

# Pump up your plant knowledge

CORVALLIS — Learning to recognize 400,000 species of plants is more than daunting; it's impossible. But making a start by learning how to identify family characteristics can help you manage a healthier garden.

"It's important for gardeners to be aware of how to ID plants," said Karen Pleasant, Oregon State University Extension Service master gardener coordinator in Josephine County. "It will tell you what the correct cultural needs are, what kind of problems they may have. Knowing which plants you have will really help you know how to take care of them."

Identification can be especially crucial for people who want to know which wild plants are edible and to learn about the medicinal aspects of plants, she said. Both are popular hobbies that require the correct information to keep safe.

Just as human families exhibit resemblances, so do plants. Each of the 620 plant families share characteristics such as the shape and composition of flowers. For instance, the huge aster family (Asteraceae) — which includes sunflowers, asters, daisies and dandelions — is



**KYM POKORNY**  
Your Garden

recognized by the daisy-shape of the flowers.

"If you're looking at a daisy or a sunflower, the center where the seeds form is the disc flower," Pleasant said. "It's composed of lots of little flowers fused together. What look like petals around the disc are the ray flowers."

The third-largest family is the pea family (Fabaceae), which is easily recognized by people who have grown peas or sweet peas. The flowers include a large curved "banner" petal in the middle with two little wing petals on either side. Right in the middle are two fused petals called keels. Plants in this family — lupine, wisteria, beans, locust, alfalfa and more — also bear pea-like pods.

Number four in the lineup of plant families is the mustard family (Brassicaceae). The flowers have four petals and six stamens (four tall, two short), which surround the pistil in the center.

"There are a lot of garden

plants in this family, broccoli, mustard, wall flowers, candytuft," Pleasant said. "They're easy to identify because of the four petals."

About to make an appearance in the garden are early-blooming fruit trees, which are part of the rose family (Rosaceae). They sport five free (not fused) petals. If you see petal confetti raining on the ground soon, you can just about be sure the plant is in the rose family.

A good place to start the identification process is by determining if the plant is a monocot or dicot. The vast majority of plants are dicots with typical flowers and two seed leaves when they sprout; monocots only have one. They also have hollow flower stems, kneelike nodes or joints, and are pollinated by wind. In addition to lawn, this group includes lilies, orchids, bamboo, ornamental grasses, sedges and rushes.

"It's like becoming a plant



flic.kr/p/e9GtPn

**With their ray flowers, daisies are easy to place in the aster family.**

detective," Pleasant said. "Study the plants in your garden. Once you get used to the patterns, you can narrow it down to genus and species. Then you know how to grow and take care of them."

You can learn more by joining garden clubs, study groups, the Extension master gardener group or grab a plant key, which takes you through a series of steps to make identifications.

"It's true, it's like learning a new language," Pleasant said. "It can be intimidating at first. One idea is to plant several plants in the same family together so that you can see the similarities. It's really fun."

## MI TOWN

You can tell that it's springtime in Oregon because the rain feels warmer. For those of us who have spent daily walks around MI Town bundled in layers of sweaters, coats and woolen gloves, this is a nice change, and we'll take it. Umbrellas and lighter jackets will see us through the next few weeks. Springtime is a season of hope and renewal for all of us, and road trips around the area give us all the opportunity to see baby lambs and calves frolicking in the farmers' fields. The March and April showers are more tolerable when we enjoy those occasional sunbreaks and warmth and blue skies.

At our house, we are looking forward to Central and Western Oregon University baseball and softball games



**PATTY TAYLOR DUTCHER**  
Columnist

in the coming weeks. Full disclosure: Great-grandson Austin Keel (Clackamas baseball) and granddaughter Nicole Lukinbeal (Scappoose softball) are the most fun to watch, and we're happy to see another generation of athletes in our family participating in this wonderful spring and summer-time activity.

March Madness is a top priority at the moment, with weekends devoted to watching the best of college basketball and wishing all the

best to Oregon State women and Oregon men and women as they compete among the finest teams in our country. The yard work and spring cleaning can wait a few more days, because we know it will wait for us, no matter what.

