

April 2026



THE GRAPEVINE

OSU - Columbia County Master Gardener™ Program
505 N. Columbia River Hwy, St. Helens OR 97051
Phone: 503-397-3462

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/master-gardener-volunteer-program>

OMGA Newsletter: <https://omga.org/newsletter/>

It has been decided to have a newsletter dedicated to just our membership and local organizations. This newsletter will be published once a month and will be edited by the President of the Columbia County Master Gardener Association (CCMGA) and the Master Gardener Program Coordinator. Please send any news items, events, articles, pictures, etc. to Gail Martyn by the 25th of every month at colcmg.secretary@gmail.com

The President's Corner

Spring has officially sprung, and the garden is waking up just in time for Easter!

The tulips are showing off, the daffodils are dancing, and somewhere out there the Easter Bunny is probably judging our weeding skills. (He has decided I need a lot of help judging by all the weeds.)

Now's the perfect time to tidy up beds, sprinkle a little fertilizer "magic," and plant a few colorful blooms—because nothing says Easter like a garden that's as cheerful as a basket full of jellybeans.

So, grab your gloves, hop to it, and let your garden be egg-stra beautiful this season! 🌸 🐰

PS: save your boxes for Spring Fair!

See you all at the next Business meeting...

Katherine Johnson, President

Monthly Meetings

Executive Board Meeting

1st Thursday each month, 10:30 AM
via Zoom. For link to join, contact
colcmg.secretary@gmail.com

Chapter Meeting

4th Thursday each month, 6:30 PM
Extension Office

BugNutz Meeting

2nd Wednesday each month, 5:30 PM
Extension Office

Seed Saving Group

2nd Thursday each month, 5:30 PM
St. Helens Public Library

Link to the OSU Online Resources and Publications - Searchable Directory:

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/>



2026 Executive Board

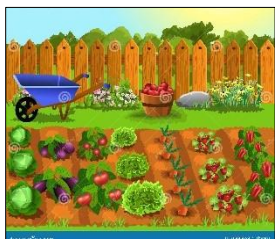
- Katherine Johnson, President
- Larry Byrum, Past-President
- Dennis Snyder, Vice President
- Gail Martyn, Secretary/ Treasurer
- Julie Polkowski, Historian
- Karen Harte, OMGA Rep.
- Katrina Clift, OMGA Alt. Rep.



April Chapter Presenter

"Common home garden remedies vs. Science: what Holds up?"

Janhvi Pandey



From Garden to Table

Cover Crops and Green Manures

Next to proper site selection, the soil - its structure, quality and fertility - is the most important and basic element of successful gardening. As gardeners, we are taught this in the very beginning. Organic matter is a vital part of soil health providing a wide range of benefits to our gardens –soil is easier to work, water and nutrient retention is improved for easy absorption by plants, improved soil aeration that helps soil warm up earlier in the spring.

Soil organisms break down organic matter and over time it becomes depleted. Gardeners need to build and regularly replenish soil with organic matter. We maintain piles of decaying vegetation or barnyard manure. We haul in compost by the sack, wheelbarrow or even truckload, arduously working it into the earth. One technique, however, that is often overlooked by home gardens is the use of growing cover crops to produce green manures|| that can be directly tilled back into the earth, the backbone of any annual cropping system that seeks to be sustainable. Too often gardeners neglect the fact that gardens that are left fallow and naked succumb quickly to soil erosion and nutrient depletion, as well as falling prey to a rampant invasion of weeds.

I must admit that I too have been guilty of such practice. In past years I have covered the vegetable garden with black plastic. This was effective in keeping weeds at bay and warming the soil up faster in the spring, but it really did very little else other than providing a warm and dry refuge for mice. And although I worked compost into the rows before I planted, the soil wasn't as vibrant and alive as it had been in the past. Like me, the soil was becoming tired. The task and cost of hauling and moving truckloads of compost was too daunting so I decided to try planting a cover crop this year instead. A cover crop is nothing more than plants grown at a time when others do not occupy garden space, becoming a green manure crop they are tilled back into the soil. Now my garden is covered with a vibrant green carpet of rye, hairy vetch and Austrian winter peas.

Information regarding cover crops and green manures abounds in research reports, Extension bulletins and the like. Although sifting through all this knowledge can be somewhat overwhelming, the use of these gardening techniques needn't be. It does require some thought and planning. The major benefits are the addition of organic matter and improvement of soil structure but there are numerous other benefits as well: nitrogen production (legume cover crops), increased soil microbial activity, nutrient enhancement, weed suppression, soil and water conservation, pest management benefits (creates habitats for beneficial insects), economic benefits, and the ability to be used in different rotations throughout the year.

