Welcome and thank you for exploring the OSU Extension style guide!

As you know, OSU launched a new brand platform and creative campaign this spring (2017). Over the past few months, we have worked closely with Ologie (the agency that developed OSU’s new brand) to create an OSU Extension sub-brand.

We invested in this branding initiative to **elevate awareness of OSU Extension's quality, relevance, and impact** among stakeholders, advocates, learners, and throughout the university. We engaged Ologie to help us fine-tune how we consistently talk about and visually represent OSU Extension.

Our brand is more than just a new logo and using certain words. It is about delivering a unified and consistent message. It is a foundation on which to build future marketing initiatives. And it also links us to one of our greatest strengths: our relationship with Oregon State University.

The Extension style guide builds on the foundational OSU brand. It will help us develop a clear understanding of who we are, what we do, and the value we bring to the state and the university, and it will solidify an identifiable visual identity.

Each one of us has an important role to play in building awareness of OSU Extension. Using this Extension style guide will facilitate the adoption of consistent practices to increase the effectiveness of our outreach efforts. New tools and examples of newly branded work will be added to the Extension style guide in the coming weeks and months.

We’ll be learning together how to use these tools to their utmost advantage. If you have questions or suggestions about how to make the Extension style guide more useful to your everyday work, please contact Ann Marie Murphy (annmarie.murphy@oregonstate.edu).

Onward!

Scott Reed  
Vice Provost, University Outreach and Engagement  
Director, OSU Extension Service

Lindsey Shirley  
Associate Provost, University Outreach and Engagement  
Associate Director, OSU Extension Service
# OUR BRAND POSITIONING

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# OUR VOICE

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OUR BRAND POSITIONING
POSITIONING

The OSU Extension sub-brand strengthens the essence of the overall OSU brand positioning. The OSU positioning statement captures what we as a university do, how we do it, and why it matters. Specifically, OSU Extension contributes to this position by providing community access to the resources, knowledge, and expertise of the university. Our community outreach and engagement work grounds the mission of the university in a very real and relevant way.

Our sub-brand will work in all ways to reinforce and strengthen this positioning.

Essence of OSU Positioning

FROM OREGON, FOR THE WORLD

OSU Positioning Statement

With steadfast determination, people from Oregon and around the globe gather to explore frontiers and solve today's most pressing issues. Together, we innovate to deliver far-reaching solutions that guarantee the prosperity of our state and world, enriching the lives of all people. We transform learners into leaders. We are unwavering and accountable, because the world can count on us for a healthier, more sustainable future.

Note

Like From Oregon, For the World, this statement should never be used externally. It's a further internal expression that guides everything we say and do.
To articulate the OSU Extension story and support the university positioning, we must define and prioritize our messages. These messages are organized into a hierarchy through attribute and benefit mapping.

**CORE MESSAGE**
The most concise articulation of our role in the world.

**ATTRIBUTES: What we offer**
An attribute is what we offer to our audiences. Attributes include the products, services, knowledge and unique offers that we bring to the table.

**BENEFITS: What they get**
A benefit is what our audiences get. It’s the value of the attributes that we offer, the answer to the question “so what?” or “why should they care?”
OSU EXTENSION MESSAGING

As an extension of the university’s messaging and the four pillars of the master brand story, our message map organizes OSU Extension’s strengths and unique characteristics to illustrate the specific ways that we contribute to advancing the university’s mission.

Attributes (what we offer)

- driving conversation and action toward a refined definition of OSU Extension
- protecting and sustaining the vital factors of a quality life
- convening partners to solve real-world challenges
- deep roots in and commitment to the communities we serve

Benefits (what they get)

- empowerment that fosters real, sustainable change
- multidimensional discovery, learning and engagement
- healthier families, thriving ecosystems and growing economies
- a dependable source of inspiration and innovation for the future

CORE MESSAGE

an unmatched positive effect throughout the state

OSU Extension offers...

