office, more than 1,000 Oregonians already have registered for OPDP. They could receive discounts of up to 55 percent and the program is expected to save Oregonians \$2.3 million this year.



The program also allows government agencies, including cities and counties, to participate – a move that will help them save money.

Morrisette said that a 2003 survey found that Americans without prescription drug coverage pay 72 percent more on average for the 10 most commonly prescribed medications than the federal government does.

The program is funded with receipts from a state settlement with Merck/Medco.

Support for program growth will come from a grant strategy under development by OPDP. Pharmacies around the state are participating, including most of the large chains.

To qualify, applicants must be at least 55 years old, have income at no more than 185 percent of the federal poverty level, and have had no private insurance in the previous six months.

Morrisette and other Democrats in the Senate already are working to expand the program. The Senate Human Services Committee, which Morrisette chairs, already has held a hearing on two expansion bills.

Anyone interested in applying for the program should call 1-866-544-5360 or go to the OPDP Web site at [www.opdp.org](http://www.opdp.org). An application form is available on the Web site.

## Farm Loans Available for Women and Minorities

PORTLAND, Ore. – The USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers farm loans to help qualified women and minorities buy and operate family-sized farms and ranches.

FSA reserves a portion of its loan and loan guarantee funds each year to assist socially disadvantaged applicants

"Both targeted and non-targeted loan funds can be used to help members of socially disadvantaged groups buy and operate farms," said Larry Frey, FSA's Oregon state executive director.

Frey said that socially disadvantaged groups are those whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities.

For the purposes of FSA's loan programs, socially disadvantaged groups are women, American Indians, Alaska Natives, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders.

"There are growing concerns over the future of agriculture," Frey said. "Having access to available targeted and non-targeted funds will help assure that women and minorities have an opportunity to own and operate farms and ranches."

FSA's loan and loan guarantee funds are available to individuals and entities

that are primarily and directly engaged in farming and ranching on family-sized operations. Farm ownership loan funds are available to help qualified socially disadvantaged persons purchase a farm or ranch. To qualify, the applicant must have participated in the business operation of a farm or ranch for at least three years.

For those applicants who have at least one year's experience in managing or operating a farm or ranch, operating loan funds are available to help with purchasing livestock, machinery, and equipment, as well as with annual procedure expenses.

During fiscal year 2004, FSA made 56 loans and loan agreements to women and minorities in Oregon, totaling nearly \$4 million. So far during fiscal year 2005, 20 loans and loan agreements have been made to women and minorities in Oregon, totaling almost \$2 million.

People who would like to learn more about FSA's programs of assistance to women and minorities are urged to contact their nearest USDA service center. These are listed in telephone directories under "United States Government, Department of Agriculture."

Further information also is available on the Oregon State FSA Web site at [www.fsa.usda/or/](http://www.fsa.usda/or/).