Buckwheat

There are three classifications of plants to grow for cover crops which include grains and grasses (cereal rye, winter wheat, spring oats, and spring barley), legumes (common vetch, hairy vetch, clovers, Austrian winter peas, and fava beans) and other broadleaves (tyfon and buckwheat). Most often cover crops are grown as a mixture, combining the advantages of each of the component species. Sometimes they will function synergistically, providing more benefits than the individual grown alone. Most are sown in the early fall for winter coverage to be turned into the soil in spring. Some, like the frost tender buckwheat, make an excellent choice for summer, being ready to turn in 30 days. Just remember, if allowed to grow too large, it becomes difficult to turn under.

Planting is a simple matter without any special requirements. Just choose the best time of year and situation for the plants you are growing. Although the seeds can be sown in rows, broadcasting is the simplest way, giving broader and closer coverage. Sow into prepared garden soil and rake to a depth of ¼ inch. They also may be planted prior to harvest of many late-season crops by under sowing or sown between rows provided adequate irrigation is available.

When to turn the crop under is a matter of debate. Some experts say the best time to turn the crop under is before the plant has a chance to flower. Others say the best time is after most of the plants have started to bloom or are close to heading, but before going to seed. The claim is that harvesting earlier is fine, but the plants will not have reached their maximum amount of stored nutrients and potential organic matter. Whichever you choose, don't wait too long and allow the plants to become woody as they are much slower to decompose. If they happen to flower, take heart. They provide forage for pollinating insects.

Mow the vegetation down mechanically or manually and then turn under using a tiller or spade to a depth of 3 to 6 inches – provided the soil is dry enough, of course. In about three weeks, the matter will be decomposed enough and the garden ready to plant again. Your fruits and vegetables will love you for it and your soil will be healthier to boot.

Robert Hammond, Class of 2007

Shared by Katherine Johnson



From your Treasurer

2026 Membership: For those of you who have not yet sent your \$15 check, make it payable to CCMGA, turn it in at a Chapter meeting or mail to me at 265 S.13th St., St. Helens, 97051. Please pay for 2026 only, as dues could change next year. *Be advised that the Extension staff cannot accept any CCMGA monies.* Remember to let me know of any changes in your contact information, including email, for the Roster that will be published in early April. You must pay your dues by March 31 to be included in the 2026 Member Roster.

Reimbursements: If you make approved purchases and expect reimbursement, get your dated receipts to the Treasurer within 90 days of purchase and *prior to December 31* as Board Policy requires. If you can scan your receipts or take a picture of them, that's even better. Just send the PDF or picture file as an attachment to colcmg.treasurer@gmail.com -- *Gail Martyn, Treasurer*



2026 Spring Garden Fair

Our repurposed garden book drive was a success at our Spring Garden Fair last year. We are looking to do it again!

Books were displayed and made available by donation at our CCMGA table and proceeds went to our chapter.

You can bring your books to our Chapter meetings, beginning in January, or contact Karen at colcmg.omgarep@gmail.com.

Also, it's not too early to start saving boxes for our tomato and pepper plant buyers. – *Karen Harte*

