

INVESTING IN POLK COUNTY 2023 IMPACT REPORT



Photo: Joshua Rainey Photography

Improving farming practices and profitability, **promoting** sustainable community horticulture, **engaging** youth to reach their fullest potential, **building** a community of health and **enhancing** natural resources.

\$1 grows into \$5

A **\$1** investment in OSU Extension Service by Polk County **leverages \$5** in other resources and services.



Oregon State
University

MEET YOUR



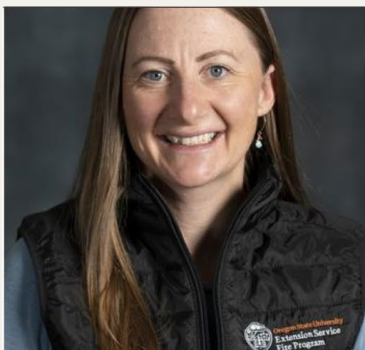
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Seed Certification Aide



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Small Farms Program



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Horticulture, Retired



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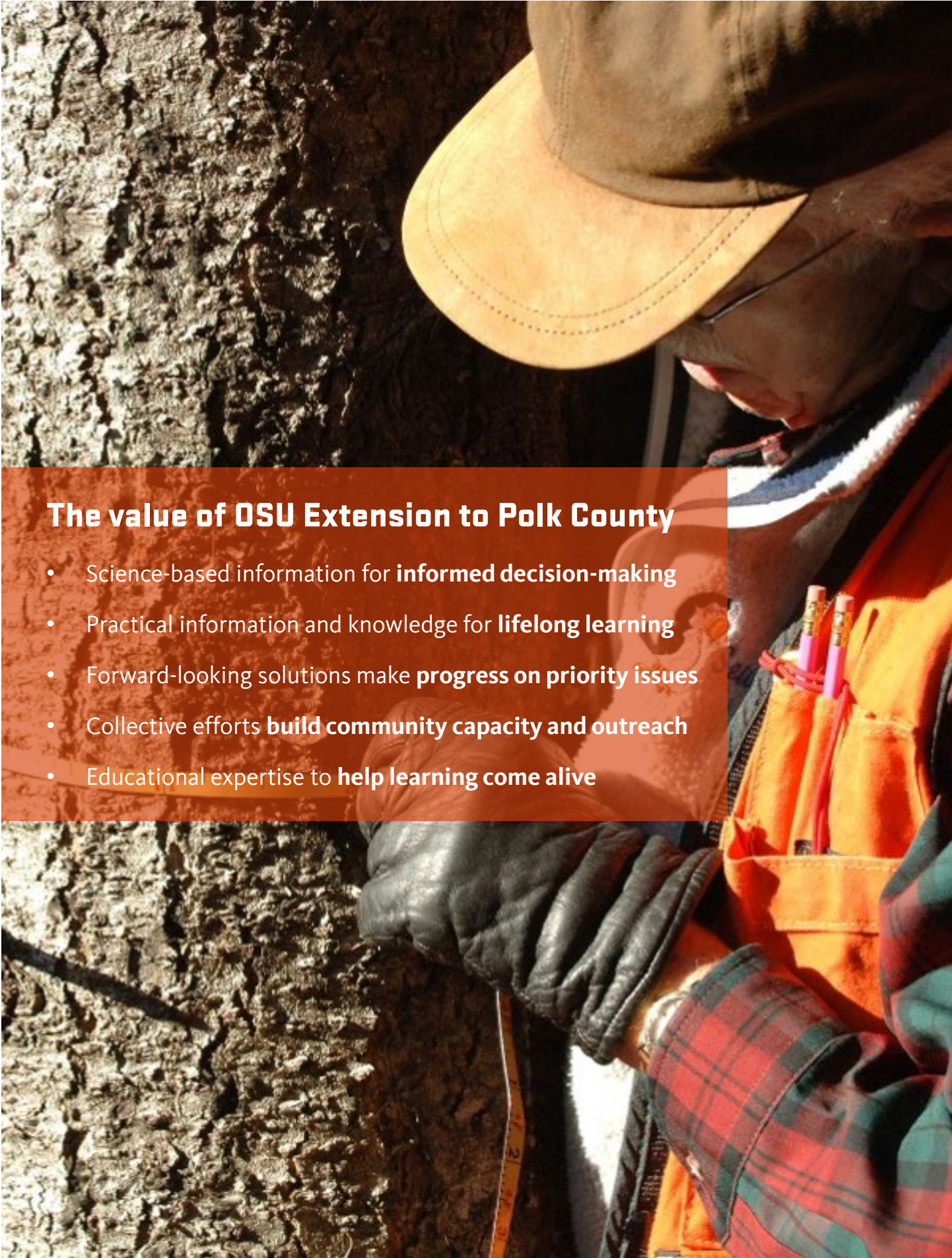


