



Oregon Small Farm News

Oregon State University Small Farms Program

In This Issue:

New Faces & New Roles Within The Small Farms Program	2
2024 OSU Small Farms Conference is February 17, 2024 in Corvallis	3
Accelerator Program Brings New Dry Farmers Up To Speed	10
Farmer Feature: Korrie & Rob Hooper of Farm For Our Lives	12
Living With Your Water Well & Septic Systems Winter Webinars	15
A New OSU Program Addresses the Impacts of Climate Stress and Grief on Farmers	16
Take Conservation to the Next Level with CSP	18

OSU Extension Service Small Farms Program

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Cover Photo:
Euchre Creek Farm in Siletz
Photo by: Evie Smith

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New Faces & New Roles Within The Small Farms Program

Our program is excited to welcome a new statewide Small Farms Specialist, Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems Director, and local Small Farms agent for Benton, Lane, and Polk Counties.

Dr. Nathan Stacey has joined the Department of Crop and Soil Science as Assistant Professor (Practice) – Small Farms Extension Specialist and coordinator of the Extension Small Farms Program – effective February 1, 2024. He will be at the February 17th OSU Small Farms Conference.



As coordinator, Dr. Stacey will lead a statewide team of Extension faculty who use a combination of applied research, extension teaching, outreach, and engagement to learn with and support the goals of a wide variety of small-scale farms and ranches that use sustainable production practices and sell into local and regional markets. The program also serves non-commercial, small-acreage producers.

Nate earned his bachelor's degree in Communications from Truman State University; and his Ph.D. in Soil Science from Washington State University. Following completion of his doctorate, Nate was a postdoctoral scholar at Washington State University where he was engaged in on-farm research that was centered on the use of compost, cover cropping, and general soil nutrient management in conventional and organic production systems.

Dr. Stacey was most recently working as Farm Program Director at Tilth Alliance in Washington.

Following a comprehensive search, Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences has named **Dr. Lauren Gwin as its new Director of the Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems (SFCFS).**

Gwin joined Oregon State in 2008, co-founded SFCFS in 2013, and became OSU's first Community Food Systems extension specialist in 2015.

continued on page 9



2024 OSU Small Farms Conference is February 17, 2024 in Corvallis - Registration is OPEN!

Registration is now open for the 2024 event. Here is the current session selection options for you the peruse, but please double check out website for the most up to date information. <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/smallfarmsconference/>

Schedule - Saturday, February 17, 2024

7:30am – 9:00am: Sign-in & Packet Pick-up
8:50am – 9:00am: Welcome and Announcements
9:00am – 9:45am: Plenary Session
10:00am – 11:15am: Session 1
11:15am – 11:35am: Break
11:35am – 12:30pm/1:00pm: Session 2
12:30pm – 2:10pm: Lunch Optional Sessions
2:15pm – 3:30pm or 4pm: Session 3
3:30/4:00pm – 5:30pm: Networking Session

Pricing Info For 2024

- Registration \$85 per person until Feb. 1st
- After Feb. 1st \$100 per person
- At the door registration may NOT be available due to venue capacity.

Session 1

Is a Food Hub a Good Fit for Me? Opportunities and Challenges to working with a food hub

Delaney Ryde, Klamath Grown; Yana Ludwig, North Coast Food Web, Kristy Athens, Good Groceries LLC; Carrie Juchau, Josephine County Farm Collective.

What is a food hub, anyway? Hear more about the growing network of Oregon food hubs. Learn how to sell to a food hub and expand your market reach. We will cover the different types of products most food hubs offer to their customers and the basic requirements needed to join this growing community.

Small Farms and Community Food Systems at the Oregon Legislature

Rachael Ward, Executive Director, Farmers Market Fund; Greg Holmes, Working Lands Director, 1,000 Friends of Oregon; Alice Morrison, Co-Director of Policy and Development, Friends of Family Farmers; Megan Kemple, Executive Director, Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network; Amy Wong, Board



Chair, Oregon Organic Coalition; Rose High Bear, Founding Director, Elderberry Wisdom Farm.

Oregon's Legislature is in "short session" this year, but there is still plenty of legislation in the works that really matters to farmers and community food systems. In this session, you'll hear from a panel of farm and food system advocacy organizations about 2023 Oregon legislative outcomes and 2024 top priority bills and funding programs they are tracking.

Searching for farmland? Things to consider when looking for farmland to lease or purchase

Natalie Danielson, Co-Director, Friends of Family Farmers; Silvia Cuesta, Oregon Farm Link Navigator, Friends of Family Farmers; Mehmet Balkan, Owner & Operator, Daydream Farm.