- a powerful network of diverse researchers, specialists and educators who work collaboratively with communities in Oregon
OSU EXTENSION MESSAGING

LEADERSHIP
- world-leading research expertise and academic teaching
- connection to a nationwide network of land grant universities
- an earned reputation locally and nationally

ROLE
- extending university resources and knowledge to the state of Oregon
- community based education and development for every stage of life
- proactively identifying the needs of those we serve

COLLABORATION
- an impartial resource for clients
- a catalyst for shared achievement and progress
- a network of trained volunteers

ATTITUDE
- a relatable approach to education and answers
- sensitivity to the cultures, ethics and values of all people
- active listening that detects true areas of need

OSU Extension offers...
a powerful network of diverse researchers, specialists and educators who work collaboratively with communities in Oregon

Attributes (what we offer)

Benefits (what they get)

an unmatched positive effect throughout the state

empowerment that fosters real, sustainable change
multidimensional discovery, learning and engagement
healthier families, thriving ecosystems and growing economies
a dependable source of inspiration and innovation for the future
OSU Extension offers...

a powerful network of diverse researchers, specialists and educators who work collaboratively with communities in Oregon

Attributes (what we offer)

- science-based information that propels ideas forward
- a broader view of the nation and the challenges that exist
- leadership that people look to and depend on

Benefits (what they get)

- empowering real, sustainable change
- multi-dimensional discovery, learning and engagement
- healthier families, thriving ecosystems and growing economies
- a dependable source of inspiration and innovation for the future

- transparent and honest partnerships
- lifelong relationships that are mutually beneficial
- greater relevance and forward-looking solutions
- information that is made usable and actionable
- respect for and inclusion of different backgrounds and voices
- place-based knowledge for making a meaningful difference

Core Message

an unmatched positive effect throughout the state
MESSAGING PILLARS

OSU Extension shares the same messaging pillars as the master brand — leadership, role, collaboration and attitude — but delivers on them in a unique way. These statements articulate specifically how OSU Extension thinks about and delivers on these pillars.

The statements should be used as a frame of reference for crafting specific messages. Periodically revisiting these statements will help ensure that our writing communicates these important traits of OSU Extension while staying connected to the university brand.

LEADERSHIP

We’re on the leading edge of the most critical issues facing Oregonians, a conduit for getting world-class research and knowledge from the university to the communities we serve. As part of a nationwide network, we’re driving conversation and action toward the next generation of OSU Extension. Our partners look to us as a source of inspiration and innovation, knowing that we’ll deliver every time.

ROLE

As a land, sea, sun, and space grant institution, we have certain defining responsibilities. We proudly work every day to uphold our promise of serving the state. In doing so, we enhance the lives of all Oregonians, our businesses, and the environments and systems they operate within, empowering them all to thrive.

COLLABORATION

The crucial issues facing Oregonians are complex and multidimensional. One person alone cannot create as much impact as many who work together. This is why we collaborate and engage with Oregon communities, inviting them to share in honest, transparent partnerships that achieve mutual success.

ATTITUDE

We believe that the best way to make a difference is to get straight to the heart of the matter. We start with an accessible and relatable approach and build on it with surefire passion. We listen to our clients, respect their need, and amplify their voices to create solutions together that empower real, sustainable change. It’s what we’ve done for more than 100 years, and we’re committed to doing it for the next 100 years as well.
AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

Segmenting audiences is important to communicating in a more targeted, thoughtful way. These audience segments bridge OSU Extension's flexible programming around commodity-, place- or interest-based communities, with more meaningful communications.

At times, individual target audiences may shift among segments, depending on the role they are fulfilling. Our communication decisions should be informed by what OSU Extension is looking to achieve with the specific audience target.
AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

PRODUCERS

OSU Extension’s greatest value to this group is accessible knowledge and service.