Jessica Shumake
Office Specialist



Hayley White
Small Farms Agriculture
Program Coordinator

EXTENSION TEAM



The value of OSU Extension to Polk County

- Science-based information for **informed decision-making**
- Practical information and knowledge for **lifelong learning**
- Forward-looking solutions make **progress on priority issues**
- Collective efforts **build community capacity and outreach**
- Educational expertise to **help learning come alive**

4-H Youth Development



385

Youth members



68

Adult Leaders



902

STEP, Camp and School
Enrichment Participants



234

County Fair Exhibitors



1,558

County Fair Project Entries

Junior Master Gardener Day Camp took place at the Polk County Extension office, engaging **30 youth** in high quality outdoor and horticulture education. All youth received 50% scholarships granted by a partnership with the **Dallas Garden Club**.

Polk County Mini Grants

- Awarded \$4000 to conduct a **free archery workshop** and purchase new bows, arrows and targets for archery club.
- Awarded \$3800 to purchase **3 complete kitchen sets**, used for a summer Foods Day camp, engaging **13 youth**, as well as other classes.

Outreach Classes

Organized traditional and non-traditional 4-H outreach classes to **reach more youth and families**, including 3 Self-Defense classes in West Salem and Independence, Cards and Scrapbooking at Dallas and Monmouth libraries, Vegetable Container Gardening, Painting Ceramics, and an Open Art Studio series, just to name a few.

School Partnership

4-H joined the Oakdale Heights Elementary School field trip and taught a 30-minute seed-starting class to **95 first graders**.

Fairgrounds Arena Improvement

4-H partnered with the Polk County fairgrounds to acquire a **500 ton sand donation, valued at \$30,000**, to renovate the horse arena. Numerous businesses, families and staff volunteered time, resources and labor to renovate the arena in time to be used for the 2023 Polk County Fair.



Master Gardeners

OSU MASTER GARDENER™ PROGRAM

1,190

People reached



87

Master Gardener
Volunteers



421

Continuing Education
Credits earned



1,214

Pound of produce donated

The Inspiration Garden: And Educational Gem

In 2023 the Master Gardener volunteers enhanced their outreach in the garden through a summer series of over **13 classes and workshops and 7 group tours**. We continued our collaborations with the City of Independence Library, partnering to install a Story Walk in the garden and hosted three interactive programs for youth and their families through the Summer Reading Program.

National Recognition

In 2023 the Inspiration Garden was selected as a **USDA's People's Garden**. This recognition is given to gardens that grow using sustainable practices that benefit people and wildlife and teach about gardening and resilient, local food systems.



5,210

Hours volunteered,
valued at

\$165,678

Small Farms

HIGHLIGHTS

17 Polk County farm visits

8 Events, including...

- ✓ Renewable Energy Options Webinar
- ✓ Small Farms Conference
- ✓ Small Farms School
- ✓ Small Farms Social
- ✓ Field to Market Series at Indy Commons
- ✓ Polk County Local Working Group
- ✓ Peedee Creek Social
- ✓ Polk County Fair Cultivating Tent

More than **323** Polk County Participants

Mid-Valley Small Farms Program

The Mid-Valley Small Farms Program serves commercial small farm entrepreneurs as well as non-commercial small acreage landowners. Our focus embraces both organic and conventional farming systems. Contact us for questions ranging from "I just bought land, what do I do with it?" to "I'm experiencing something odd that I haven't seen in all my years of farming!" We enjoy working with both new and experienced small farmers.

OLEA HIGHLIGHTS

Oregon Olive School – Guest speakers, field tours, farm tours for olive growers

Olive Harvest Event – Olive harvest and field tour

Oregon Olive Growers Association Meeting – Research Update



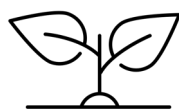
Small Farms OLEA Project

OSU *OLEA* PROJECT

The *Olea* project is evaluating **118 cultivars** of olives, planted at NWREC in 2021, for adaptability to our region. A research project involving this many olive cultivars has never before been attempted anywhere in the world. The project simultaneously provides innovative data on growing olives in cool regions worldwide while addressing real local issues.

A significant freeze event occurred in western Oregon from January 12th to the 16th, 2024. Temperatures at NWREC dropped to 15°F on January 13th and 14th. As important as the low temperature, was the fact that the freezing temperatures were sustained for an unusually long period of time. The temperature did not rise above 32°F for a total of 112 consecutive hours and remained below 20°F for 19.5 hours. This event produced immediate evidence of damage on some olive cultivars, mostly as defoliation, discoloration of foliage and shoot tip dieback. To document this damage, a visual rating of the damage was made on February 23rd, 2024.

About 30 of the 116 cultivars in the evaluation were rated as having minimal damage, including cultivars such as 'Leccino', which are currently grown in the Willamette Valley. 16 of the cultivars were exhibiting significant damage, including bark cracking and defoliation. The remaining 70 cultivars were intermediate in the evident damage. However, full symptom development does not occur until the trees are exposed to warm spring temperature, so these results should be regarded as preliminary and the rating will be repeated in May.