Join Friends of Family Farmers and farmer, Mehmet Balkan to learn more about things to consider when looking for farmland including: visioning and preparation, land search, evaluation, and common lease terms. For better or worse, there are no magic solutions when it comes to searching for land and we will share all the methods we've heard of. We will also cover the basics of evaluating a piece of land for your farming needs and how to work with a landholder for a legal and mutually beneficial lease arrangement.

The Entrepreneurial Mindset

Julia Shanks, Julia Shanks Food Consulting @ Author of The Farmer's Office: Tools, Tips and Templates to Successfully Manage a Growing Farm Business

You decided to become a farmer because you love being outside, working the land and making a difference in the way we eat and farm. And when you started your farm-business, you also became an entrepreneur, with new responsibilities of financial and people management. How do you juggle it all? There's always a more pressing chore – like feeding the chickens or covering the pac choy before a frost. In this workshop, we'll discuss the entrepreneurial mindset, what gets in our way of doing what we should, and strategies to overcome them. We'll discuss time management, moving past our fear of numbers and learning how to delegate.

Using Your Farm to Educate and Build Community

Audrey Comerford and Melissa Fery with the OSU Extension Service Agricultural Tourism project.

Making connections with community and educating the public about agriculture are two strong motivations for farmers to add agritourism to their business. In this session we will talk about various types of on-farm education activities and how to incorporate them effectively. There will be time for discussion and information sharing amongst the group.

Assess and Adapt: Pasture Planning Workshop

Shayan Ghajar, Oregon State University

This session will address what to look for when evaluating a pasture to determine its capabilities and make goals and plans for a successful grazing system. Attendees will learn to estimate forage productivity, assess species composition, anticipate seasonal extremes, and use new free technology to map out their pasture's most and least productive areas.

Making and Selling Bigleaf Maple Syrup in Oregon

Eric Jones, Forest Ecosystems and Society Dept.; Melanie Douville, Oregon Maple Project; Joy Waite-Cusic, Food Science and Technology, Dept.

A new industry is emerging on Oregon small farms, syrup and other sap-based foods from native bigleaf maple and walnut orchard trees. In this session you will learn how to identify bigleaf maple, assess your commercial potential, and how to take your first steps toward making quality end-products. The session will cover the new Oregon Farm Direct revisions that include maple and walnut syrup, food

safety considerations, sensory test results, and an overview of the basic equipment and labor required to be a producer. You will learn about opportunities for training through OSU Extension and through the Oregon Maple Project sugaring collective. Attendees will have the opportunity to sample bigleaf maple syrup produced in Oregon.

Business of Flower Farming

Lennie Larkin, Farm Business Instructor, Flower Farming For Profit @ B-Side Farm.

Cut flowers can be one of the most profitable crops on a small farm, but building an efficient and financially sustainable farm business can be a challenge when trying to grow a vast array of crops and sell through multiple channels. Lennie Larkin's forthcoming book from Chelsea Green: Flower Farming For Profit, teaches both established and aspiring flower farmers how to strategically build the business behind the blooms. This presentation will focus on methods for increasing profitability in cut flower operations, starting with data-driven crop planning. Lennie will share the methodology and some results from her Western SARE-funded cut flower crop cost of production research with ten small farms using Know Your Cost To Grow, a program created by Oregon Tilth in Collaboration with the OSU Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems, and share actionable strategies for getting in touch with your own cost of production.

Session 2

Field-to-Market: Selling Farm Direct, Producer-Processed, Value-Added Products in Oregon

Kelly Streit, OSU Extension Service.

Keep up on the new changes to the Oregon's Farm direct Marketing Law (ORFDML) which allows small farmers and aspiring food entrepreneurs to produce certain low-risk, value-added products (fruit spreads, pickled and lacto-fermented fruits and vegetables) from the produce that they grow and sell them directly to the consumer without having to obtain a processing license. The law was passed in 2011 and amended in 2023 to include new products, new sales channels, and a raised sales limit.

Funding Opportunities for Farmers:

This session will feature a panel of representatives from grant and financial assistance programs who will share about current and upcoming funding opportunities for farmers and ranchers. Funding

programs that will be covered include the Farmer & Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program, the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant Program, the Farm to Child Nutrition Program Producer Grant, the Northwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center Business Builder Grants, financial assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Natural Climate Solutions Fund and more. Program representatives will provide information about what funding can be used for (based on examples from farmers that have received funding in the past where possible), eligibility requirements and application processes and timelines.

Thinking of Leasing Out Your Farmland?

Andrea Krahmer, Oregon Agricultural Trust; Christina Bentrup, Friends of Family Farmers; Silvia Cuesta, Friends of Family Farmers; Teagan Moran, OSU Extension Service Small Farms Program

Join us to explore questions you should be asking when considering leasing out your land to new or experienced farmers. Service Providers will share common questions and considerations as well as provide input and guidance on where to find answers. Presentation topics include site readiness and assessment, contract building, farmer relationships, succession planning and more.

