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WEEKEND BREAK

Happy Mother's Day

CELEBRATING MOTHERS, DAUGHTERS
AND THEIR BONDS • PAGES B1-B4



SMALL BUGS, BIG PESTS



Aphids, like the ones seen here, have damaged Sitka spruce trees on the North Coast.

Colin Murphey/The Astorian

Aphids invade Sitka spruce trees

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

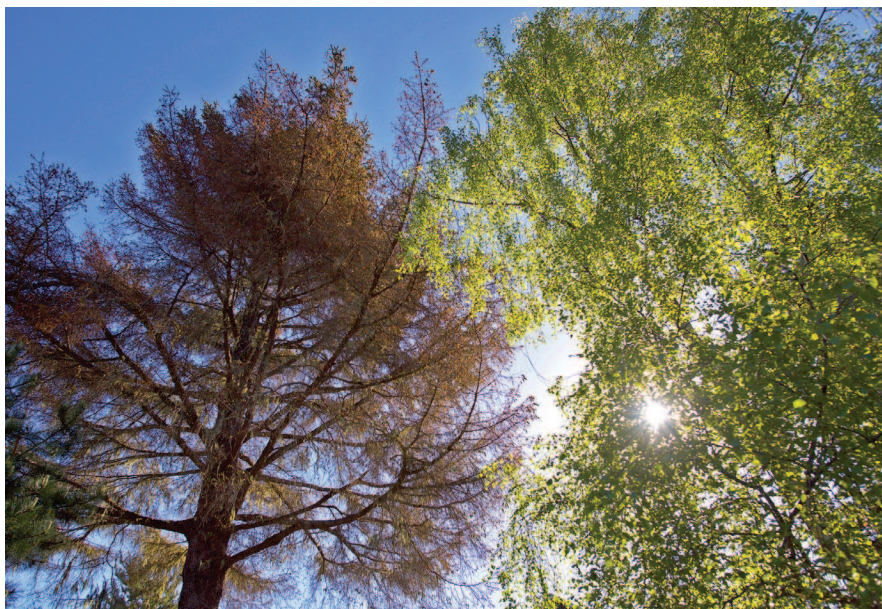
GEARHART — Large Sitka spruce trees in the yard were one of the selling points when Angela Sidlo and her husband decided to buy a house in Gearhart a few years ago. Now, with their green needles suddenly brown, the trees look like they are dying.

Sidlo, a holistic health practitioner, isn't the only one seeing disturbing changes in trees known as evergreen.

Up and down the North Coast, spruce trees are turning brown — “red,” if you're a forester, because the same issue is happening on commercial timberlands, too.

A tiny green bug is likely to blame. Several years of unusually mild winters and drier springs have set a perfect stage for spruce aphids. Without hard frosts and wintry weather, the insects boomed.

The aphids are not usually associated with widespread tree death. But



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

A tree damaged by aphids, left, stands next to a healthy tree at a home in Gearhart.

Luke Colvin, a certified arborist and owner of Arbor Care Tree Specialists in Astoria, took down two trees for clients this spring and expects more will follow.

He is used to seeing aphid populations flare up every few years, but it has been bad for several years

now. And the aphids are hitting at a time when trees are already stressed. Drought conditions over the past three summers have weakened trees that would normally be able to withstand an infestation.

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County rejects new deal for data center

Technology project in
doubt in Warrenton

By BRENNA VISSER
The Astorian

The Clatsop County commission has rejected a new purchase and sale agreement with Agile Design, the company behind a proposed data center at the North Coast Business Park in Warrenton.

Emerging after nearly an hour of private talks in executive session, the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously on Wednesday night against a new proposal that outlined how the project could move forward.

Sarah Nebeker, the commission's chairwoman, called the situation “disappointing.”

“We did want this to move forward,” she said after the meeting.

Commissioner Mark Kujala said there were many issues that led him to vote against accepting the proposal.

“There were too many variables for both (sides),” Kujala said. “We both want to go back to the drawing board ... the county commission wants to relook at the property. I didn't feel comfortable entering into a partnership at this time.”

The vote is a blow to entrepreneur Mark Cox, of Agile Design, who

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Murder trial opens in Astoria with a twist

One of the suspects
pleaded guilty

By BRENNA VISSER
The Astorian

The trial for a homeless couple accused of killing a Newport man in 2016 began Thursday with a twist.

Christian Wilkins and Adeena Copell are charged with first-degree murder, second-degree abuse of a corpse and two counts of unauthorized use of a vehicle in connection with the death of 71-year-old Howard Vinge, whose body was found off U.S. Highway 30 about three miles east of Astoria.

The couple is suspected of murdering Vinge and dumping his body, and then stealing his motor home with a car attached on a trailer. Days after abandoning the trailer east of Seaside on U.S. Highway 26, the couple was found traveling in the stolen car in northern Arizona.

Moments before opening statements in the trial at Circuit Court, Wilkins pleaded guilty to all four counts.



Christian
Wilkins



Adeena
Copell

Astoria vets choices for community development director

Two interested in
planning post

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

A planning director from Washington state and a Portland architect are vying for the job as Astoria's community development director, a post the city has struggled to fill for over a year.

Kirsten Sackett, community development director for Ellensburg, and Stuart Emmons, an architect based in Portland, met

with residents, city department heads and city leaders during a meet-and-greet event at Clatsop Community College on Wednesday night.

The event was an important “opportunity for the community to learn about them and for them to learn about the community,” City Manager Brett Estes said.

Sackett has spent the past 4 1/2 years in Ellensburg overseeing a variety of projects, including an overhaul of the city's comprehensive plan and development codes. Her department works with a variety of city commissions, including one with a focus on affordable housing.



Katie Frankowicz/The Astorian

Kirsten Sackett, community development director of Ellensburg, and a candidate for a similar job with the city of Astoria, talks to Astoria City Councilor Joan Herman during a candidate meet and greet on Wednesday.

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