

Fall
2019

LWC Meanderings

Watershed News & Reflections



LWC MISSION:

To engage and assist land-owners and communities in the voluntary protection, restoration and enhancement of the Luckiamute and Ash Creek watersheds.

WHAT WE ARE:

The Luckiamute Watershed Council is a 501(c)3 non-profit comprised of stakeholders who live or work within the Luckiamute and Ash Creek watersheds.

WHO WE ARE:

Patrick Melendy, *President Independence*

Wendy Hudson, *Vice President Monmouth*

Karin Stutzman, *Secretary Monmouth*

Mark Hazelton, *Treasurer Kings Valley/Hoskins*

Dan Farnworth
Monmouth

Dave Ehlers
Kings Valley/Hoskins

COUNCIL MEETINGS:

Typically held the second Thursday of every month from 6:30 — 8:30 pm at locations around the watershed. For details, visit our website at: www.LuckiamuteLWC.org

Dry Farming: Making Every Drop Count



Surrounded by the beautiful setting of Darlene Gowen's Independence farm, OSU Small Farms instructor Amy Garrett introduced 52 participants to the science and techniques of farming without irrigation at a September 11 Dry Farming Field Day. Taste tests and testimonials of other dry farmers demonstrated the amazing results that can be achieved by returning to this ages-old but little-used practice!

— by Cheryl Gaston, LWC Education and Outreach Committee Member

I remember my surprise a year ago when Brandon Wagner of Quail Flats Farm in Independence told me he was dry-farming some tomatoes. My curiosity jumped up and I started asking questions. He briefly explained the process before we were interrupted by his many customers at the Independence Farmers Market. He takes delight in their questions.

“What I find exciting about dry farming, especially tomatoes, is that people don't think it is possible. Not only is it possible, but you often end up with tomatoes with better flavor. People can taste the difference.”

Dry farming was explained, and the quality of dry-farmed vegetables was highlighted, at a workshop co-sponsored by the Luckiamute Watershed Council, Oregon State University (OSU) Extension, and Marion and Polk Soil & Water Conservation

Districts. Fifty-two attendees listened, learned about and tasted the bounty at Darlene and Vernor Gowen's farm in Independence on a sun-drenched September afternoon.

Farmers finding success with dry farming have recently made headlines in drought-stricken California, and this ages-old technique is rapidly gaining interest in Washington and Oregon. In addition to conserving an ever-scarcer water supply, farmers are considering dry farming to meet growing customer demand for the better tasting vegetables. Its increase among commercial and small farmers is also driven by consumers' values held about natural resource conservation and organic farming, especially due to increasing concerns about a changing climate.

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While some may be tempted to just rip out their drip irrigation to give dry farming a try, OSU Small Farms instructor Amy Garrett cautions that there is a suite of techniques and variables that have to be managed and tested before applying this technique on your own farm or garden. The good news, Amy says, is that much of the Willamette Valley is well-suited to crop production without irrigation, since our region typically receives well above the minimum 20 inches required during fall through spring. This moisture is stored in the soil and is what keeps the plants' moisture requirements sustained throughout the dry summer months.

Because of a dry-farmed plant's reliance on stored moisture, soil water-holding capacity is one of the most important variables that has to be tested before trying to adapt this technique to your own farm or garden. You can contact your local OSU Extension Office (<https://extension.oregonstate.edu>) for more information on soil testing and how to choose the right lab to perform the analysis. Other important variables that need to be monitored and adapted to are local climate and weather, management of weeds and pests, spacing, cover crops, and suitable crop varieties.

Once these conditions are met, the variety of crops that can be grown without a drop of added water is astounding. OSU field trials across the region have resulted in an impressive list of crop varieties well-suited to dry farming - including tomatoes, peppers, garlic, pumpkins, water-melons, cantaloupes, winter squash, corn, beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and more.

Darlene Gowen has been participating in OSU's Dry Farm Trials for the past four years with help from Garrett, and has been adapting dry farming techniques to her land. "I can grow almost anything and it all tastes better than irrigated. It's an efficient and effective way to garden," she says.

When I asked about dry farmer's lower crop yields when compared to growers who irrigate and fertilize, she contends that "you probably come out ahead with dry farming when you take into account the longer season, and less work and expense once you get it all started." Her advice to someone wanting to try this? "Plants know how to care for themselves as living things. They will send roots down to find the water. So, just follow the rules and use the right seeds, and you'll be successful."

Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator, notes that "with temperatures warming and growing concerns about water quantity, dry farming is one action you can take to conserve our water resources and help protect the overall health of our watershed."

If you are interested in learning more about dry farming, the resources listed below can help get you started!