Producers look to OSU Extension as a trusted partner and source of science-based knowledge and research. They need to know that we’re here to help them, whether it’s through the production of commodities or through providing other goods and services, such as health care and education. They trust us for our credibility and our ability to provide impartial information. They value our long-standing commitment to being accessible.

When communicating with this group, emphasize these personality traits: Helpful, Welcoming, Progressive.

Example groups might include, but are not limited to:
• Small farm owners, foresters, fisheries, commercial and industrial agriculture producers
AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

STEWARDS

OSU Extension’s greatest value to this group is partnership with shared values and purpose.

Stewards have an interest in ensuring safe, responsible, sustainable and ethical practices. Often they are regulatory or governing organizations that monitor the production and distribution of commodities, goods or services. They need to know that OSU Extension is upholding its promise to make the state a safe, sustainable and prosperous place to live, grow and do business. It’s important that they recognize our role in protecting and sustaining the vital factors of a quality life, as well as our willingness to collaborate with them to accomplish shared success.

When communicating with this group, emphasize these personality traits: Conscientious, Collaborative, Progressive

Example groups might include, but are not limited to:
- Land owners, conservationists, ecologists, coastal organizations, business owners, food processors and distributors, regulatory agencies, Oregon tourism organizations, boaters, loggers, public health groups, school systems (K–12), Master Gardeners, community colleges
AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

ADVOCATES

OSU Extension’s greatest value to this group is the positive effect we can create together.

Advocates are our fans and supporters—the ones who act in our favor in a variety of ways. They can be organizations, businesses, individuals or government entities. Together with this group, we can enhance the positive effect we have throughout the state by way of funding, shared goals and the opportunity to implement new programs. It’s important to communicate our leadership and our approach to collaboration.

When communicating with this group, emphasize these personality traits: Visionary, Collaborative, Adventurous

Example groups might include, but are not limited to:
- Extension volunteers, non-governmental organizations, local and state government, and federal government, legislators, partner organizations, funders, sponsors, community leaders, OSU administration and alumni
AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

LEARNERS

OSU Extension’s greatest value to this group is breadth and expertise of our diverse network.

Learners are those who benefit, directly or indirectly, from our programs and partners. Many in this group have direct connections to Extension through a program they currently participate in. It’s important that they understand the breadth of programming that we provide, and that the programs are a part of both OSU Extension and Oregon State University. Learners have a wealth of knowledge from which OSU Extension and the university can benefit. This needs to be respected and acknowledged, resulting in an exchange of information that benefits everyone.

When communicating with this group, emphasize these personality traits: Helpful, Welcoming, Progressive

Example groups might include, but are not limited to:
• Urban residents, gardeners, youth, families, seniors, non traditional and place-bound learners, outdoor recreationalists, tourists, English learners, prospective students
AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

INTERNAL

OSU Extension’s greatest value to this group is the direct connection to Oregon communities.

Internal audience groups fuel the work and services that we provide. They include employees within OSU Extension and also within the university. This group is responsible for knowing and understanding the true scope of work we perform. They need to be able to articulate our entire story consistently and compellingly. It’s important that they stay informed about the activity occurring with OSU Extension, because awareness of these efforts will lead to new opportunities for us and a greater appreciation for our work.

When communicating with this group, emphasize these personality traits: Helpful, Collaborative, Visionary

Example groups might include, but are not limited to:
- Extension staff and faculty, OSU academic units and leadership, researchers, specialists
PERSONALITY

OSU Extension’s personality sets the tone for how we communicate. These traits drive the voice and image for all Extension communications. We share some of our personality traits with the university master brand, but additional traits apply specifically to OSU Extension. Depending on the intention and audience for a given communication piece, we can lead with a collection of traits that best represent the tone and voice we want to convey.