Innovations in dry farming in western Oregon

Jihelah Greenwald of Kasama Farm; Dan Schuler of Moondogs Farm; Matt Davis and Lucas Nebert of OSU Horticulture

For millennia, farmers have used dry farming practices to grow food through arid, warm seasons without relying on irrigation water. While dry farming has a history in our region, and around the world, farmers continue to innovate on dry farming practices to meet the diverse opportunities and constraints of growing food in our modern age and into a hotter, drier future. Our panel of farmers and researchers will discuss the latest dry farming practices that work for them, including no-till dry farming methods in diversified vegetables, techniques in dry farmed organic fruit tree production, and management of blossom-end rot in dry farmed tomatoes.

Organic Transition (TOPP): Opportunities and Challenges

Rose High Bear, Director, Elderberry Wisdom Farm; Amy Treasure (Siletz Tribe), Tribal Liaison, Elderberry Wisdom Farm; Elizabeth Dean (NW TOPP), Oregon Tilth.
In this listening session, presenters will solicit

feedback from Native American and BIPOC farmers on the benefits and barriers of transitioning to organic. Presenters will cover topics on how to access funding, resources, obstacles and issues for transitioning producers, market opportunities, and ecological health. Two Native farmers and ranchers will share their experience transitioning to organic and be available for Q/A.

Futuring the Small Farm: A model for ecologically sound, socially responsible, and economically viable agricultural systems

Beth Hoinacki, Goodfoot Farm.

In this workshop, farmerworker Beth Hoinacki will use Goodfoot Farm, a Demeter certified Biodynamic® and certified organic market farm, as a case study to discuss how she has applied principles of holacracy and sociocracy to empower and engage farm workers as highly valued and skilled components of the farm organism. With the philosophy, “mentor people, manage projects,” Beth reimagines how we view and value labor on the production farm. The farm also seeks to pay a living wage for all workers and is accomplishing this in part through the implementation of a sliding scale farm membership. Underlying her priority of wage equity for farm workers is her belief that the single most important goal we can work toward to ensure a whole and healthy food and farm future is changing the narrative on what it costs to produce food and how we pay for it. It is expected that farmworkers and farmers from farms of various sizes will leave this workshop with ideas, tools, and inspiration to support implementing labor and market practices that support a viable farming future. Others with interest in our community food systems will learn how they can help to shape a farming future that centers the people who farm as well as the planet.

Adjusting Crop Plans to Manage Climate Risk Using Financial Modeling

Julia Shanks, Julia Shanks Food Consulting @ Author of The Farmer's Office: Tools, Tips and Templates to Successfully Manage a Growing Farm Business; Lennie Larkin, Farm Business Instructor, Flower Farming For Profit @ B-Side Farm.
In the last decade or so, weather patterns have become more extreme and unpredictable. Different parts of the globe have experienced a range of devastating rains, scorching droughts that fuel wildfires, hurricanes, and unseasonable temperatures. Crop plans that made sense a few years ago, may need to be modified to take into consideration the

risk of extreme weather events. Farming has always been a risky venture. With little control over the weather, a freak snowstorm or severe hurricane can wipe out wide swaths of production. And as weather patterns become more erratic, the high value crops are also the highest risk. Climate change has affected agri-business strategies – from deciding what to grow, when to plant, and what infrastructure is needed. In this session, we will go through 2 case studies of how farmers used financial modeling to evaluate shifting priorities, risk tolerance and profit goals. We will discuss a flower farm in a region with increasing risks from wild fires and drought (B-Side Farm) and a vegetable farm with increasing risks for severe weather events (like hurricanes and winter storms).

Becoming a Successful Vendor at Your Local Farmers Market

Ashley Hess, Oregon Farmers Market Association.

Farmers Markets are a key business opportunity for small farms. There are more than 140 farmers markets throughout the state that yield more than \$60 million of revenue across more than 6,000 vendors annually. This session will cover the key metrics that are most impactful to bring new businesses success through their local farmers market(s).

Getting Meat to Market

David Zarling, Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (NMPAN)

Come learn about opportunities under retail and custom exemption, plus FIVE things you can do right now to work smarter and not harder with your meat processor resulting in better margins for both.

Optional Lunch Roundtables

Co-Packing & Food Processing Partnerships

Hannah Kullberg, Co-Pack; Erick Garman, ODA

A lunchtime discussion on co-packing and food processing partnerships for small farms. As resource connectors & match-makers we would love to hear about your product ideas and needs!

