

GIVING BACK

Cottage Grove groups, businesses contribute to make a difference

Youth Empowerment group donates to freezing nights shelter

Cottage Grove's Junior Youth Empowerment Group, composed of middle-school aged young people, recently sought to make a difference for the local Beds for Freezing Nights effort, which works to provide a warm place to sleep for those in need when temperatures drop below freezing. The group decided that it could raise money to purchase socks for those who utilize the shelter, as they were viewed as the greatest need. They sold mistletoe during the



holidays to raise the needed funds. Bulk mistletoe was donated by Spring Creek Holly Farm, and group members spent hours putting sprigs of mistletoe together with decorations for sale. They sold their

products in front of Walmart on seven weekday afternoons, and through their efforts over \$700 was used to buy flashlights, socks and thermoses for BFN shelter visitors. Pictured at right are members Shawn

Farmer, Taniece (no last name given), Joey Farmer, Fiona McKinnon and Shaelynn Steele, who presented their purchases to BFN board member Lise Colgan.

Board of Realtors helps Habitat

The Cottage Grove Board of Realtors recently presented a \$5500 donation to Cottage Grove Area Habitat for Humanity to support its efforts to build affordable homes for deserving families in the area. Presenting the check to Habitat's Linda Oxley (far right) are board members Linda Schmale (left) and David Hemenway.



courtesy photo

Rainfall causes closure of USFS road

The U.S. Forest Service says current saturation from recent rainfall on the Cottage Grove Ranger District has led to unstable and potentially dangerous conditions near mile marker 5 on Forest Service Road 1751 toward the Mt. June trailhead. This area is closed until conditions are suitable to repair the roadway.

The closure also includes the short spur road 1758-715 due to unsafe conditions until conditions are suitable for repair.

Visitors are advised to take precautions, avoid secondary and native surface roads, and let someone know where they are going and when they plan to return if traveling through the National Forest.

The Ranger District asks that the public stop by the Cottage Grove Ranger Station for more information and current conditions.



The USFS says a portion of Forest Service Road 1751 has sloughed off, making the road unsafe for vehicle traffic.

Set seeds on the right path with homemade soil mixture

BY KYM POKORNY
OSU Extension Service

While you're battling the winter blues, make your own seed-starting mix and plan for the gardening days ahead.

Home gardeners can start vegetable and flower seedlings indoors from four to 12 weeks before the last average spring frost in their area, which means it's time to get started. Making homemade planting medium can be more economical than buying a sterile mix at the store, said Brooke Edmunds, a horticulturist with Oregon State University's Extension Service.

A good germinating mix must be fine and uniform, yet well-aerated, loose and free of pests, diseases and weed seeds, Edmunds said. It also should be low in fertility and total soluble salts, yet capable of holding and moving moisture.

But beware, she warned. Soil straight from your backyard just won't do the job.

Typical backyard soil is too compacted, full of weed seeds and it is not pasteurized, causing seedling diseases and death. Native soil often does not drain as well as seedling mixes. And it can develop a crust that prevents seedlings from pushing through.

Edmunds' recipe for a good basic pasteurized medium for growing seedlings is a mixture of one-third pasteurized soil or compost, one-third sand, vermiculite or perlite, and one-third peat moss.

"Many people just use half peat moss and half perlite, vermiculite or sand, and this combination seems to work well, too," she said.

To pasteurize a small quantity of soil or compost in an oven, put the slightly moist soil or compost in a heat-resistant container or pan. Cover with a lid or foil. Place in a 250-degree oven; check the temperature periodically using a candy or meat thermometer. When the mix reaches 180 degrees, cook for an additional 30 minutes. Avoid overheating it, as the structure of the soil may be damaged, rendering it useless as a seedling soil



A good soil mix for germinating seeds should be fine and uniform, yet well-aerated, loose and free of pests, diseases and weed seeds.

ingredient.

Mix pasteurized soil or compost with peat moss. Add sand, vermiculite or perlite. All ingredients are available at most nurseries and garden stores.

Another task to complete before the start of seed-sowing is to clean your pots, trays and flats. After washing, rinse the containers in a solution of 1 part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water to kill remaining plant disease microorganisms that could weaken or kill your tender young seedlings.

For information about starting seeds, see Extension's publication Propagating Plants from Seeds.

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