COLLABORATIVE
We’re better together

CONSCIENTIOUS
Aware, with integrity and conviction

VISIONARY
Creatively leading the way, taking on issues

WELCOMING
Friendly, open to all and enriched by difference

PROGRESSIVE
Pursuing innovative practices that lead to proven methods of thinking and doing

HELPFUL
Focused on service that meets the needs of our communities

ADVENTUROUS
Having the courage to seek out new solutions
OUR VOICE
THE OREGON STATE MASTER BRAND CREATIVE PLATFORM

There's the brand we express to the world — through print, the web, on buildings and in person. But then there's the very essence we reflect on before our pen hits the paper or our fingers strike the keys.

The OSU Extension story builds on the master brand platform to further reinforce the impact of the university.

Out There

At Oregon State, we have a responsibility.
To our state. To our region. To every part of the globe.
We're obligated to solve today's most pressing issues.

And to do so, we travel to the highest peaks and the deepest depths. To verdant orchards and vibrant meadowlands.
To communities fragile and flourishing.

To the very edge of what's known and back, to where answers coalesce in labs and classrooms, virtual and physical.

Where discourse and discovery are informed by a culture that embraces the worth of individuals and the value of serving everyone.

Every day, fulfilling our duty to embrace the land, explore the seas, study the sun and search the cosmos.

And in every mind we enlighten, every life we enrich, every challenge we face and solution we forge,

we're OUT THERE.

Serving the people of Oregon.
Of our nation.
And of the world.

Tip
Revisit this from time to time. Make it part of your pre-writing ritual. Will these words ever be read or heard verbatim? No. But they will echo through everything we write, compose or speak.
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Our message will naturally shift based on the audience. Different personality traits will come into play depending on the audience, and while the core content remains consistent, the tone will change.

Here is how the description of OSU Extension might shift based on audience, and which of the Extension brand personality traits help inform the tone.

OSU Extension Service message:

Original
OSU Extension puts information and expertise within reach of all Oregonians so they may thrive in their communities, be lifted by growing economies, and share pride in the flourishing ecosystems of Oregon.

Personality Traits

PRODUCERS
Helpful
Welcoming
Progressive

OSU Extension is your essential resource for knowledge in your field, so you can draw upon expertise, build on best practices, and fulfill your vital role in helping Oregon’s communities, economies and ecosystems thrive.

STEWARDS
Conscientious
Collaborative
Progressive

OSU Extension is here to provide concerned Oregonians the knowledge and expertise they need to ensure that our ecosystems remain vital, that our economies grow equitably, and that every Oregonian can seize the opportunity to thrive.

ADVOCATES
Visionary
Collaborative
Adventurous

OSU Extension partners with you to champion our communities, promote our economies and stand tall for ecosystems by providing the knowledge and expertise to help every Oregonian thrive here, and beyond.

LEARNERS
Helpful
Welcoming
Progressive

OSU Extension is the go-to resource for the expertise and knowledge every Oregonian needs to live healthy lives, nurture our great state’s ecosystems, and play a vital role in Oregon’s vibrant communities.

INTERNAL
Helpful
Collaborative
Visionary

OSU Extension is here for every Oregonian, providing the resources and knowledge they need to thrive in their communities, to take part in Oregon’s vibrant economies, and to help our great state’s ecosystems flourish.
ELEVATOR SPEECHES

Whether we're speaking with someone in person, communicating over email or composing a tweet, our message needs to be clear and consistent. Here are a few ways to talk about OSU Extension (who we are and what we do): in 140 characters, 10 seconds and 30 seconds.

140-CHARACTER STATEMENT
Oregon State University Extension provides information and expertise to help meet local challenges and help every Oregonian thrive.

10-SECOND STATEMENT
Oregon State University Extension puts information and expertise within reach of all Oregonians so they may thrive in their communities, be lifted by growing economies, and share pride in the flourishing ecosystems of Oregon.