Reduced Tillage Options

Doug Collins, Extension Specialist, Washington State University; Nathan Stacey, Statewide Coordinator, OSU Small Farms Program; Nick Andrews, Organic Vegetable Specialist
Join our lunch roundtable to discuss reduced tillage options. Doug will share updates on applied research and practical reduced tillage methods for annual crops west of the Cascades. Engage in a farmer-to-

farmer discussion, and provide input for a summer reduced tillage field day and future extension events.

Raising Resilient Bees

Eric and Joy McEwen, authors of Raising Resilient Bees

Eric and Joy McEwen, authors of Raising Resilient Bees, share a short presentation followed by Q & A, about their journey as a beekeeping family operation and their unconventional means of developing an inbred line of honey bees with increased levels of resistance to varroa mites. This long-term selection program when paired with management practices that include integrated pest management techniques to reduce varroa mite populations has allowed minimal use of acaricides, specifically oxalic acid twice annually. Using in-hive queen propagation techniques in lieu of grafting, daughter colonies are raised annually from every extant colony. By maintaining relatively high mite pressure, we have imposed a selective force on our inbred line toward mite resistance. Differential rearing of number of daughter colonies per over-wintered colony allows for steady genetic transformation of our metapopulation. By foregoing grafting, we prevent unintended loss of rare genetic information. We utilize the processes of making walk-away splits to grow your apiary and produce naturally-reared queens.

Farm to Institution Roundtable

Melina Barker, Oregon Farm to School; Amy Gilroy, Oregon Department of Agriculture

Institutional sales can be daunting for small producers, however they also hold great potential as a valuable and stable income stream. We will discuss the opportunities and challenges related to institutional markets including schools, hospitals, prisons and universities. Come join the conversation with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Farm to School Network. Learn about the recently forming Oregon Farm to Institution Collaborative and how institutional markets might be a fit for your business.

USDA – NRCS Resources for Small Farms

Will Fett, NRCS

Do you farm and want to make improvements to the land that you own or lease? The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) offers technical and financial assistance to help farmers and forest landowners. No matter the size of your farm, NRCS helps with conservation planning and

installing practices that are specific to your natural resource needs and business goals. From simple management systems, such as planting cover crops, to complex structural practices, such as animal waste management systems, NRCS has a conservation solution for you.

Session 3

Seed Stories: A Deeper Dive into the Process of Seeds

Ada Snyder, High Mowing Organic Seeds

What happens to seed varieties? Where do they go? We will share a handful of specific organic seed stories, challenges, and triumphs of the multi-faceted process. Our stories demonstrate the importance of building relationships with breeders, farmers, and vendors to develop organic varieties. We hope this narrative informs growers of the efforts and obstacles of developing organic seed and the importance of grower feedback in furthering product development.

Making the Match: Facilitated Land Access Networking

Geoffrey Van, Future Farms Program Director, Rogue Farm Corps

This session is for farmers and ranchers who wish to access land, and for landholders who want to sell or lease their agricultural land or business. Whether leasing, purchasing, or engaging another creative arrangement, finding a land-match counterpart is a critical step to success. This workshop will help participants craft an elevator pitch for effective landseeker/landowner communication, and facilitates networking for meaningful connection. Breakout groups by region will be facilitated as possible.

Oats, Peas, Beans, and Barley Grow: Adding Grain and Pulse Crops to your Farming System

Brigid Meints, Oregon State University. She also spends part of her time with the OSU Center for Small Farms and Community Foods Systems as an Organic Grains & Pulses Extension specialist.

Come learn about the opportunities and challenges associated with adding small grains or dry edible legumes to your farm: species and variety selection, marketing, equipment, and more! In this session, Brigid Meints will begin by sharing some strategies for selecting which crops to grow and present results from her variety trials, followed by a small panel who will share their experiences growing and marketing small grains and pulses. The session will wrap up

with an interactive discussion and questions from the audience.

Agricultural Microplastic Pollution and Reduction:

Plastics have become a staple of everyday life, including in agricultural practices. However, agricultural plastics, such as mulches and films, as well as biosolids, are a source of microplastics and have been shown to impact soil and crops. In this session, hear from researchers, stakeholders, and farmers to discuss how microplastics affect farming and best practices to reduce agricultural plastic pollution.

Manage It: Systems for keeping and using farm records

Josh Volk runs Cully Neighborhood Farm, a small urban CSA, and does bookkeeping and consulting for multiple other farms in the Portland area and beyond under the business name Slow Hand Farm. He is the author of the books "Compact Farms" and "Build Your Own Farm Tools"

Looking for straightforward and effective ways to keep records that actually get used on the farm? This session is based on the practical methods used on my own farm and on farms of different sizes with multiple employees and marketing outlets. The principles we'll talk about are applicable for paper and pencil, or specialized apps. I will share examples of the actual record keeping systems that I use and how I use the information I keep records on to make decisions for my own farm business; both day to day production decisions and longer term general business decisions. The session will include plenty of time for question from the audience.

