

If you can't beat it, eat it

Master Gardeners compete for best 'pigweed' recipes

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Like most invasive weeds, purslane can be a major headache if it isn't dealt with quickly.

"Even if you kill it with Roundup, it comes back," said Carol Mills, president of the Umatilla County Master Gardeners. "It's a tough little devil."

What makes purslane unique, however, is its rich nutritional content. The plants are an excellent source of vitamins A, C and E, and packed with omega-3 fatty acids typically found in fish. Rather than simply spraying for purslane or chucking it into the compost pile, the master gardeners are encouraging people to try mixing it into their favorite recipes to reap the health benefits while keeping their gardens in top shape.

Members of the master gardeners class put their own creativity to the test Monday by bringing in a variety of dishes cooked with purslane, adding it to things like beef stew, basil pesto, potato salad and even a chocolate zucchini roll. Each person voted on their favorite course, with master gardener Richard Bertram's purslane egg rolls coming out the winner.

Bertram said he found the egg roll recipe on the internet. The hardest part was picking enough of the small, tear-shaped leaves to make a full batch.

"It takes forever to get a cup and a half of this stuff," Bertram said.

Also known by less appetizing names such as pigweed and fatweed, purslane grows wild throughout Umatilla County and across the U.S. Native to Persia and India, the species was introduced to Europe in the 15th century as a salad herb. It is now classified by the Department of Agriculture as a noxious weed, despite its long history of cuisine.

Annette Frye, activities chair for the master gardeners,



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Master gardeners Richard Bertram and Annette Frye hold up egg rolls made from a hearty weed called purslane.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Purslane, commonly known as fatweed or pigweed, is a pesky nuisance weed in Eastern Oregon gardens, but the plant is tasty and is packed with omega-3 fatty acids.

"It's everywhere here. It's edible, so why not pull the leaves off and nibble on it while you're gardening, or throw it into your salad?"

— **Annette Frye**, activities chair for master gardeners

said she is constantly pulling purslane out of her garden. She compared the initial taste to lettuce, with an after-taste more like boiled okra. Others say the plant has a lemony and peppery flavor, like arugula.

"It's everywhere here," Frye said. "It's edible, so why not pull the leaves off and nibble on it while you're gardening, or throw it into

your salad?"

Purslane can be paired with countless foods, pickled on its own or eaten raw. Recommendations include sprinkling it over pizza, adding it to sandwiches, steaming it with spices, blending it into smoothies or adding to tea, where it is said to ease headaches.

Mills said she used to erad-



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Fred Hollibaugh, a member of Umatilla County Master Gardeners, tastes a stew made with a pesky weed called purslane. The members were challenged to prepare a dish using the weed and bring it to a potluck to share.

icate purslane by covering it with black plastic and letting it bake in the sun. Now, she said the class is pushing for pigweed to be recognized locally as a superfood.

"It's good for you," Mills said. "And it's free."

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PENDLETON

Round-Up week means business

Even among non-western stores, support is strong

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

For a Tuesday afternoon, the Pendleton J.C. Penney was positively bustling.

Of course it wasn't just any Tuesday. Early Round-Up week is when many Pendleton businesses — even those that don't exactly cater to a Round-Up audience — start looking toward the massive influx of foot traffic to boost their sales.

J.C. Penney manager Michelle Mizerka-Peters was heartened by the uptick in sales and was hopeful that momentum would build as the week progressed.

Mizerka-Peters said J.C. Penney doesn't always see more business during Round-Up week, but the store has made an extra effort this year to attract a slice of tourists in town for the festivities.

J.C. Penney employees moved their western-style clothing to the front of the store and pinned posters in their front windows that depicted early newspaper ads for the century-old company. That includes an ad announcing the 1911 opening of The Golden Rule Store in Pendleton, the store's original moniker before James Cash Penney bought the entire franchise and rebranded them under his own name.

The Round-Up tide does not lift all boats equally, especially those that don't sell western goods or serve food, but several local businesses owners said the Round-Up is too important to the community to complain about a momentary lull in business.

Zimmerman & Co. True Value owner Jim Naughton said his hardware store gets more customer attention in the week leading up to Round-Up as locals prepare their homes for guests.