Columbia County Master Gardener™ Association's
29th Annual

Spring Garden Fair

May 2, 2026 ♦ 9 AM - 3 PM

Columbia County Fairgrounds Pavilion

4,140 tomato, 1,584 hot & mild pepper plants on sale,
only \$3 each

\$1 raffle tickets, drawings every 30 minutes

Plant Clinic ♦ local vendors

rain or shine ♦ cash/checks only

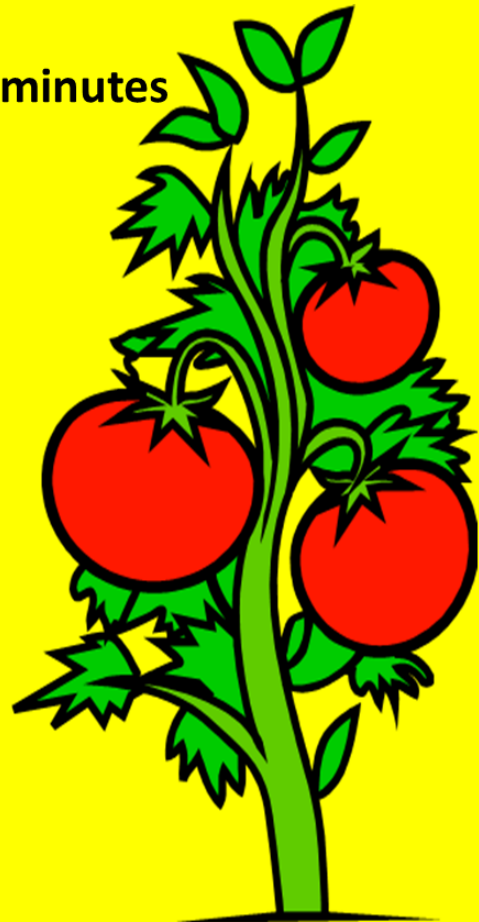
ATM on-site

FREE PARKING ♦ FREE ADMISSION

All proceeds from this event support local
Master Gardener™ activities.

Email colcmg.omgarep@gmail.com for
information on being a vendor at this event.

Find us on Facebook at
Columbia County Master Gardeners



In collaboration with
and support of



OSU Extension Service prohibits discrimination in all its programs, services,
activities and materials.

Spring Fair Raffle tickets now on sale!

We have raffle tickets for the Spring Fair raffle available for you to buy & to sell to friends! Tickets are \$1 each. Prizes are donations from local businesses... things like massage, dinners at restaurants, garden supplies, a cart, plants... (I will be bringing tickets to the chapter meetings)

I am also accepting donations....so if you have something you want to donate talk/text me...

Cassie Hall. 503-863-0707

Demo Garden Update

Planning meetings for the demo garden will be on the first Wednesday of each month (April's meeting will be at the Extension Office at 10:00. Eventually we will have them at the garden, before we start work for the day.

We will start working in the garden on Mondays & Wednesdays...10-12:00

Our first workday will be Monday, April 6th, 10-12:00.

We also will be doing some Friday evenings & Saturdays after Scappoose Farmers Market...these days & times aren't set yet.

Questions call/text...Cassie Hall 503-863-0707



SATURDAY, APRIL 26
SCAPPOOSE OREGON
EARTH DAY
8 AM - 3 PM HERITAGE PARK

WIN ME!

**GO GREEN TO SAVE GREEN
DRAWING FOR A FREE ELECTRIC BIKE AT 2:30
MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN
FREE FOOD 11:30-2
COMMUNITY BOOTHS - MUSIC - CHILDREN'S
ACTIVITIES**

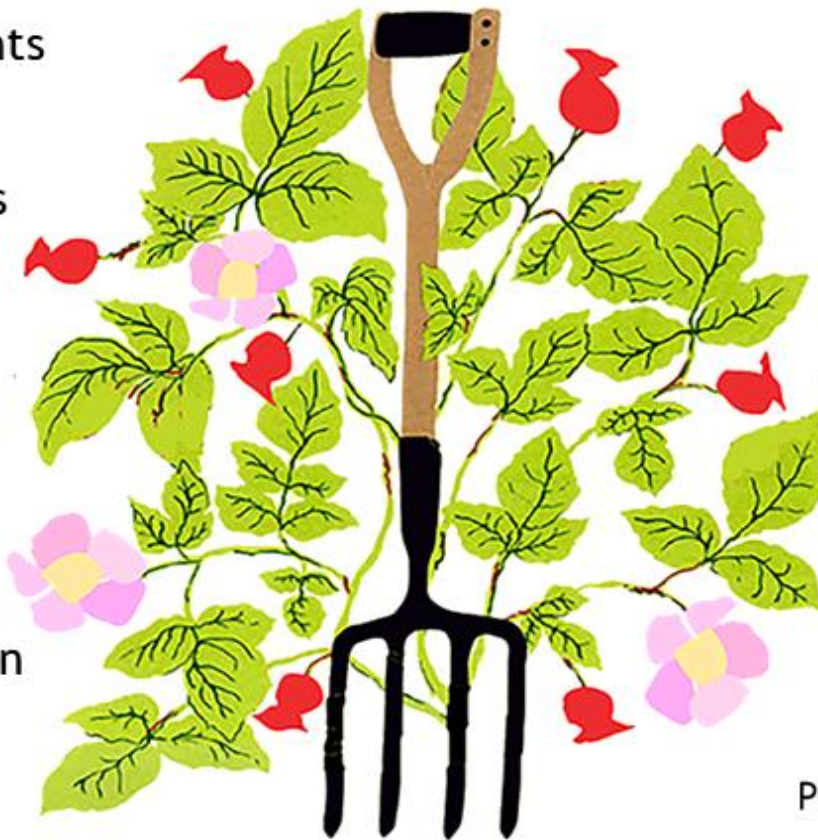
The poster features a green background with a magnifying glass over a globe. A red starburst says 'WIN ME!' and a photo of a teal electric bike is shown in the bottom left corner.