Adding Flowers to Your Market Farm

Erin McMullen, Rain Drop Farms

Adding a crop to your farm can be daunting, but flowers can be an easy and satisfying addition to many market farms. Join veteran flower farmer Erin McMullen, of Rain Drop Farms in Philomath, to discuss the ins and outs of how to be successful with cut flowers. We'll check in on the differences of existing markets, how your farm can best take advantage of the upsurge in demand for locally grown flowers, and what crops will best suit your farm. Whether you're thinking about adding sunflowers to your market share, looking to add flowers for pollinators, or wanting to launch a comprehensive flower program, the potential for profitability in cut flowers is worth consideration.

An Introduction to Living Soils and Applications of Regenerative Agriculture

Matthew Slaughter, President, Earthfort LLC

A life-focused approach to farm and land management is centered around soil microorganisms. In order for soils to function properly, there must be adequate microbial diversity and abundance. Just a teaspoon of soil has billions of microorganisms that play a vital role in soil to plant interactions, which are essential for people to continue cultivating their land in a healthy and sustainable manner. Learn how to harness the power of microorganisms in your own backyard!

Climate Stress & Grief

Addie Candib, American Farmland Trust; Maud Powell, OSU Extension Service

As we continue to face challenges related to climate change, it is important to address how we can cope with the mental toll they can bring. The goal of this session is to introduce farmers to the concepts of climate stress and grief. Participants will learn how it is different from other forms of grief and discuss theories about the grief process. After establishing

a safe and supportive group dynamic, participants can discuss what they have lost to climate change with their peers, then identify and share coping mechanisms they employ.

Local Meat Local Flavor – The Keys to Marketing Your Meat Products Locally

Michele Thorne, Executive Director, Good Meat Project

Michele Thorne is the Good Meat Project's second Executive Director, and she works in partnership with her staff, Board, collaborating organizations, government agencies and subcontractors to support and expand the GMP's programmatic work that helps connect stakeholders across the meat value chain to its shared values of transparency, collaboration and inclusivity

End the day with our Think with a Drink: Networking Session

View all the sessions and register at <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/smallfarmsconference/>

SYMPHYLANS: IN A CLASS OF THEIR OWN



Symphylans cause severe damage to a wide range of vegetable crops. Learn to monitor symphylans, prevent their spread, and reduce populations so you can grow great vegetables in their presence.

Think through ideas for future projects and join this farmer-to-farmer discussion with:

Navneet Kaur, Jon Umble & Nick Andrews

**Friday, February 16th
2:00-4:30 pm**

**LaSells Stewart Center – Ag Leaders
Room, OSU Campus, Corvallis, OR**

February 16th

2:00-4:30pm

LaSells Stewart Center

Free

Register at

**[https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/
smallfarmsconference/associated-events](https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/smallfarmsconference/associated-events)**

continued from page 2

Her work focuses on local and regional food system development that is grounded in sustainability, equity, and collaboration. She leads a team of innovative programs and people that bring a broad range of expertise and experience to complex food systems challenges and opportunities. Gwin also participates in national initiatives that elevate and enrich SFCFS's impact in Oregon. An Associate Professor in the Department of Crop and Soil Science, Gwin holds a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley in Environmental Science, Policy and Management and a bachelor's degree from Harvard University.

"I am excited to build on SFCFS's first 10 years, with our innovative team and programs," Gwin said. "I am grateful to our partners and stakeholders and will work hard to keep their trust. Together, we will press on toward a resilient, sustainable food system for all Oregonians.

Gwin fills the position formerly held by Garry Stephenson, whose work at OSU focused on supporting farmers markets, sustainable farming methods, beginning farmer education, and the production and policy needs of organic farmers for more than 30 years before retiring in 2023.

Todd Anderson is the newest member of the Small Farms team serving Polk, Benton and Lane Counties. Originally from the Sacramento area, and he has been involved in or around agriculture my entire life. His mom's side of the family has always been small farmers in the Southern Philippines. Their stories, experiences and connection to their land have always played an outsized role in his life. He intends to integrate their mindset of resilience, pragmatism and resourcefulness into his work with extension.

