

# Help available for first time gardeners

The faltering economy, combined with interest in healthy food choices has led to an increase in calls to Oregon State University Extension Service county offices with questions about growing food in home gardens – and more calls are expected as spring approaches.

One of the most compelling phone calls came in late fall of last year, according to Gail Langellotto, statewide coordinator of the Master Gardeners program.

“It was a difficult time, as gas prices and subsequently the cost of food surpassed the means of many people,” she said. “The man on the phone asked, ‘What can I grow that will produce food for my family right now?’”

The worried caller’s options for starting a garden late in the fall were limited. But Langellotto had an answer: A container garden would be easiest, she told him, and leafy greens could survive the winter if the containers were placed in the sun, out of the wind, and wrapped with plastic to keep the soil warm.

People who want to start

gardening are concerned not only about the price of food, but growing fresh produce that they know is safe. Many also want to know what grows well in their area and how to participate in community gardens, according to reports from county Extension staff members.

Gardening seminars also have seen increasing numbers. A Benton County lecture in January on planning a garden in the Willamette Valley drew a standing-room-only crowd of 220. The number of names on a waiting list to rent plots in the Portland area’s 30 community gardens has grown to 1,000, according to Extension’s Clackamas County horticulturist Weston Miller, and landowners are offering to donate land for more community gardens.

Gardening help is available at most county Extension offices from home horticulture experts and Master Gardeners, who are trained to answer questions. More than 3,500 Master Gardeners are active in 28 of Oregon’s 36 counties as volunteers and last year donated more than 173,000 hours to helping home gardeners.

“When the Master Gardener

program began in 1976, its focus was on diagnosing plant problems and offering solutions,” Langellotto said. “While still a major focus, Master Gardener volunteers also provide educational programs on topics such as pest management, composting and sustainable landscaping, as well as getting a garden started.”

OSU Extension’s, “Growing Your Own,” a practical guide to gardening for first-time gardeners, is available online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/html/grow/grow/>. Copies of a printed version are available at county Extension offices.

Most Extension offices offer gardening classes on a variety of topics. Check with the OSU Extension Service in Washington County, 18640 NW Walker Rd., No. 1400, Beaverton, OR 97006-8927, 503-821-1150, <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/washington/> for more information. In Columbia County, contact OSU Columbia County Extension, 505 N. Columbia River Hwy, St. Helens, at 503-397-3462, or <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/>

# Saved by a life jacket? Marine Board wants you

If you’ve ever been boating and unexpectedly wound up in the water with your life jacket on, then the Marine Board wants to hear your story.

“For the last few years we’ve focused our life jacket campaign on some amazing survivor stories,” says Ashley Massey, Public Information Officer for the Marine Board. “We’ve highlighted a variety of survivors, including an angler whose boat capsized near the Columbia River bar, an OSP Trooper whose boat capsized on the Santiam River, a duck hunter whose motor malfunctioned and fell overboard, and a boater floating the McKenzie River when his pontoon boat came apart. In all of those cases, the boaters would have likely drowned if they hadn’t been wearing their life jackets,” Massey warns. “None of them expected to get wet.”

The Marine Board has been educating the public about wearing life jackets for years, and for the last six years, has

produced public service announcements for television and radio and produced print ads with the survivors’ stories.

“It’s important to create a message that people can identify with. By using real-life stories, boating situations hit a little closer to home,” Massey says. Although adults are not required to wear a life jacket, only to have one “readily accessible,” often there isn’t time in an emergency to put one on.

“We’re interested this year in hearing from boaters who’ve had a close call on a lake or reservoir in a motorized boat, and survived because they

wore a life jacket,” says Massey. One story will be selected and the survivor will be highlighted in television and radio spots.

To share your story, contact Ashley Massey at 503-378-2623 or [Ashley.massey@state.or.us](mailto:Ashley.massey@state.or.us).

## More stocked trout coming

One more trout stocking is scheduled for Vernonia Lake, to take place the week of April 27, with Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife set to stock 2,500 trout in the lake.

## Power of the People

Power of the People by Marc Farmer, General Manager of West Oregon Electric will be back on May 7.



## Fairboard gets needed tractor

It has been a long time coming and a much needed purchase, but the Columbia County Fairboard finally raised enough money to purchase a new tractor. A tractor is a constant need at the Event Complex and has been a goal of the Fairboard for several years. “We have over 70 acres here”, said Event Complex Manager Ronda Courtney, “there is always the need for a tractor. We have been practically duct taping our old tractor together for the past few years and just praying it would hang in there until we could get a new one.”

The Fairboard attended the Northwest Ag Show in January to take a look at what was available and make some contacts with dealerships. After sending out requests for quotes, the Fairboard reviewed quotes from eight dealers on 11 tractors. “We really wanted to buy locally if at all possible but it also had to make sense to us financially,” said Ronda Court-

ney, manager of the Event Complex.

The Fairboard chose to purchase a lightly used Kubota 5040HD with a new loader and set of pallet forks. Sunset Equipment, the local Kubota dealership, found a rental tractor that was for sale from a southern Oregon dealership that was going out of business, allowing the Fairboard to save a couple thousand dollars off the price of buying new.

Funding for the tractor has come from several sources over the past five years, according to Fairboard President Evelyn Hudson. “We combined the proceeds from the last two years of the Columbia County Oktoberfest, a large donation from the Lowell McGregor Group and a portion of the proceeds from the Means Nursery plant sale at last year’s Fair, to make the purchase. We finally had enough,” said Hudson.

Picture courtesy of Fairboard.

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