30-SECOND STATEMENT
Oregon State University Extension puts information and expertise within reach of all Oregonians. As a land, sun, space and sea grant institution, we’re committed to nurturing our great state's communities, economies and ecosystems. We're partnering with people in every county and helping them thrive every day — just as we have done for more than 100 years.
FIVE TIPS FOR WRITING WELL

Telling your story clearly and compellingly takes a combination of instinct and discipline.

Good writing feels purposeful, intentional and, above all, meaningful. Here are five can’t miss principles to keep in mind when crafting your next communication.

MAKE HEADLINES COUNT.
A headline is not a label; it’s a handshake, a conversation starter and an enticement for the reader to learn more.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.
Consider who you’re writing for and what they care about, and your story will be more relevant and resonate more strongly.

SPEAK TO ONE PERSON AT A TIME.
Imagine you’re writing a letter to a friend or a loved one. It will naturally focus and clarify your message.

MAKE IT ABOUT THEM.
Use second-person “you” and “your” to engage and motivate the reader. They’ll be grateful you did, and so will you.

STAY ON MESSAGE.
No communication is too big or too small to support our core value proposition. Always consider how your message aligns with our attributes, benefits and messaging pillars (outlined on pages 8 to 10 of these guidelines)
OUR COLORS
MASTER BRAND COLORS

Use these color values when creating printed collateral.

Never Green and Yellow
Never use Pine Stand and Luminance together in large fields, or in close proximity in any instance.

Tints and Shades
No values other than those listed on this page may be used. Tints and shades of these colors are not permitted.
DIGITAL COLORS

Our audiences usually meet us digitally first, way before they ever experience us in person. To translate our brand thoughtfully for our digital communications, we’ve created web-specific values for our color palette, using the HEX and RGB variations listed. These have been optimized for digital use and should not be altered in any way.

Provide high contrast
As a state entity, we are required to maintain a minimum of ADA AA standards for contrast on the web. To that end, we have included a handy key on each color to help guide its usage online. A strikethrough represents a failing contrast level for the color combination. A bullet signifies a passing contrast level. Bold weights represent a passing contrast for “large text.”  
For more information on contrast and compliance, please visit webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker

Don’t rely on color alone
Since some users may override page colors, color should not be the only way information is conveyed. Make sure information is available even if colors are altered. This can mean adding another cue, such as an underline to show a link, or an icon to reinforce the meaning.

DESIGN FOR ACCESSIBILITY

We want our communications to resonate with all audiences, so be thoughtful when choosing color combinations for digital communications. Our digital color palette has been optimized for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) — an equal-opportunity law for people with disabilities — so that it’s visually effective and functionally useful for everyone.
COLOR PALETTES FOR OSU EXTENSION

OSU Extension has full use of the primary and secondary OSU color palette. Communications and marketing pieces should reflect Beaver Orange and Bucktooth White as dominant colors. Emphasis for Extension should be on the cooler colors, but all colors can be used.

The sample color palettes below reflect proportions of color as they should appear in OSU Extension communication and marketing pieces.
OUR PHOTOGRAPHY
IN THE ELEMENT

The master brand relies heavily on photographs to add interest and color, and to convey the important work of OSU.

This category is all about the people. In-the-element images should capture OSU Extension folks, and their fellow Oregonians, in their natural element: OUT THERE.

These images should be in the moment, never posed, showing all the great things our people are doing. And we shouldn’t shy away from showing the less glamorous side of things. If a situation is gritty, show the grit. If a setting is beautiful, highlight the beauty. Just capture what’s happening the most authentic way possible, to give viewers to true idea of what it’s like to be OUT THERE.
IN THE MOMENT
(EVENT-SPECIFIC)

These are the images from OSU Extension events and community events, captured in the signature Oregon State style.

These images should adhere to the overall style established at the master brand level. They should have a large amount of negative space so that text can be laid over them in layouts. Shots should be candid rather than posed, and they should authentically capture the setting, wherever that may be.
EXAMPLES
OSU EXTENSION AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture and Natural Resources programs support a brighter, healthier and more vibrant future for Oregon and the world, by providing Oregonians the guidance and resources to help strengthen our ecosystems and implement safe and sustainable farming practices.