Starting school for horticulture in San Luis Obispo California he worked and supported research in the university orchards as well as a few internships, one dealing with corn and one with endangered native plants in Kauai. After completing a Bachelors degree he worked on Oahu with a private company



experimenting with saltwater hydroponic systems before leaving to concentrate on a masters at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. At the University of Hawaii he worked on a sweet potato breeding program for niche local markets that collaborated with a Native Hawaiian led organization. The goal of the project was to develop cultivars that Hawaii farmers could market locally with a higher profit. With the higher cost of living he also found work on other projects like assisting in a chili pepper breeding project, a seasonal potato virus screening and cleaning equipment for a tissue culture lab.

In 2020 he came to Oregon to work on a heat tolerant blueberry breeding project through the United States Department of Agriculture and Oregon State University collaborative breeding program where he is wrapping up project and completing a his PhD.e side. This project allowed me to collaborate with growers across Oregon and Washington, giving me appreciation and love for both the horticulture and rural communities of our region.

In my free time I enjoy gardening, especially experimenting with what niche and hard to find plants can be grown in my community garden plot, crabbing, trivia nights, exploring the West Coast, trying new food and anything with the ocean. ∞

Accelerator Program Brings New Dry Farmers Up To Speed

By: Sophia Nowers (student), Lucas Nebert, Teagan Moran & Matthew Davis
Oregon State University

Around the Willamette Valley of Oregon, small farmers and beginning farmers can struggle with access to irrigation water. In order to help new farmers grow food without irrigation, the [OSU Dry Farming Project](#) launched a Dry Farm Accelerator Program with funds from the Western SARE Research to Grassroots grant program. A cohort of 11 farmers participated in the Dry Farm Accelerator Program during the 2023 growing season.

What is dry farming?

Dry farming is the production of crops without irrigation during a dry summer growing season. To meet their water needs, dry-farmed crops use soil moisture that is retained from the winter and early spring rains. Dry farming is different from dryland farming, which is unirrigated farming in semi-arid regions, such as the interior west of the USA. In dryland regions, low rainfall may necessitate farmers keeping their fields fallow for one or more years to store sufficient water to produce a crop. Western Oregon receives an average of 48 inches of precipitation annually, meaning that a dry-farmed crop can be grown every summer. In suitable locations in Oregon, farmers have successfully dry-farmed many warm-season crops, such as tomatoes, melons, corn, sorghum, quinoa, amaranth, legumes, squash, and potatoes. The [OSU Dry Farming Project](#) conducts research, education, and outreach activities to help farmers produce dry-farmed crops profitably and sustainably.



Dry Farming Accelerator Program participants Justin and Julia Vastola of Perennial Hill pose with their 5' soil core, which was used to assess their soil's suitability for dry farming. Photo credit: Lucas Nebert

Small and beginning farmers are interested in dry farming

Small farmers and beginning farmers are often interested in dry farming due to either a lack of water rights or because they have junior or limited [water rights](#). However, there are many other reasons that farmers are interested in dry farming. Some lack the infrastructure or capital investment required to irrigate farmland. Additionally, many urban farmers can accumulate big water bills if using municipal water. Some farmers with a long history of irrigated farming are interested

in dry farming to keep land without water rights in production, as a low-input weed management strategy, and for perceived improvements in flavor and storability of dry-farmed crops.

However, dry farming is riskier than irrigated farming. Not only are yields lower, but the risk of crop failure is higher. For example, on certain sites, drought stress in a tomato crop can result in a high incidence of blossom-end rot, resulting in the loss of a half or more of total tomato yields. One thing beginning dry farmers need to understand in order to successfully dry farm is whether their site is suitable for dry farming.

Location, location, location

Dry farming success can be highly dependent on the

location of a farm or garden. Site suitability for dry farming encompasses many factors including climate, annual precipitation, growing degree days, exposure to wind, and the soil's available water holding capacity and subsoil constraints on root development. Soil type is extremely important for dry farming, because the soil is the principal water source for the plants throughout the growing season. Thus, a good first step to determining if a plot of land is suitable for dry farming is to determine your soil series. A quick and easy method to do this is to look up how your site is mapped on the [Web Soil Survey](#); however for more certainty, it is recommended to take a 5-foot-deep soil pedon (see picture). Then a determination of the soil's available water holding capacity (AWHC) can be made—the amount of plant available water a soil can hold against the force of gravity. At least 9 inches of AWHC in a 5-foot deep soil sample is a suitable amount for dry farming warm season vegetables, and 11 inches or more is ideal. Root-restrictive layers such as a hardpan can also reduce roots' access to valuable subsoil moisture.

Other relevant site factors are important too. Insufficient nutrients and low soil pH can affect root growth and crop development, which can restrict access to soil moisture. Climate and microclimate should also be considered. Hotter and drier sites will be less amenable to dry farming and cooler humid sites. However, farmers will also want to make sure that their site has sufficient growing degree days to mature the crop. Finally, fast winds can pull water away from the crop and the soil. Sheltering the crop from the wind can help improve dry farming outcomes.



