

Tip of the hat to top garden stories

The end of the year snuck up on us and now come the perennial lists — best movies, top albums and most-watched TV shows. Not to be outdone, we present the five most popular Oregon State University Extension Service stories of 2015.

How this list was compiled is a bit unscientific. We looked at which stories got the most hits on the website; how they panned out on Facebook; and what experience tells us. Some articles like renovating lawns, making compost and harvesting pears and apples regularly make their way into the top 10.

A rundown of trees with beautiful fall color grabbed readers' attention this year, as did a wrap-up of ceanothus (aka California lilac) that perform best in western Oregon. Not surprisingly, people always want to learn about aggravating and sometimes devastating pest and disease problems, edging stories on those matters into top slots. In that category, ash whiteflies and boxwood blight were the biggies for 2015.

But while all those topics ranked near the top, five others rose above. Here's the chance to take another look.

HOW TO GROW HOPS: It was inevitable in beer-thirsty, hop-growing Oregon that home brewers would



KYM POKORNY
Your Garden

start raising their own. They're hungry for information on how to get to the point of harvesting precious hops — or cones — from fast-growing vines that can easily get out of control. Shaun Townsend, OSU hops breeder, shares his wisdom for growing, controlling and enjoying. (<http://bit.ly/1QUYyJZ>)

MASON BEES: In spring, industrious mason bees are busy pollinating the season's earliest-blooming plants. Brooke Edmunds, a horticulturist with OSU's Extension, makes a case for the important place mason bees have in the cool, wet shoulder season before honeybees wake from their winter naps and tells you how to get and keep them. (<http://bit.ly/1Ysjzlo>)

DROUGHT-TOLERANT PERENNIALS: It's not exactly the Sahara in western Oregon, but summers are hot and dry and setting records for getting hotter and drier. Even if that wasn't the case, saving water only makes sense and many gardeners want all the information they can get on this red-hot topic. Gail Langelotto,



PHOTO BY LOTUS JOHNSON

Planting drought-tolerant perennials like pineapple sage saves water, time and money.

an Extension horticulturist, shares 10 suggestions of water-wise perennials that thrive with a minimum of moisture. (<http://bit.ly/1S67hdi>)

MOLES, VOLES AND GOPHERS: Nothing seems to get to gardeners more than these mound-making rodents. Some eat roots and bulbs, some rotor through the lawn leaving long runways where they've been dining on grass. Others are underground just eating bugs, but still leaving trip-worthy holes and mounded soil. How you deal with them depends on identifying them correctly. Dana

Sanchez, an Extension wildlife specialist, gives the scoop. (<http://bit.ly/1mwLnny>)

SWEET POTATOES: Who knew Oregonians would be so excited about growing sweet potatoes? It must be a case of "I want what I can't have." At least, that's what most people thought until Gary Jordan, a master gardener with OSU's Extension, set out to bust the myth. And bust it he did. All it took was one successful crop and people wanted his secrets. Only they're not secrets. Jordan will tell anyone listening — or reading. (<http://bit.ly/1S67qxe>)

MI TOWN

The beautiful Christmas carols have taken flight from the airwaves and it's somewhat bittersweet to say good-bye to music that helped transform the dark and rainy days in this wintry season. One moment, we're sharing good times and making happy memories, and it seems like in the blink of an eye, we're back to our usual routines like work and other responsibilities. Let's hope the true meaning of the Christmas season lingers in our hearts throughout the next several weeks, and we can look back and remember those special times.

With a brand-spanking new year just around the corner, it's time to think about making resolutions —



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Columnist

something most of us do as a matter of habit — or having thoughts about making positive changes in ourselves and our lives. It seems like we all plan to lose 20 pounds and love our enemies and be one with nature and the world, at least for a couple of days or so. Then reality rushes in and most of the unrealistic expectations disappear as quickly as they arrived. Wouldn't be great if we could make some positive resolutions everyone can

live with — and enjoy — in the coming year.

How about bundling up in warm clothes on these cold mornings and take a walk around the neighborhood? It's a great way to beat the winter doldrums and to something good for yourself. Better yet, talk a friend into walking with you and celebrate the day with a cup of coffee or hot chocolate at one of MI Town's restaurants. If you aren't physically able to get out and about, take the time to write a letter to a friend or family member that you haven't heard from in a long time. A handwritten letter brings a personal and special treat to a friend or family member, and can be taken out to be read again and again.

A friend shared a great New Year idea, and that's one resolution I am going to keep. Set aside a jar (with a lid) and put it, along with a pencil and pad, on a kitchen counter or a bedroom dresser where you know you will see it every day. When good things happen, write a note and put it in the jar. Next New Year's Eve, open the jar and read all the notes you've saved and revisit all the good and happy memories. I have a pretty, blue Ball canning jar that we'll use — the half-gallon size — as we begin 2016 with hope and optimism that it will be a good year.

Best wishes to everyone and have a safe and Happy New Year!

BIRTHS

Henschel

Louisa Virginia Henschel was born to Raymond and Evelyn Henschel of Salem at 4:02 p.m. on Dec. 18 at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

She weighed 6 pounds, 15 ounces, and was 19.75 inches long.

Louisa joins Teddy, 4; and Elsie, 2.

Grandparents are Kathleen Edwards of Salem, and Ray and Shelia Henschel of Monmouth.

Licona

Jayden Leonardo Licona was born to Daniel Licona and Esmeralda Arredondo of Monmouth at 11:38 p.m. at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

He weighed 7 pounds, 2 ounces, and was 20 inches long.

Jayden is the couple's first child.

Grandparents are Elvira Landeros of Independence, Porfirio Arredondo of Salem, Jose Antonio Licona Escorcia and Maria Eugenia Licona of Moreno Valley, Calif.

Great-grandmother is Simona Ochoa of Independence.

MILITARY

Sipe



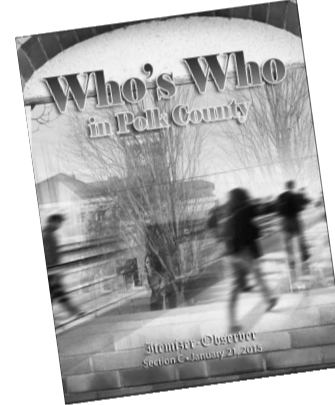
Riley Sipe, of Dallas, graduated from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot on Dec. 19.

Riley is the son of Bekki and Donald Sipe. Grandparents are Sharon and Lester Martin, both former Marines.

Siblings are Tim Huff, Mel Gross, Brian Sipe and Jessica Pollen.

Riley is off to his future endeavors in the Marine Corps. Semper Fi.

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