- Small Farms Program
- Master Gardeners
- Ag Technology
- Aquaculture
- Crops
- Environmental Quality
- Food Processing
- Livestock
- Pollinator Health
- Wildlife

Knowledge and support from the ground up.

For every dollar OSU Extensions invests in Oregonians, eight dollars of economic benefit are created.

Access to Oregon State experts builds a broad and shared base of knowledge with farmers and conservationists.

Program participants draw upon—and contribute to—Oregon State research, in the lab and everywhere else.

Oregon State University Extension puts information and expertise within reach of all Oregonians so that they may thrive in their communities and in everything they do.
A LOOK AT WHAT OSU EXTENSION PROGRAMS ARE HELPING ACCOMPLISH.

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OUT THERE AND IN ACTION.

What we do
OSU’S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Step 1
Build internal and community partnerships

Step 2
Jointly indentify current and future societal needs

Step 3
Explore options through science and information sharing

Step 4
Collaborate to create relevant, innovative, knowledge-based solutions

Step 5
Assess outcomes and refine our approach

Where we are
THE OSU STATEWIDE CAMPUS

OSU Extension Offices
OSU Research and Extension Centers
OSU Campuses
OSU Agricultural Experiment Station Sites
OSU Open Campus Sites
OSU Forest Research Lab Sites

Out there and in action.

A LOOK AT WHAT OSU EXTENSION PROGRAMS ARE HELPING ACCOMPLISH.

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OSU Campuses
OSU Agricultural Experiment Station Sites
OSU Open Campus Sites
OSU Forest Research Lab Sites

Find an Extension Office near you:
extension.oregonstate.edu/find-us

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Sam Angima
sam.angima@oregonstate.edu
(541) 737-3742

Oregon State University
Extension Service
The show includes:

• Showmanship
• Animal judging
• Kennel decorating, photo contests
• Cloverbud Show-and-Tell
• Demonstrations including a grooming and handling presentation by Nature’s Pet Market

Visit our website for show requirements, prizes and cage-decorating guidelines.

For more information, contact Julie Smith at:
(503) 888–3038 (evenings and weekends) or juliesmith@xyz.com

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13 @ 10AM
SMALL ANIMALS BARN, CLACKAMAS COUNTY
FAIR & EVENT CENTER | CANBY, OREGON

OSU EXTENSION SERVICE 4-H PRESENTS

CLACKAMAS COUNTY
CAT SHOW

Getting the cat in the harness is just where the fun starts.

Take on a new challenge alongside your courageous feline friend. The 4-H Cat Show is a great opportunity not only to train your pet, but also to forge your own new set of skills, venture into the show ring together, and explore everything that’s part of the wide-ranging 4-H community.

The show includes:

• Showmanship
• Animal judging
• Kennel decorating, photo contests
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OSU EXTENSION SUB-BRAND GUIDELINES
Protecting the rich resources of Oregon: HOW TO KEEP YOUR WELL WATER CLEAN.

Oregon State University Extension Service

If you get your water from a private source, such as a well or spring, you are responsible for ensuring that your drinking water is safe. This makes you the water regulator, inspector, maintenance manager, accountant, and consumer.

How safe is well water?

Generally, the groundwater pumped from wells is safe to drink. As water moves through layers of soil to reach the underground aquifer, disease causing organisms, such as bacteria and viruses, are filtered out or eaten by soil microorganisms. Many harmful chemicals, such as pesticides, are also broken down in the soil before they reach the aquifer that supplies your drinking water. Exceptions occur when:

- Wells are not properly constructed or maintained.
- Wells indirectly draw water from surface water sources.
- Wells draw water from unconfined aquifers in areas where there have been potentially contaminating land uses (such as chemical spills, a large number of septic systems, intensive agriculture, or construction).