Jihelah Greenwald of Kasama Farm poses with dry farmed winter squash and corn plots. Their farm, located in the Hood River Valley, participated in the Dry Farming Accelerator Program. Photo credit: Leilani Mroczkowski

What is the Dry Farming Accelerator Program

Many small farmers, urban farmers, and homesteaders involved in the Dry Farming Collaborative are interested in having more hands-on involvement in OSU Dry Farming Project research. So in 2022, the Dry Farming Project launched the Dry Farming Accelerator Program intended to make it easier for growers to adopt dry farming. This included a soil assessment by a soils expert, a soil nutrient test, an introductory dry farming curriculum (<https://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/article/dry-farming-accelerator-program>), access to seeds and starts, and

access to peer-to-peer groups of growers trialing dry farmed crops on their farms.

Every member of the cohort grew a trial of North Georgia Candy Roaster winter squash to compare the yield of their farm to others. The goal is to give growers a base of knowledge in dry farming and develop dry farming strategies for different climates and soil types in Oregon. Additionally, farmers could participate in multiple other trials including a toolkit for controlling blossom-end rot in tomatoes, “Oaxacan Green” dent corn trials, grafted tomato trials, and “Lilly” melon trials.

Next steps

Now that the 2022 cohort has completed the Dry Farming Accelerator Program, we look forward to continuing to work with them in future trials. We are also making the [Dry Farming Curriculum](#) that we produced for the program available to the broader community. If you are interested in learning more about dry farming the Dry Farming Curriculum would be a good place to start. We hope to be able to do more cohorts in the future, and if you are interested you should contact Lucas Nebert at nebertl@oregonstate.edu or Matthew Davis at davisma3@oregonstate.edu. ∞

Farmer Feature: Korrie & Rob Hooper of Farm For Our Lives

By: Evie Smith, OSU Small Farms Program

Farm For Our Lives is a small, diversified farm just on the Lincoln County side of Alsea, Oregon. Korrie and Robert Hooper are taking their farm into its third farming season in Alsea. The majority of their farm is dedicated to growing mixed vegetables, flowers, and fruit, which they sell at the Florence Farmers Market and through their Waldport-based CSA. This year they also started raising pigs, which they plan to sell as locker meat.

What is something that you'd like your community to know about your farm?

Farm For Our Lives has a community focus. The 'our' in Farm for Our Lives doesn't just refer to Korrie and Rob— they're farming for the lives of everyone who comes in contact with their farm. They farm organically, and have a goal of providing affordable, healthy food for their neighbors. 'We want to make our farm everyone's farm,' Korrie shared. Their vision is to eventually hold events on their farm so that their community can see where their food is grown and enjoy time together on the land.

What do you like most about farming?

Korrie and Rob enjoy working together on the farm. Korrie was a corporate accountant and Rob a bartender until they started farming. They worked opposite shifts, and saw very little of each other. 'It took us 21 years to find a job that we could do together,' shared Korrie. Now, they enjoy being together and being able to problem-solve and brainstorm as a team.

What's your favorite thing about farming on the Oregon Coast?

The Hoopers like farming in their microclimate on the coast. They farmed in Dufur, OR in the rain shadow



Photo by: Evie Smith

of Mt. Hood previously. The mild temperatures, high rainfall, and afternoon marine layer are a welcome change!

What's next for your farm?

Farm For Our Lives is growing in a lot of ways! One of Rob and Korrie's big projects right now is expanding their market. They're looking for new places to sell, and they plan to expand their CSA to serve more customers as well.

If other farmers want to connect with you, what should they talk with you about?

You can talk to Korrie and Rob about anything farming- and food-related! They love hearing stories, and they're always happy to share information and advice based on their experiences farming.

Specifically, you should talk to Korrie about flowers. 'Flowers have my heart,' she shared.

Talk to Rob about livestock. Farm For Our Lives has recently added pigs on the farm. They're selling them

as locker meat right now, and plan to make pork an add-on for their CSA in the future. Managing the pigs is one of Rob's favorite jobs on the farm. Since he's new to raising livestock, he's always looking for more information about how to improve his management practices. 'I'd like to learn from others' experiences,' he shared.

Get in touch!

If you'd like to connect with Korrie and Rob, you can send them an email (farmforourlives@gmail.com), follow them on [Facebook](#), follow them on instagram (@farmforourlives) or drop by the Florence Farmers Market on Tuesday evenings. ☞

New OSU Publication about Arsenic in Drinking Water

The OSU Extension Service has released EM 9401 Arsenic in Drinking Water. Arsenic can contaminate well water, leading to serious health conditions. But if you don't test for it, you won't know it's there.