Speaking of spring cleaning — How about those books that are taking up space on bookshelves or in the corner of the closet, or on that end table in the bedroom? A great opportunity to clear away the space — and make room for more — is to donate them to the Independence or Monmouth libraries. Ongoing book sales help raise extra funding not provided in the city budgets.

The Friends of the Monmouth Library are having

the Spring Book Sale, beginning May 5 (noon to 2 p.m., members only), 2 until 8 p.m., open to the public; May 6, 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., open to the public. If you aren't a member, you can certainly join prior to the sale, or on the date of the sale (\$10, individual; family of two, \$20; family of three or more, \$25; lifetime, \$150).

Just a little reminder to MI Town residents — spring fever is a good thing to catch and enjoy, but try to remember to put on your responsible driver hat whenever you get behind the wheel. With spring break and warmer weather on the horizon, kids and cats and dogs and people of all ages are going to be out and about even more often, so be careful out there.

## PEDEE NEWS

April 22 is Kings Valley's annual school dinner and auction put on by the Parent Teacher Organization. Tickets are \$10, and it's always a lot of fun, especially with their auctioneer, Paul Thompson, who is absolutely amazing at getting good prices for their items. They're still looking for donations, so drop items off at the school during school hours. Plants, baked goods, and handcrafted items are always good. I'll be donating a small quilt for the occasion.

My sister Vicki turned 62 last week and quickly bought her National Park pass, a very valuable commodity which allows a per-



**ARLENE KOVASH**  
Columnist

son and whoever he or she is with to go into a National Park or monument for free, which saves a lot of money. It is good for the rest of your life, too. The thing is, it costs \$10 now but will go up to \$80 in the near future, so if you are 62 or older, get it fast. Check online on where to get one.

Paul Telfer spent 10 days in February with Red Cross, working in Sacramento for

Health Services in shelters for those who were displaced by the Oroville Dam disaster. Volunteering for Red Cross is a real way to help others in bad situations, as so many hands are needed. Talk to the Telfer on how to get involved.

Don't forget to go to Pedee Church's "rummage" and bake sale this weekend. They are trying to make the rummage more highend, which should be enticing. Also, the youth planted vegetable seedlings and will be selling them to help with missions.

I'm in Dallas, Texas, for an American Agri-Women meeting as I write — 85 de-

grees and NO rain. Of course, even though it's beautiful out, I'm freezing in a meeting in a hotel conference room. Bummer.

The students at Kings Valley Charter School held a science fair, and the first-grade class participated in an egg drop. Each kid designed a contraption that would prevent their egg from breaking from a height of 15 feet. Kailey Traglia wrapped her egg in bubble wrap and then placed it in a small plastic Folgers coffee can — no broken eggs! The other grades worked on projects either individually or in pairs, then judges selected a student from each class to give an award to.

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

These Polk County groups would welcome individuals who have time or expertise to volunteer. Organizations that would like to be added to this list should call 503-623-2373 or email [IONews@polkio.com](mailto:IONews@polkio.com).

