

Berries from 1B

some for us to sell. Hopefully, they left some of the big ones.”

The Crays charge \$2 for a pint of blueberries and when asked how they can charge so little and make money, they both responded with big smiles and looked at each other before Duane said quietly, “We don’t really make money, we just hope we can kind of break even — and that’s ok for now,” he said. “We have talked about raising our prices, but Debbie thinks it is a tough time to do that to our customers.”

The Cray’s are very aware of the COVID-19 related challenges posed to visitors to the farm and have changed the way customers can purchase and pick their berries.

“We have posted on our Facebook page, asking customers to bring their own containers, we also have sanitizer and will weigh their containers so they can pick and just take the container home,” Debbie said.

Masks are recommended at the farm and there is a good deal of space to allow pickers to spread out.

Debbie is the more talkative of the Crays, as Duane tends to the plants and also works on the new barn and studio the couple are building.

They have plans to expand the farm and eventually incorporate music and a wider assortment of food for visitors to purchase. All of those plans are on hold as the COVID pandemic has pressed the pause button on the growth the couple had hoped to complete.



LENA FELT/SIUSLAW NEWS

Duane and Debbie Cray, who bought Clearlake Blueberry Farm in 2016, are hoping to offer additional food items and venues as the farm expands its options.

They have made some progress, finishing the new barn to hopefully increase future sales.

“We built a chicken coop and maybe in a year or two we will have eggs for sale too,” said Debbie.

Of course, by that time they will have spent a considerable sum for the new coop, Duane pointed out, smiling again, in addition to costs like fencing, food, medicine and other chicken-related needs

But making money is not the ultimate goal for the Crays, who are content to slowly build a customer base while improving their land and the quality of the fruit their land produces.

The interest in the health benefits of high-level antioxidant foods like blueberries continues to drive scientific research into the tart, indigo fruit.

And the numbers of

visitors to Clearwater grows each year as well.

The importance of the blueberry crop to the overall economy of Oregon is significant and has been rising each year since 2009, when the state produced 47.2 million pounds for consumption.

In 2019, production figures show a total more than three times higher at 153 million pounds harvested, according to the Oregon Blueberry Commission.

This annually increasing tonnage was grown by only 330 growers.

The total number of acres dedicated to the cultivation of blueberries in the state has grown from 6,100 acres in 2008 to 14,500 acres in 2019.

The first pickers of the season at Clearlake Farms on Saturday came from as far as British Columbia, Seattle and Portland, along with a number of area resi-

dents.

There were couples and families excitedly spilling out of shiny SUV’s with obvious excitement as they walked among the tall blueberry laden bushes.

The deep color — or more ripened — blueberries is due to their high levels of anthocyanin, which is a flavonoid that has been identified as having beneficial effects on many bodily systems related to circulation, cognition and energy levels.

America is the world’s leading producer of blueberries and more than 700 million pounds were grown for consumption in 2019.

For more information about Clearlake Blueberry Farm, the Crays post regular berry updates on the farm’s Facebook page and are hoping to remain open for about five more weeks this season.

Ready from 1B

visit www.KeepOregonGreen.org/prevent-wild-fires.

Above all, know your risks and be prepared for them. OEM’s 2 Weeks Ready initiative offers a real way each of us can help ourselves and our communities prepare for the next emergency.

2 Weeks Ready encour-

ages Oregonians to prepare to be on their own for a minimum of two weeks. This empowers individuals and communities to count on themselves and each other, especially in the aftermath of a major disaster such as a wildfire or earthquake.

It’s also a great way to mitigate the effects of events such as heat waves, power outages, and even COVID-19 as people may

need to isolate at home for as long as 14 days.

“It’s all about knowing the risk so you can plan ahead to reduce that risk,” says OEM Director Andrew Phelps. “Disasters don’t wait for us to be ready, and they can be due to any number of hazards. Preparing for disaster can be overwhelming but 2 Weeks Ready is an achievable goal. You don’t have to get there today, but you do

need to start now.”

OEM has created a short video to show Oregonians the basics of a 2 Weeks Ready kit, including face coverings and hand sanitizer. Everyone’s kit will look different so be sure to customize for you and your family.

For more information on preparedness resources, visit www.oregon.gov/oem.

Fishing from 1B

Cutthroat trout fishing opened May 22 on the Alsea River and trout fishing has been good throughout the basin. The rivers are dropping quickly into more normal summer flows but are still providing good conditions for trout fishing and will provide good opportunities through the summer months.

SALMON RIVER:
Cutthroat trout, fall Chinook

Fall Chinook fishing opens on the Salmon River on Aug.1. Expect fishing to be slow at the beginning of August but things typically start to pick up at the end of the month and into September.

SILETZ RIVER:
Summer steelhead, fall Chinook, cutthroat trout
Summer steelhead fish-

ing is still slow on the Siletz River but overall it has improved in the last few weeks. The higher than normal flows in June and early July changed the migration timing and these fish and they are finally starting to stage in the upper portions of the river and gorge sections.

The high and cooler water has slowed the migration this year but now we are in a more typical summer pattern and

the fish seem to be responding, moving up into the gorge where there is better summer holding water. Fish numbers should keep increasing through the month of July and into August.

Spring Chinook fishing closes on Aug. 1 above the Ojalla boat ram. Anglers are reminded that the bag limit has been changed for the 2020 spring Chinook season to 1 fish per day and 1 for the year.

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