

Getting a start on your spring garden

Ready, set — time to start spring planting

By Susan Romersa
For Seaside Signal

Author Maggie Stuckey gives new meaning to thinking “inside the box.”

A packed crowd filled the Community Room of the Seaside Public Library Saturday, March 12, as author and expert gardener Maggie Stuckey presented facts and ideas on container gardening.

Stuckey was invited to talk on the subject by Friends of the Seaside Library. After the constant rain and recent 75 mph winds, the audience appeared to be ready and quite enthusiastic for nice weather to arrive, with the promise of growing vegetables and herbs in the spring and coming summer — in convenient containers!

Stuckey’s latest book “The Bountiful Container” was on sale. She described it as a guide to growing a bounty of edible foods in containers in small areas — patios, decks, or in and among plants in larger garden areas. She grew up in a family that valued gardening — and equated gardens with food — food to share with family and friends. “With container gardening, you need to be smarter about what you select to plant,” Stuckey said. “You have to water frequently because the containers tend to dry out faster.”

She suggested moisture retaining pellets mixed in with the soil when plants are started. This gradually releases moisture over time. She also recommended mixing fertilizer to half strength and watering every four or five days.

Stuckey, a Portland resident, pointed out a technique used by commercial farmers to stagger planting stages. As spring produce fades, introduce a summer crop in the container. As summer heat slowly dries out your plants, and tomatoes and beans start to



SUSAN ROMERSA/FOR SEASIDE SIGNAL

Maggie Stuckey preparing a container.

diminish, start your fall crop.

Stuckey advised planting with potting soil and not top soil. Someone in the audience asked if you need to start in the spring with new potting soil. She said she has gotten a little lazy and now just adds potting soil on top of last year’s soil. She says to look for a fertilizer that has “17/17/17” on the label. This has nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium for healthy flowers and leaves. Be sure you have a hole at the bottom of your container for good drainage.

Stuckey demonstrated putting together an attractive bowl of herbs — with a purple hue — and at the end of the event, a lucky member of the audience won it in a drawing.

To learn more in-depth information on the subject, her book “The Bountiful Container” covers vegetables (17 varieties) peppers (19 varieties), beans, Thumbelina carrots, Chioggia beets, and sugar snap peas. She delves into herbs, edible flowers and some fruits. “With few exceptions, most all produce can be raised in a container,” she said. Her book goes into a plant-by-plant guide for growing beautiful vegetables and flowers.

Stuckey is the author of seven other books on gardening and horticulture; for more information, visit magiestuckey.com.

What’s Pouring at the Coast

Seventh annual festival highlights artisan beers March 18 and 19 in Seaside

Katherine Lacaze
For Seaside Signal

It’s that time of year again when a handpicked lineup of Pacific Northwest craft brews intertwines with the culinary offerings of local high schoolers during the Oregon Coast Brewer’s Dinner, the kick-off event for the seventh annual Pouring at the Coast event, presented by the Seaside Chamber of Commerce and Seaside Brewing Company.

The dinner starts at 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 18 at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center. Under the direction of instructor and Astoria chef Chris Holen, eight students from Seaside High School’s culinary arts program will prepare a five-course meal including Oregon pink shrimp, arugula pesto and roasted beets; carrot soup, cured ling cod, radish sprouts and fresh horseradish; seared chicken breast, citrus rice pilaf and roasted mushrooms; beef shoulder tender, kale, truffle oil and cauliflower; and chocolate mousse, Northwest berry crumble and sweet goat cheese. The courses will be paired with five craft beers from the Northwest, still in the selection process.

Reservations for the Brewer’s Dinner, which are required, are \$65 per person or tables of 10 for \$800. Half of the net proceeds from the dinner will go to benefit the Seaside High School Culinary Program.

Pouring at the Coast continues Saturday, March 19, from 3 to 8 p.m. with a craft beer festival featuring about 40 craft breweries, primarily from Oregon, Washington and California. Jimmy Griffin, owner of Seaside Brewing Company, makes the annual selection of featured craft beers for the festival.

The Sons of Aloha and The Tablerockers, a traditional Chicago blues-style band, will be performing live. Tickets for the festival are \$10, which includes a beer glass and three tasting tickets, or \$20, which includes a



PHOTO BY JOSHUA BESSEX

Kegs are stacked in the corner of the brewing room at Seaside Brewing.

glass and 10 tasting tickets.

Over the years, the event has featured more than 60 types of craft beers, representing nearly 30 breweries in the region.

High school participation

This is the second year Seaside High School’s culinary arts students will participate in Pouring at the Coast. The students work with Holen and his staff to create a five-course menu. The day of the event, the group will head to the convention center to prepare the food in the facility’s kitchen. While Holen is working with eight instead of 19 students this year, he doesn’t foresee that affecting the group’s productivity or ability to serve the food in an efficient manner.

“They’ll just be busier all day than they were last year,” he said. “It’s totally attainable.”

He plans to divide the students into teams to oversee various courses, and then they will work together on plating, “so we can put out plates twice as fast,” Holen said. After all, the students have to serve about 135 people at the dinner.

Along with preparing dinner during the Seaside Three Course Challenge meet in September, the Brewer’s Dinner is the program’s largest fundraising activity.

Additionally, the dinner serves as the final exam for sec-

ond-semester students. As the second semester ends March 11, Holen has “to bring them back for a couple of days and take them out of their other classes” to pull off the dinner.

“I give them an incomplete until after the beer dinner,” he said. “That’s their final exam. And it’s about executing it and following through and showing up on time and showing up, period. That’s what the lesson is about.”

In general, he believes in giving the students practical assignments to improve their work ethic and give them marketable skills in the local hospitality market.

A love of craft beer

During the festival, tasters can vote on their favorite beer. At the end, the brewery with the most votes will win the People’s Choice Award and a trophy — or rather, a surfboard the brewery can display and bring back

the following year. The reigning champion is Wild Ride Brewing of Redmond.

The Oregon Coast Homebrewer’s Competition also is a highlight of Pouring at the Coast. The competition is open to all home brewers, at least 21 years old, from across the country. They can submit — either through drop-off or mail-in — one exhibit in each category. The entries are judged March 18 and the morning of March 19 according to the 2015 edition of the Beer Judge Certification Program style guidelines. Winners are announced at the end of the festival.

The festival has evolved since its early days, when it featured about 10 breweries from the local area. However, while the venue has changed and the number of participants grown, the culture surrounding the festival has remained, Griffin said. In general, people want to collectively celebrate and appreciate an array of fine craft brews in a single location, rather than party and get wild.

“Culturally, it has remained a tasting festival. People are going because they are fascinated with and have a love for craft beer,” Griffin said. “It provides a really unique opportunity for people who wouldn’t otherwise be exposed to these beers to have access to them.”

Besides, he added, who doesn’t want to attend a beer fest at the beach? And because the event takes place indoors, weather is not an issue.

“Whether it’s pouring at the coast or not, Pouring at the Coast still goes on,” Griffin said.

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