SCAPPOOSE BAY WATERSHED COUNCIL NURSERY

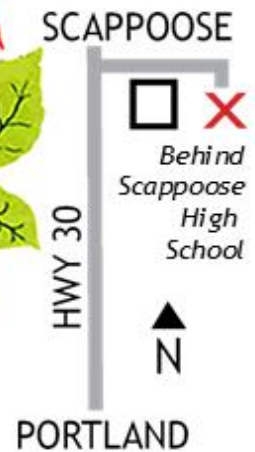
SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE

Great Plants
grown by
Great
Volunteers
sold at
Great
Prices

Proceeds
Help
Local
Restoration
Projects



Serving
Columbia
County
Since
1997



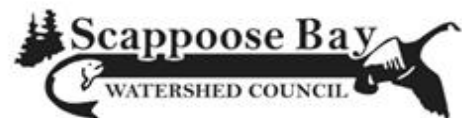
APRIL 11, 2026 • 9 am - 2 pm



Now accepting payment via
Square, check and cash.



www.scappoosebay-wc.org



Let's Stay Certified and Keep Growing Together

Thank you so much for the time, care, and heart you bring to your work as OSU Master Gardener™ Volunteers. The impact you make whether through answering questions, teaching others, or simply sharing your passion, ripples out in ways that truly matter. We're so grateful to have you as part of this community. As we look ahead, we'd love for all of you to stay connected and continue sharing your gifts through the OSU Master Gardener Program.

To do that, a quick reminder: in order to stay active in public-facing volunteer roles, it's important to maintain your Certified Master Gardener status. Certification is renewed each calendar year and helps ensure you're eligible to proudly wear the badge and represent OSU Extension Master Gardener program in outreach programs.

Recertification is also our way of recognizing your commitment and celebrating everything you contribute. We want to be sure you get the appreciation and recognition you've more than earned! To stay certified, all you need to do annually is:

- Complete the required forms
- Contribute at least 20 hours of volunteer service
- Complete 10 hours of continuing education

This helps ensure we're all staying current and continuing to grow in our knowledge—so we can keep offering reliable, research-based support to gardeners and communities.

Once you're up to date, you'll receive a sticker for your badge to show that you're certified for the current year. Please log your hours in the VRS system here: https://vrs.osumg.org/sec_Login/

If you run into any hiccups logging hours or accessing your account, please don't hesitate to reach out. I would be more than happy to help. Just be sure to submit everything by October 31st.

Thanks again for being such a valuable part of the program. Your dedication, generosity, and spirit are what make the Master Gardener community so special—and we're lucky to have you with us. Please reach out to Janhvi Pandey for any questions or concerns.

Janhvi Pandey

Assistant Professor (Practice) - Extension Horticulture

Oregon State University

OSU Extension Service - Columbia County

505 N Columbia River Hwy, St. Helens, OR-97051

Office: 503-397-3462

janhvi.pandey@oregonstate.edu

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark Your Calendars



- **Board meetings:** 10:30 AM, 1st Thursday every month, via Zoom
- **Chapter meeting:** 6:30 PM, Thursday, January 29, Extension office
- **BugNutz meetings:** 5:30 PM, 2nd Wednesday, Extension office
- **Seed Saving Group:** 5:30 PM, 2nd Thursday, St. Helens Public Library
- **Demo Garden work parties:** will begin April 6, 10 AM -noon
- **Shred Event:** Saturday, April 25, 10 AM -1 PM, Inroads Credit Union, Scappoose branch; limit 2 regular bags or boxes; donations for CU4Kids gladly accepted.
- **Spring Garden Fair:** Saturday, May 2, 9:00 – 3:00, Fairgrounds Pavilion
- **Joy of Gardening:** July 10/11 at the Alumni Center on the OSU Campus; early-bird registration in early April.
- **GardenPalooza:** Saturday & Sunday, April 10 & 11. [Details](#)
- **Rainier Spring Bazaar:** Saturday, April 18, 10 AM- 3 PM, Rainier Riverfront Center. [Details](#)
- **Columbia County Fair:** July 15-18
- **Bottle drive:** Monday-Thursday, 9 AM – 1 PM, St. Helens Columbia Pacific Food Bank, Donation door
- **Bottle drive:** Saturdays, 10 AM – 1 PM, St. Helens High School parking lot, next to the mural: April 24, May 16, June 13
- **Household Hazardous Waste Disposal events:** all dates are Saturdays; details [here](#)
 - **St. Helens:** 8 AM – 2 PM, June 6, August 22, October 24
 - **Clatskanie:** 8 AM – noon, October 3
 - **Rainier:** 8 AM – noon, May 16
 - **Vernonia:** 8 AM – noon, April 11
- **Full list of OSU events:** <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/events?page=0>