¿Es et para occumqu?

Por lo general, el agua subterránea extraída de los pozos es buena para beber. A medida que el agua atraviesa las capas del suelo hasta alcanzar el manto acuífero, los organismos que causan enfermedades, tales como las bacterias y los virus, van siendo filtrados o digeridos por los microorganismos del suelo. Además, muchas sustancias químicas dañinas, tales como los pesticidas, se descomponen antes de alcanzar el agua subterránea que suministra el pozo. Algunas excepciones ocurren cuando:

- El pozo no ha sido construido o mantenido adecuadamente.
- El pozo permite la entrada indirecta de aguas superficiales.
- El suministro de agua es un acuífero confinado, y alguna actividad humana en el área (tales como los derrames de productos químicos, la presencia de numerosos tanques sépticos, la agricultura intensiva o las obras de construcción) podría causar contaminación.

What is an aquifer?

An aquifer is an underground layer of permeable rock, sediment (usually sand or gravel), or soil that yields water. The pore spaces in aquifers are filled with water and are interconnected, which allows water to flow through them.

¿Qué es un acuífero?

Un acuífero es una capa subterránea de roca permeable, sedimentos (típicamente de arena o gravilla) o tierra que sirve de suministro de agua. Los espacios porosos del acuífero se llenan de agua, y las conexiones entre estos espacios permiten que el agua fluya entre ellos.

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This is going to be an exciting season for Clatsop County gardeners.

The Master Gardener projects are gearing up, the Spring Garden Seminar and Plant Sale is right around the corner, the Master Gardener volunteers are ready to research and answer your plant and gardening questions at the plant clinics.

This issue of the Cultivator includes OSU’s Spring clean-up tips, some new cultivators, gardening articles, new ways to keep abreast of the CCMGA projects, speakers, events, and of course, the latest news and dates for the CCMGA members. **So let’s cultivate!**

— Your Clatsop County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

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Move up your harvest with hydroponics

CORVALLIS, Ore. – Ask experienced gardeners what makes their garden grow and they’ll come up with the same response: great soil. Good answer, but not the only one. The same crops grown in soil thrive in water, too, as long as there are nutrients and oxygen involved.

In fact, vegetables grown hydroponically root and grow faster than traditionally grown plants, said Barry Burnsides, an Oregon State University Extension Service master gardener. This ages-old system uses a mixture of water and nutrients to grow plants inside or out. He does both, but prefers the outdoors because there’s no need for lights.

“You can grow any plant in hydroponics if you use the proper system,” said Burnsides, who spent months researching hydroponics and building four of the six types of systems. He grows lettuces, greens, peppers, cilantro, cucumbers, basil and even tomatoes, melons, squash and cucumbers on trellises.

“Hydroponics is efficient,” Burnsides said. “It takes less water than growing plants in soil. In dry areas, it’s a big plus. The other place it shines is if you’re trying to grow in an area with poor soil.”

Hydroponic systems generally need grow lights and heat when used indoors, according to Burnsides, who will teach a class at 11 a.m. April 8 at the Josephine County office in Grants Pass. Cost is $85 for the public; $70 for Extension master gardeners. For those out of the area, he advises doing a search of the internet for resources. There are many how-to articles and videos as well as materials and kits to buy.

Though he grows inside – especially to start seeds or for cuttings of things like fuchsias, rhododendrons, coleus and hydrangeas – Burnsides suggests using starting with a floating raft or NFT system outdoors. Be sure to give plants eight hours of sunlight and use shade cloth with 30 percent screening during the hottest part of the year and frost cloth for freeze and bug protection.

“For most plants, Burnsides uses a fertilizer formulated for tomatoes, which is premixed with the correct amount of micro and macro nutrients. He adds it to the water and replenishes it plants take it up.