But during the actual Round-Up week, Naughton said customers turn their attention toward the rodeo, while the Main Street vendors and nearby carnival siphon traffic from his business.

Naughton figures it's a wash between the extra money the store gets the week before Round-Up and the slowdown in sales during Round-Up, and the impact the rodeo has in the community is a net plus.

"It's up to us to take advantage of this opportunity instead of bitching or complaining about it."

— **Angela Thompson**, Pendleton Music Co. operator

"Overall, it's a blessing," he said.

Just before Round-Up is also a good sales time for Dean's Pendleton Athletic, said owner Cari Broker, because high school athletes are purchasing equipment for fall sports.

Like Zimmerman, Dean's holds shortened hours during Round-Up week, accommodating the occasional customer who wants to buy Pendleton gear.

While the reduced schedule might save on operating costs during a slow week, Broker said it also gives her employees a chance to catch the rodeo.

Although it is western-themed, the owners of Montana Peaks Hat Co. said the Round-Up isn't a make-or-break time for them either.

Hat maker Laura Wortman said they get plenty of foot traffic throughout the week, but they mostly use it to show them around the store and educate them about the craft of hat making. Some of those Round-Up visitors turn into contacts that eventually become customers.

Pendleton Music Co. operator Angela Thompson also plays the long game when it comes to building up contacts for sales down the road, although she does make some Round-Up specific sales.

Thompson said Pendleton Music Company is essential to the performers who play music at various events around town and also to a growing international clientele, like the member of a Brazilian rodeo contestant's entourage who buys brass instruments each year.

Although she occasionally has to guard against drunken revelers who insist on testing out the guitars, Thompson said operating a business during Round-Up is all about perspective.

"It's up to us to take advantage of this opportunity instead of bitching or complaining about it," she said.

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ODA plans for both budget cuts, increases

Depends on fate of Measure 97

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Bureau

Oregon's farm regulators are simultaneously planning for substantial budget cuts and increases due to the state's uncertain revenue future.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture is anticipating a total budget ranging from roughly \$103 million to \$124 million in the 2017-2019 biennium, depending on whether voters approve a corporate tax increase in November.

The agency's budget for the current biennium is about \$111 million, which means it faces either a 7 percent reduction from its current level, or

a boost of nearly 12 percent.

ODA is scrambling to plan for either scenario, as are other state agencies, because Gov. Kate Brown must complete her proposed budget for the next biennium by Dec. 1. — just weeks after the Nov. 8 election.

"We're all kind of schizophrenic right now," said Katy Coba, ODA's director, during the Sept. 13 Oregon Board of Agriculture meeting in Pendleton.

State agencies have been asked to submit proposed budget cuts due to a large expected rise in state spending on the Public Employee Retirement System, as well as higher healthcare costs, said Coba.

However, the state government is also preparing for the

possibility that Measure 97 passes, she said.

That ballot initiative would raise roughly \$3 billion a year by imposing a gross receipts tax of 2.5 percent on certain corporations.

Under the \$124 million budget request, ODA would hire multiple new employees focused on food safety inspection, agricultural water quality, information services, human resources and public records, among other investments, Coba said.

Positions would be cut from those and other programs, including confined animal feeding operations and insect pest prevention, under the \$103 million scenario, she said.

Much of ODA's budget is derived from fees on different

types of farms and other companies who have a good understanding of what service reductions will entail, Coba said.

The situation is more complicated when dealing with the portion of the budget that comes from state general funds, which aren't directly funded by the same agricultural constituency that receives ODA services, she said.

Friends of the Hermiston Public Library set book sale

East Oregonian

Everything from volumes to complete a collection of fiction, to books on cooking, travel, history and just about any subject you can think of are featured in the annual book sale of the Friends of the Hermiston Public Library.

The event opens with a special member's only sale

Thursday, Sept. 22 from 5-7 p.m. in the Lanham Room, downstairs at the library, 235 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston. For people who want to get an early start for the best selection, friends memberships are available for as little as \$10 at the door.

The sale opens to the public Friday Sept. 23 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The final day is Saturday, Sept. 24

from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., which features a \$1 per bag sale.

The Friends of the Hermiston Public Library are dedicated to promoting libraries in general and specifically providing financial and donated time to the library. Those interested in becoming a member can pick up a form at the library.

For more information, call 541-567-2882.

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