If you are new to dry farming, zucchini is one of the easiest crops to try first! Darlene Gowen recommends the Dark Star variety, one of her favorites!

Dry Farming Resources

An overview of the techniques and benefits of dry farming in the Willamette Valley is documented in this YouTube video by OSU Extension: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRjDf7x9Tro>

For a great place to get started with dry farming and connect with the Dry Farming Collaborative, head to <https://agsci.oregonstate.edu/smallfarms/dry-farming>

Dry farming research results, articles, reports and an excellent list of resources and can be found here: <https://centerforsmallfarms.oregonstate.edu/dryfarm>

For a great source of seeds adapted to dry farming and organic techniques, you can head to <https://seedalliance.org/profiles/seed-revolution-now>



LOVE YOUR WATERSHED

Upcoming Fall Events

Visit LuckiamuteLWC.org/LoveYourWatershed for details and registration info!

Bilingual Bird Walk/ Paseo de Pájaros Bilingüe



October 12 / 12 de Octubre
8am — 12pm

\$12 (\$8 - Friends of the LWC)*

Kids under the age of 12 are free!
¡Los niños menores de 12 años son gratis!

**Lunch provided / almuerzo proporcionado*

Join us for a family-friendly bilingual fall bird walk at Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge’s Guadagno Memorial Loop Trail. Register today at

LuckiamuteLWC.org/bilingualbirdwalk

Únase a nosotros para una caminata bilingüe de pájaros para familias a lo largo de Guadagno Memorial Loop en el Refugio Nacional de Baskett Slough. Regístrese en LuckiamuteLWC.org/bilingualbirdwalk

Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge, 10995 Oregon 22, Dallas

Jont Creek Tour, Part II



October 26, 2019
12:30 — 3:30pm
FREE!

Join us for our second tour of the Jont Creek project site and get a progress update on a restoration project that will open up critical wetland habitat on a 900 acre privately owned farm. You’ll see and hear first-hand how partnerships between individuals and public agencies can have a huge impact on watershed health in our region. RSVP at LuckiamuteLWC.org/jontcreektour.

We’ll meet at Sarah Helmick State Park — see website for details and RSVP info!

Soil Health Workshop



November 6, 2019
12:30 — 5pm

\$20 (plus Eventbrite fee)

This Soil Health Workshop is designed to help local farmers and producers learn to excel at the Web Soil Survey and make soil testing a tool that can work for them. This exciting event will pair great speakers, light refreshments and a beautiful venue. Get the details and registration link at LuckiamuteLWC.org/soil-health-workshop.

Chemeketa Eola Viticulture Center, 215 Doaks Ferry Rd NW, Salem

Join the FRIENDS OF THE LWC!

What does it mean to be a **FRIEND OF THE LWC?**

- ◆ Regular “Behind the Scenes” Bulletins
- ◆ Early access to event registration
- ◆ Discounts on workshops
- ◆ *Knowing that you are helping improve the health of your watershed!*

Ready to Join?

Find out how at

LuckiamuteLWC.org/Friends

We also welcome donations* to support the work of the Council. All charitable donations will be used towards building the organizational resources needed to address our goals of water quality enhancement, habitat restoration and community education.

**Your contribution may be tax-deductible. The LWC will provide a letter of documentation in January 2020, following your donation.*

Upcoming Council Meetings

Join us for Council Monthly Meetings, typically held the second Thursday of each month from 6:30 — 8:30 p.m. **Please note that the schedule for our upcoming meetings is different from our typical second Thursday routine.** Our meetings are always open to the public and discussion topics include local watershed issues and actions. For details, please visit LuckiamuteLWC.org.

Oct. 8, 2019: *Monmouth Volunteer Hall*

Nov. 21, 2019: *Check out website for venue info!*

****No December meeting****

To donate, go to www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/donate or you can send a check to:

165 D Street, Independence, OR 97351

Thank you to our supporters!

THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS!

We are grateful to the following donors and volunteers who have contributed their hard-earned dollars and their time and energy to our conservation goals from July to September 2019. *THANK YOU!* Our supporters are at the heart of what we do and why, and we cannot achieve results without their contributions and hard work!

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With special thanks to:
Oregon State University GEO 300 students

It's Time to Order Your Native Bulbs and Plants!



Polk Soil & Water Conservation District Native Bulb Sale: www.polkswcd.com/bulb-sale.html

Benton Soil & Water Conservation District Native Plant Sale: www.bentonswcd.org/programs/plant-sale/

Marion Soil & Water Conservation District Native Plant Resources: www.marionswcd.net/conservation-planning-practices/



Your Land. Your Rivers. Your Community. Your Watershed.

Luckiamute Watershed Council

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