- AARP Foundation Tax-Aide — 503-930-7636
- After DARC — 503-623-9501
- Arc of Polk County — 541-223-3261
- Central School District — 503-838-0030
- City of Dallas — 503-831-3502
- City of Independence — 503-838-1212
- City of Monmouth — 503-751-0145
- Crime Victims Assistance Program — 503-623-9268
- Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce — 503-623-2564
- Dallas Fire Department — 503-831-3532
- Dallas Food Bank — 503-623-3578
- Dallas Kids, Inc. — 503-623-6419
- Dallas Police Department — 503-831-3582
- Dallas Public Library — 503-623-2633
- Dallas Retirement Village — 503-623-5581
- Dallas School District — 503-623-5594
- Delbert Hunter Arboretum — 503-623-7359
- Girl Scouts of Southwest Washington and Oregon — 1-800-338-5248
- Ella Curran Food Bank — 503-917-1681
- Falls City Arts Center — 503-559-6291
- Falls City School District — 503-787-3531
- Family Building Blocks — 503-566-2132, ext. 308.
- H-2-O — 503-831-4736
- HART (Horses Adaptive Riding and Therapy) — 971-301-4278
- HandsOn Mid-Willamette Valley — 503-363-1651
- Heron Pointe Assisted Living — 503-838-6850
- Independence Health and Rehabilitation — 503-838-0001
- Independence Public Library — 503-838-1811
- Kings Valley Charter School — 541-929-2134
- Luckiamute Watershed Council — 503-837-0237
- Luckiamute Valley Charter School — 503-623-4837
- Meals on Wheels — 503-838-2084
- Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce — 503-838-4268
- Monmouth-Independence YMCA — 503-838-4042
- Monmouth Public Library — 503-838-1932
- Northwest Human Services — 503-588-5828
- Oregon Child Development Coalition — 503-838-2745
- OSU Extension Service - Polk County — 503-623-8395
- Perrydale School District — 503-623-2040
- Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Polk County Inc. — 503-623-8473
- Polk Community Development Corporation — 503-831-3173
- Polk County Community Emergency Response Team — 503-623-9396
- Polk County Museum — 503-623-6251
- Polk County Public Health — 503-623-8175
- Polk County Resource Center — 503-623-8429
- Polk Soil and Water Conservation District — 503-623-9680
- Relief Nursery Classroom — 503-566-2132
- Rickreall Watershed Council — 503-623-9680
- SABLE House — 503-623-6703
- SALT (Senior and law enforcement together) — 503-851-9366
- Salvation Army — 503-798-4783
- SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) — 503-391-8423
- Salem Health West Valley Hospital — 503-623-8301
- Victim Assistance Program-Polk Co. District Attorney's Office 503-623-9268 x1444
- Willamette Valley Hospice — 503-588-3600

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Continued from page 8A

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5

- **Scrabble with Betty** — 1 p.m., Independence Public Library, 175 Monmouth St., Independence. Scrabble games first Wednesday of every month. Free; refreshments and prizes available. 503-551-7687 or 503-838-1811.
- **Willamette Valley Food Assistance Program Food Bank** — 1:30 to 6:30 p.m., 888 Monmouth Cutoff Road, Building E, Dallas. Weekly distribution for eligible community members. 503-831-5634.
- **Yarning for Others** — 3 to 5 p.m., St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 1486 SW Levens St., Dallas. Knitters and crocheters gather to make clothing and accessories for those in need on the first Wednesday of every month. 503-689-7222.

**We're on a hunt for local Easter Egg Hunt events!**

Send us an email with information about the event to: [ionews@polkio.com](mailto:ionews@polkio.com) by 4pm on Thursday, April 6th.

**Itemizer-Observer** 147 SE Court St., Dallas  
503-623-2373 • [www.polkio.com](http://www.polkio.com)

**Love, hope, success, family, security.**

Barb Mlynchuk Ins Agency Inc  
Barb Mlynchuk, Agent  
1697 Monmouth St  
Independence, OR 97351  
Bus: 503-606-0066

Some things we all have in common. There's nobody like me to protect the things we all value. Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there. CALL ME TODAY.

1101022.1 State Farm, Home Office, Bloomington, IL

**LUCKIAMUTE DOMESTIC WATER COOPERATIVE BOARD MEETING**  
Monday 7:00 p.m.  
April 10th  
503-838-2075  
Location: Business Office  
8585 Suver Rd. • Monmouth

**Pencil us in!**  
[www.polkio.com](http://www.polkio.com)  
Polk County Itemizer-Observer

**4th Annual Survivor Dinner & Celebration**  
hosted by Eola Hills Winery  
Presented by Relay For Life of Polk County & Team Perrydale

**Saturday, April 1, 2017 at Eola Hills Wine Cellars**  
501 S. Pacific Highway 99W Rickreall

5:30 ~ Doors open, Meet & Mingle  
6:15 to 8:00 ~ Dinner & Entertainment

Every survivor and guest will be our guests of honor at this wonderful event. Please join us for an evening of food, fun and festivities.

To RSVP your name and the name of one guest, contact Jen Levesque at 503.837.0118 or [jenniferlevesque01@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferlevesque01@gmail.com)  
RSVPs are encouraged by March 20, but are not required.  
The opportunity to register for Relay For Life will be available.

**Relay For Life ~ June 3-4, 2017 • Dallas High School, Dallas**  
[www.relayforlife.org/polkcountyor](http://www.relayforlife.org/polkcountyor)