

# Dry, warm winter continues with stellar weekend

## Gardeners anxious to get digging, but caution is urged

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Gardeners in the Willamette Valley have likely been feeling the itch to get their hands dirty with recent warm, dry weather portending an early spring.

Rainfall was expected to again descend on the valley by Sentinel press time this week, but all the early gardening buzz has already meant big business for Dorena-based Log House Plants, according to owner Alice Doyle.

"All of our accounts in Oregon and Washington are really feeling the excitement of gardeners getting into their gardens," Doyle said. "We're selling lots of vegetables, sweet peas and herbs. It seems like we're about three to four weeks early this year."

Doyle said Log House has been selling vegetable starts since about the second week of February, adding that gardeners typically wait until the first few weeks of March to begin planting veggies like broccoli and cauliflower. Still, Doyle added that cool nights have meant frosty mornings, even in southern Oregon and northern California.

"It's very eerie," she said. "It's nice that gardeners have been able to get in and prepare the soil, but we have to be worried about the lack of snowpack and how dry it's been."

Andrea Mull, president of Cottage Grove's Garden Club, said she's also worried about late-season freezes and the effect they could have on local crops.

"The trend has been early warming, but I think the change



photo by Jon Stinnett

**Michelle Rose and Peter Dumbleton start their battle against grass in the soil of their Cottage Grove yard, where they're working to convert grass to vegetables. They say they'll likely begin planting cool-weather crops this week.**

is going to have more to do with dryness and lack of rain," Mull said. "It's going to cause things like fruit trees to bloom early, but with a cold snap, we could lose that fruit."

Mull cautioned against planting vegetables early just because they're available on local store shelves. She added that

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## Corps says there's still time for lakes to fill up

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Recent visitors to Cottage Grove and Dorena Reservoirs south of town may have noticed miles of dry, exposed shoreline where a lake would typically be, with but one channel of water snaking through the area opposite each lake's dam.

A much drier than normal winter has thus far kept the reservoirs very relatively low on water, but the Corps of Engineers, which manages the reservoirs, said it's too early to tell if those low levels will last.

"It probably looks worse than it is," said Corps spokesperson Scott Clemans. "Right now, Dorena is about 10 feet lower than normal, and Cottage Grove Reservoir is only about four feet low. These are pretty small reservoirs, and one or two good

rainstorms could easily catch us up."

Spring rainfall typically fills the reservoirs in advance of the summer recreation season, and Clemans said there's still plenty of time for rain to fill the lakes by the end of May, when the Corps plans to have them full for boaters, swimmers and campers.

Low water levels toward the end of winter have been the norm at the reservoirs the last few years, Clemans said, though rainfall levels typically catch up in subsequent months.

"We somehow always seem to manage to find a way," Clemans said of filling the lakes. "Even Fern Ridge Reservoir, which sees a lot worse weather pattern in terms of receiving snow melt

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# From cars to quilts: Turner's love of form and function finds many outlets

Auto technician belies common stereotype about quilters

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

By now, Chet Turner's little secret is not-so-secret anymore.

Most days, Turner can be found under a car or an SUV in the shop at Brad's Cottage Grove Chevrolet, where his love of automobiles has become his career these past 18 years. But those who know a little more about him know there's more to Turner than just turning wrenches. In fact, at times he's been known to trade his more customary torque wrench and socket set for fabric and thread, though it's not a hobby he's shared with many of the guys (or even ladies, for that matter) at Brad's.

That is, until now, when it's revealed that the same love of function and beauty that draws Turner to cars also makes him a competent quilter, a pastime often believed to be the exclusive domain of women.

Of course, Turner and others know there's nothing inherently feminine about quilting, the simple art of sewing two or more layers of material together to create a heavier layer of fabric. And while he watched his mom do her fair share of sewing while making many of her clothes and his during his childhood, Turner had other role models in the field as well.

"My dad's mom was a seamstress, so he grew up learning how to sew," he said. "I watched him sew a lot of camping equipment: backpacks, first-aid kits. I grew up watching my mom and dad sew, so to me it's just a part of what you do."

Later, in his mid-20s, Turner rented a room from the parents of a friend, whose grandmother counted tying flies for fishing among her skills in addition to quilting. And just like that, he was hooked on quilting.

"I was single at the time and I thought,

"Why not?" he said. "I made one or two, and most of them I gave away to friends when they had babies."

These days, Turner is still working on an appliqué quilt that he's been finding time to sew for a number of years, and he says there's really not all that much difference between a beautiful quilt and a beautiful car.

"Cars, guns — I'm drawn to anything that's beautiful yet utilitarian, things you can see and appreciate the beauty of," he said. "Quilts are a part of that; they can be useful but still very beautiful."

Turner is also a bit of a history buff, and as a member of the board of directors at the Cottage Grove Museum, he's learned a lot more lately about the beauty and function of quilts. The Museum has undertaken an oral history

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photo by Jon Stinnett

Chet Turner brought a few of his own creations to the Cottage Grove Museum, which is currently cataloguing the history of the quilts in its care. A presentation of the quilts is planned for August.

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