Groundwater Education

Approximately **23%** of Oregonians rely on domestic wells, or private wells, as their primary source of potable water.

WELL WATER NITRATE SCREENING

Year round **FREE** screening available at the Polk County Extension office in addition to drive-through testing clinics and community events.

27 Screenings at Polk Extension Office

92 Contacts at **2** different clinic locations in Polk County.

Provided numerous one-on-one consultations on water quality and septic system issues, including nitrate screenings.

RURAL LANDOWNER EDUCATION

Living with Your Well and Septic System

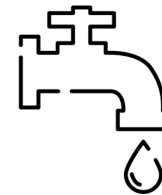
87 participants in 5 online webinars

Rural residents learn the basics of groundwater, wells and septic systems.

Before You Buy Rural Land

Future and recent landowners, and realtors, learn important topics related to land management and rural living.

162 (Regional) participants



Agritourism



Oregon State University Extension agritourism program in Marion, Polk and Yamhill Counties engages the agriculture and tourism communities to foster connections through research-based knowledge and education and seeks to strengthen the understanding of agritourism and farm direct sales in order to help build **financially viable** farms, encourage **sustainable practices** and **industry resilience** through networks and educational resources.

THE FIRST-EVER AGRITOURISM IMPACT STUDY

...for the Willamette Valley was completed and published. **An Initial Economic Impact Estimate of Agritourism in Oregon's Willamette Valley** provides valuable insights into the economic contributions of agritourism in the Willamette Valley and highlights its importance for local farming communities.

The study results can be found online at <https://beav.es/cky> for the full report and <https://beav.es/ckF> for the executive summary.

Developing a Successful Agritourism Business in Oregon

This self-paced online course won the **national communication award** in 2023 from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents.

The course can be found <https://beav.es/w88>.

EDUCATION

Agricultural Tourism 101 was held at the Polk County Extension office in May for any Polk County residents interested in having on-farm sales and activities. Topics covered included What is Agritourism?, legal considerations, risk management, marketing and customer service/hospitality. Six Polk County residents attended the session, and resulted in follow-up farm visits and one-on-one teaching contacts.

15 individual teaching contacts



SNAP-Education

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ **6** Farm Share Rx CSA produce distributions, providing healthy recipe tastings and education
- ✓ Six-week Cooking Matters for adults series in West Salem
- ✓ Member of Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde Food Access Community Team (FACT)
- ✓ Outreach and nutrition education at food pantry distributions
- ✓ 5 trainings for early childhood professionals in English and Spanish, supporting healthy eating habits for youth.
- ✓ Led nutrition, gardening, and physical activity related events in Polk County for youth and families.
- ✓ In October, welcomed Hannah Nelson as the new Education Program Assistant, serving Polk County



Growing Healthy Kids

GHK is a garden-based nutrition education curriculum for 2nd and 3rd graders.

SNAP-Ed is partnering with Lucky Crow Farm in Polk County to grow produce for students to taste during weekly teacher-led lessons.

SNAP-Ed received a grant from Pacific Source which will be used to pay the farmer for their time, effort, and cost of the produce, which will be delivered to 65 participating 2nd and 3rd grade classrooms in the Marion, Polk, and Yamhill region.



Master Food Preservers



806

Hotline Calls

1 of 4

Calls were about canning fruits, tomatoes and salsa.

1 of 8

Calls for advice about canning equipment.

80%

Of calls were flagged as a serious food safety issue.

Master Food Preserver Program Revamp

In 2023, a ten-county collaborative group of Extension faculty came together with the goal of revitalizing and expanding the volunteer Master Food Preserver program.

The 2023 Master Food Preserver certification course was offered in a hybrid format to improve accessibility of the course.

66 trainees in Western Oregon participated in the course to become local experts in home food preservation, including six Polk County residents.

Resources

We work in the county to have a meaningful presence, deepen our impact and put information and expertise within reach of all Polk County residents so they may thrive in their community, be lifted by growing economies and share pride in the flourishing ecosystem of our county.

RESOURCES ACCESSIBLE TO POLK COUNTY RESIDENTS

OSU Extension youth portal providing educational resources by subject and by grade level

extension.oregonstate.edu/families-health/youth

Food Hero's budget friendly and nutritious recipes foodhero.org

Ask Extension. We have experts in family and health, community development, food and agriculture, coastal issues, forestry, programs for young people, and gardening

extension.oregonstate.edu/ask-expert

Extension Publications

catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu

POLK EXTENSION CITIZEN ADVISORY NETWORK (PECAN)

PECAN's purpose is to provide a network of volunteers who are willing to advocate on behalf of the OSU Extension Service, and to provide and coordinate local advice and counsel to the Regional Director of OSU Extension Service Polk County regarding current and future direction for the Extension programs.

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