

BIGGER AND BETTER

Annual Mother's Day plant sale triggers green thumbs everywhere



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Jane Gragg and Darrell Ward inspect plants on Friday morning in preparation for the Master Gardeners annual plant sale, which will be Friday and Saturday at Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center in Rickreall. Vegetables, flowers and other plants will be available.

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Mother's Day weekend is upon us, and that means the annual Polk County Master Gardener's two-day plant sale on Friday and Saturday.

With the warmer-than-usual spring, gardeners all over Polk County may have been tempted to plant those tomatoes early, but those of you who have had the patience to wait will be rewarded with top picks from the sale.

"We have a tremendous variety of tomatoes, more than 70," said Darrell Ward, Master Gardener. "We've gone the next step of grafted tomatoes. In the past, we've purchased those from nurseries. This year, we wanted some varieties we thought would be better for our customers, so we've grafted our own."

These varieties are better because they'll grow better right here in Polk County, Ward said.

A large selection of peppers, cucumbers, cabbages and squash — all grown by Polk County Masters — will be available starting Friday.

To accommodate all the plants on sale and the indoor vendor selection, the sale has expanded to two buildings at the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center.

The sale will be in Building C and in the Swine Barn this year, with everything under cover.

"We won't have vendors or demonstrations out in the rainstorms, we hope," Ward said.

Vendors will have a plethora of gardening supplies, from clothing to tools to decor, for all your gardening needs.

The Country Store is expanded, also, Ward said.

"We have had a tremendous amount of donations this year," he said. "One of the things we received from an estate was framed oil paintings — originals — also framed prints. Those will be on display and for sale."

Along with the plants, Master Gardeners are scattered around the buildings, easily accessible to answer all your gardening questions.

Unusual and hard-to-find plants are back this year, Ward said, with a selection from India and other countries.

"We've also brought back the native plants," Ward noted. "We haven't had that for a couple of years."

Live demonstrations will include soil blocks, raised beds, planting tomatoes and bonsai.



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Darrell Ward tends to a wide variety of peppers and tomatoes at Mountain Fir Park's Inspiration Garden on Friday.



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Tables will be filled with both unusual and hard to find plants, as well as native selections at this weekend's Master Gardeners plant sale.

Gardener's Paradise

What: Oregon State University Extension Polk County Master Gardeners Plant Sale.

Where: Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center, 520 S. Pacific Highway (99W), Rickreall.

When: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday and Saturday.

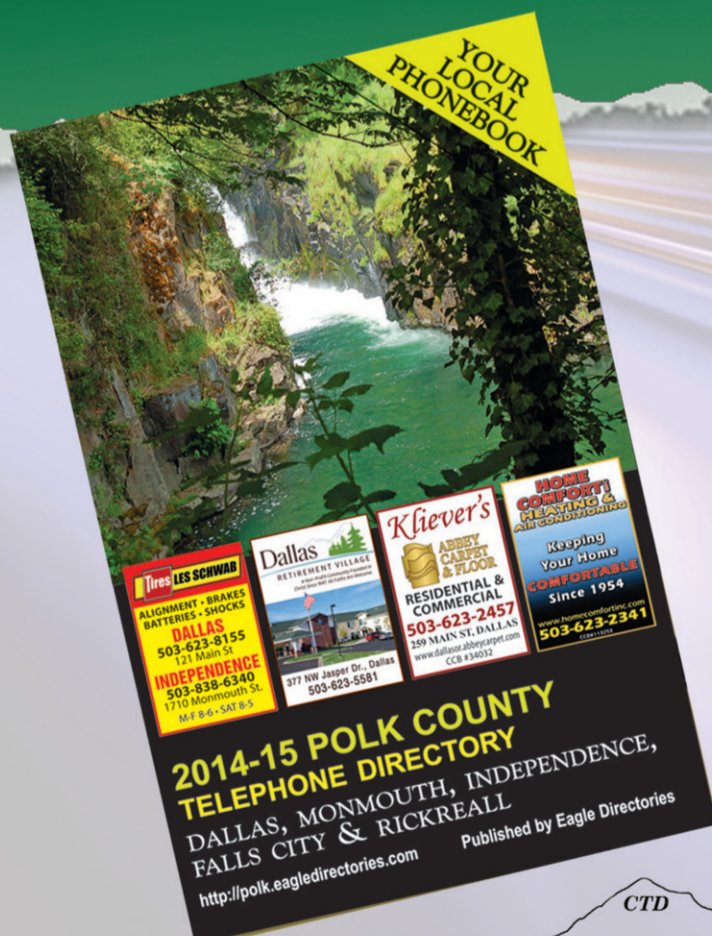
Admission: Free.

Of note: Parking will also be expanded, including additional handicapped spaces close to the buildings, making access easier. This sale is popular. For the best selection, including hanging baskets, go early.

For more information: Master Gardeners OSU/Polk County on Facebook.

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