Useful Links

- **2024 Level Up Series:** click [here](#)
- **2025 Level Up Series:** click [here](#)
- **10-minute University:** click [here](#)
- **Columbia County OSU Extension Newsletter:** click [here](#)
- **Electronic Volunteer Hour reporting system:** mgvrs.extension.oregonstate.edu Report yearly by October 31
- **Facebook page:** [Columbia County Master Gardeners](#) (1,500 Followers)
- **Garden Future:** click [here](#)
- **Guide to Being a Master Gardener Volunteer:** click [here](#).
- **Monthly Garden Calendars:** click [here](#)
- **Oregon Master Gardener Association (OMGA):** <https://omga.org>

Columbia County Master Gardener™ Association
Chapter Meeting Minutes for February 26, 2026
President Katherine Johnson Presiding

Tonight's Program:

Roy Barbour, Master Gardener Volunteer since 2025
"Do the ROT thing"

President, Katherine Johnson
Vice President, Dennis Snyder
Past President, Larry Byrum
Secretary/Treasurer, Gail Martyn

Historian, Julie Polkowski
OMGA Representative, Karen Harte
OMGA Alternate Representative, Katrina Clift

Door Prizes – seeds, plant stakes, seed storage box

Call to Order – 7:45 PM

House Keeping

- **Secretary's report:** The January 22 minutes were reviewed. Zelda's motion to approve as presented was seconded by LaVina and approved.
- **Treasurer's Report:** The February 26 Account Balances and Cash Flow reports were reviewed. We have 25 members. Russ's motion to approve as presented was seconded by Katrina and approved.
- **Correspondence:** None

Committee Reports

- **OMGA:** Joy of Gardening Conference, July 10/11 on OSU campus. Early registration, open mid-April, is only \$50.
- **Speakers:** No report.
- **Fairgrounds Garden:** The broker bench and Kiwi plant have been removed.
- **Community Gardens:** We have been invited to a memorial service for Scott Bauska on April 10th at 11 am at First Lutheran Church in St Helens with a meal for all, following. Memorial donations may be made to the Columbia County Food Bank and designated to the community food bank garden.
- **BugNutz:** The insect display will be at the April 4th mEGGa Egg Hunt, 11:00 AM at the Fairgrounds.
- **Seed to Supper:** Students have signed up in St. Helens, Scappoose, Clatskanie, Vernonia and Rainier. *Planning Your Garden for Seed-Saving* class Monday, March 2 at the Extension office.
- **Seed Library:** No report.
- **Social media:** No report.
- **Spring Fair:**
 - Raffle tickets will be available at the March Chapter meeting.
 - Flyer: QR code will be replaced with text about vendor contact info.
 - Plants will arrive between noon and 1 PM.
 - Sunday, March 3rd, potluck will start at 1:00 PM.

Old Business

- **2026 dues:** \$15 dues are now payable by cash or check.
- **Appreciation gift:** A motion to reimburse Janhvi for a card and flowers for the Scott Bauska family was approved at the January 22 chapter meeting. No request has been made yet.

New Business

- **Pruning demo:** Saturday, February 28, 10 AM – 2 PM at the Fairgrounds Demonstration Garden. Free for Master Gardeners. Set-up at 9 AM.

For the good of the order

- Ace now has Stihl pruners
- Grafting class will be on Sunday, March 29, 1-4 PM at the Extension office. \$25 registration fee.

Motion to Adjourn

At 8:12 PM, Gail's motion to adjourn was seconded by Zelda and passed. The meeting was adjourned.

Gail Martyn, Secretary/Treasurer