Burnsides also recommends the nutrient film technique (NFT). In that case, pipes with holes drilled in them for plants are positioned horizontally at a slight angle so the water easily moves through with the help of gravity. The nutrient solution is moved by a small fountain pump through a half-inch line to the highest point and flows through the pipe and over the plant roots back to the storage tank. An aquarium air pump is used to add oxygen to the nutrients in the storage tank.

“Hydroponics is efficient,” Burnsides said. “It takes less water than growing plants in soil. In dry areas, it’s a big plus. The other place it shines is if you’re trying to grow in an area with poor soil.”

In hydroponics, the floating raft system is the simplest. — Photo courtesy of Barry Burnsides.

“It’s nice to set one up next to the kitchen,” he said. “You can harvest salad or stir-fry for dinner right out your back door. You don’t get any fresher than that.”

For most plants, Burnsides uses a fertilizer formulated for tomatoes, which is premixed with the correct amount of micro and macro nutrients. He adds it to the water and replenishes it plants take it up. Lettuce grown hydroponically is ready to harvest in 30 days rather than the 60-day cycle it takes when grown in soil. There’s also the benefit of no weeds, fewer diseases and pests and the need for less space. Of course, there’s always the best reason to grow vegetables in any kind of medium: the quality of the produce.

“You wind up with the ultimate, freshest veggies,” he said. “The flavor and crispness and quality of what you can grow is better than what you find in the store. And to see the growth stages and know you were part of that is rewarding.”
CORVALLIS, Ore. – It would be nice to say, “Hang a birdhouse and they will come,” but attracting wild birds to nest in your yard isn’t quite so easy.

Don’t get discouraged if your nesting box doesn’t draw birds the first year, said Dana Sanchez, wildlife specialist for Oregon State University Extension Service. Move it to a new spot and put up more than one to give birds a choice.

It’s most important to get the size of the entrance hole correct, she added. “The entrance diameter is really crucial so that target species can get in, but also to diminish the opportunity for birds to be attacked by predators and competitors,” Sanchez said.

“Non-native birds such as house sparrows and starlings are notorious for taking up residence in nest boxes intended for native birds. And some native birds will bully out other native birds.”

Don’t hang it and forget it. Check the box regularly to see if birds are being stalked by predators. If so, you can add a block of wood with the same size hole at the entrance to create a tunnel that makes it difficult for other birds, squirrels, rats and cats to reach the babies. Other discouragements include a metal collar around the tree or post where the box is affixed or any number of baffles that you can buy or build. As always, the advice for cats is to keep them inside.

“In the Extension guide The Wildlife Garden: Build Nest Boxes for Wild Birds, you’ll find instructions on how to build a simple birdhouse, placement recommendations and box dimensions for about 18 species of cavity-nesting birds, including house wrens, chickadees, woodpeckers, northern flickers, purple martins, barn owls, nuthatches and western bluebird.

If you choose to make or buy a birdhouse for one of the 45 Oregon species that build their nests in cavities, avoid those with perches, which provide purchase for predators. Though it’s fun to hang colorfully painted boxes, Sanchez recommends plain ones, which birds seem to favor. For longevity, choose untreated cedar or redwood. Metal can get too hot.

It’s not necessary, but you can line the box with wood shavings or chips. Some birds will use the material for nesting but most will build on top of it. Be sure not to use sawdust, which soaks up water and gets matted down. Clean birdhouses in fall or winter with warm water to loosen droppings. Buy or build a house made with screws so they’re easy to partially dismantle when it comes time for cleaning.

“Remember that a nesting box is just one piece of habitat,” Strong said. “They need safe access and food and water nearby. Bird feeders can be a wonderful aid, but they must be maintained. Don’t put them out and then take them away.”

Adding bird-friendly plants to your garden and providing a variety of shrubs in different heights for shelter will help, too. Be sure to use bird baths to offer water.

Author: Kym Pokorny
Source: Dana Sanchez, Nicole Strong