

PLANTS

FOR A CAUSE

Nonprofit events offer great plant selection

BY RACHEL FOSTER

Plant sales are always fun — unless you hate crowds. Popular sales open with a rush of people who come early and know what they are looking for. Things slow down an hour or so after opening time, but be warned that the best plants and the best bargains may already be gone. Even so, arriving later can be advantageous if you would like advice on what to buy. There are often volunteers hovering, eager to answer questions and make suggestions for awkward garden spots.

Each sale has a slightly different emphasis, but all include ornamentals and at least some edibles. Some sales offer art and artifacts. Bird houses are popular. Most sales have booths operated by professional nurseries, the club receiving a percentage of their take. Those vendors, as well as nonparticipating businesses, may also donate plants.

Donated plants, from vendors as well as home gardeners, usually have a booth to themselves, and the nonprofit gets 100 percent of the money from those sales. Personally, I like sales that feature plants donated by club members. The quality may vary but the price is usually good, and you never know what may show up.

Kicking off the season is what was once a simple seed swap but now has grown into the **Spring Propagation Fair**. Brendan Lynch, media coordinator, says, “This year we are focusing on regionally adapted, disease-resistant tree fruit (especially apples and pears) as well as grapes and plums. We will also continue the seed swap and have an array of guest speakers. As usual, people can pick out their scion for free and then purchase rootstock and have it grafted at the Prop Fair for a nominal fee.”

What is a scion? Cultivated fruit trees are usually grafted on the roots of another variety that is a more vigorous or adaptable grower. At grafting time, the upper portion that will eventually form the tree is called a scion. Scions from many varieties of fruit trees will be available. This free event takes place 11 am to 5 pm, March 24, in the cafeteria at Lane Community College. Bring scions and seeds to share. Contact Lynch at 731-1605 for more information.

FOOD for Lane County Spring Plant Sale: 10 am-5 pm Saturday, March 31, at the GrassRoots Garden, 1465 Coburg Rd. This benefit for FFLC Gardens Programs offers a “huge selection of organic spring vegetable, flower and herb starts, along with donated ornamental and edible perennials, natives and trees.” Proceeds from a **Summer Plant Sale** to be held at the FFLC Springfield Youth Farm (10 am-5

Phoebe Staples uncannily resembles Anna Lee-Hoelzle's bronze sculpture in Alton Baker Park. Staples is a legend in the gardening community, and the park has a perennial border named after her.



pm Saturday, May 12, 705 Flamingo Ave., Springfield) will go directly to the Youth Farm's education program, where gardening changes lives.

This year, the **Master Gardeners Plant Sale** will join the Earth Day Celebration at EWEB Plaza (11 am to 5 pm Saturday, April 21, 500 E. 4th Ave., Eugene. Edibles have always been a strength of this sale, but expect a huge selection of donated plants of all kinds. There will be snacks, activities for everyone and booths such as “Ask a Master Gardener.” Proceeds support activities of the Lane County Extension Service Master Gardener program.

Sales for **Destination ImagiNation** always have an exciting mix of vendors and donated plants, some from wholesale-only nurseries. This year's sale is 9 am to 4 pm Saturday, April 28, at the Pleasant Hill Junior High Parking Lot at 36386 Hwy. 58. Coordinator Joan Hladky says, “Northwest Native Trees was a vendor last year and this year we have a tentative commitment from a lavender nursery.” Profits go to Destination ImagiNation, a program for students “to learn and experience creativity, teamwork and problem solving.” Contact Joan at jhladky@pleasanthill.k12.or.us for hours.

Healing Harvest's plant sale moves to Cottage Grove this year. It will be held 10 am to 4 pm Saturday, May 5, at the greenhouse, Kennedy School of Sustainability, 1310 S. 8th Ave. in Eugene. Proceeds will directly support horticultural therapy and sustainable agriculture programs in Cottage Grove and Eugene. For more information, contact Maggie Matoba at 915-0599, or check the website after April 1: www.healingharvest.org

Saturday, May 12, the day before Mother's Day, holds an embarrassment of riches: In addition to the Youth Farm's

summer sale, two of the area's largest sales take place on opposite sides of the river. **The Willamette Valley Hardy Plant Group** will present its 21st Annual Sale from 9 am to 2 pm at the Lane County Fairgrounds, Auditorium Building. The sale will have 23 specialty vendors and nonprofit groups selling every kind of plant you can think of, with an emphasis on ornamentals. Donated plants are priced to move. There will also be locally made birdhouses and feeders for sale, as well as information about butterfly gardens. Proceeds from the sale support the Hardy Plant Group's Speaker Fund and the activities of Healing Harvest.

The Oregon Plant Fair, “a convergence of specialty plant growers and garden artists from all over Oregon,” is organized by Avid Gardeners and Willamette District Garden Clubs. The Fair returns to Alton Baker Park shelters, with some new and some returning vendors, 9 am to 2 pm Saturday, May 12. You can count on “fabulous new plant varieties and familiar old favorites, along with distinctive and imaginative garden artworks.” Proceeds support the groups' speakers programs as well as donations to causes such as Friends of Mount Pisgah, Food for Lane County and the Master Gardener program.

The Sunday after Mother's Day is Mount Pisgah Arboretum's **Wildflower Festival and Plant Sale** (10 am to 5 pm May 20). This sale is well known for offering many native plants. Donated natives have their own table, which empties quickly. Vendors include Jeff Eaton, who brings a grand selection of his tomato and pepper plants (sometimes eggplant, too) and splits his take with the arboretum. I'm told some people come to the festival largely to buy Eaton's starts. Another highlight: great food! A \$5 donation is requested for entry, but parking is free on festival day. **EW**

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