Arsenic in groundwater can come from natural sources (volcanic rock or soil), industrial processes or historical use of arsenic-based pesticides and pressure-treated wood. A new guide from OSU Extension shows people who use well water how to remove arsenic from the water they drink every day. With brand new visuals and graphic elements.

Peer reviewed and pilot tested we are so excited to share this resource with all of you. You can find the publication at <https://beav.es/Tpy> in pdf and html formats. We recommend the pdf version if you are sharing with others. A Spanish version is also available, along with sister publications Arsenic in Drinking Water and Lead in Drinking Water.



How to Read a Pesticide Label: A Guide for Small & Beginning Farmers Publication Now Available

Available in both English and Spanish. These new publication are a must have for those that apply pesticides. Pesticides, both conventional and organic, can be a practical part of an integrated pest management plan when used appropriately. Incorrect use of pesticides can lead to problems with human health, crop production and environmental damage. Pesticide labels contain important information for keeping people who work with and near them safe and minimizing negative environmental impacts. This guide provides a roadmap to help pesticide applicators and handlers understand how to use pesticides more safely and effectively, direct long pesticides, it is important to understand the label is the law — it is a legally binding agreement between the applicator, manufacturer or registrant and state and federal regulatory agencies.



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<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pub/em9410-s>

Register Now!

February 17th, 2024

OSU Oregon Small Farms Conference

<https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/smallfarmsconference/>

We can't wait to see you there



Living With Your Water Well & Septic Systems Winter Webinars

Did you know there are possible contaminants in your well water that you cannot see, taste, or smell? Municipal water is regulated by the EPA so consumers can be quite confident that the quality of the water coming from their tap is sufficient. However, well water does not face such stringent regulations and contamination testing often only occurs when the well is first installed or in some locations when property ownership changes.

It is so important that well water users understand when and how to monitor their water quality and the associated benefits of doing so. Proper maintenance and monitoring of your septic systems ensures proper treatment of the effluent and a longer life of the system.

Learn steps to protect the health of your family, neighbors and animals, your property investment, and the safety of groundwater resources during these FREE webinars.

- January 10, 2024
12:00pm-1:15pm
Living with your domestic water well
- January 10, 2024
12:00pm-1:15pm
Living with your septic system
- January 18, 2024
6:15pm-8:15pm
Living with your well and septic system
- January 27, 2024
9:00am-11:15am
Living with your well and septic system



Register at <https://beav.es/qiT> (case sensitive)

Registration for webinars is required to receive the zoom link ahead of time. For additional questions you can email Chrissy.Lucas@oregonstate.edu or leave a message at 541-713-5009 ☎

**Oregon State University**

**Dry Farming Collaborative
Regional Meetup: South
Willamette Valley**

*Learn about the Dry Farming
Project, share resources and
ideas!*

<https://beav.es/qsk>

**Thursday January 25, 2024
5pm-7pm**

**Optional potluck at 6pm*



**Linn County Extension Office
33630 McFarland Rd, Tangent, OR
97389**



A New OSU Program Addresses the Impacts of Climate Stress and Grief on Farmers

By: Maud Powell, OSU Extension Service Small Farms Program

A vegetable farmer laments the missing crawdads she hunted with her father in Lake Washington as a child. A farm intern chokes up as he describes a news headline about rainwater no longer being safe to drink. An older cattle rancher talks about relationships he's lost to the politics of climate change. "My nephew doesn't call anymore," he says, his voice straining. Other people mention plants they've lost—a beloved hydrangea bush that perished in the heat dome of 2021, a centuries-old incense cedar that finally succumbed to beetle damage. Fireflies in the Midwest are now uncommon. The lake where one rancher brought his kids to fish is too warm to sustain life anymore. These are the voices of farmers asked to name a specific and personal loss they've experienced to climate change in a session on stress and grief at the Tilth Alliance Conference in Washington state in October. Like waves reaching for the shore, losses continue relentlessly, one after another, lining up beyond the horizon.

A growing body of literature and research documents the mental health impacts of climate change on the general population, but with little focus on rural, agricultural populations in the United States (Howard et al., 2020). Farmers are also less likely to seek out support and mental health services than the general population (Hagen et al., 2021). However, farmers extremely vulnerable to climate anxiety and grief—they spend working hours interacting with plants and animals and notice even subtle changes in the environment. Excessive heat and smoke make work unpleasant and dangerous, and farmers rely on the eco-systems in which they grow food and fiber.

Climate change can be terrifying and overwhelming. A natural human response to unresolved loss is denial, "numbing out", and paralysis. However, research indicates that people who speak openly about their climate anxiety and grief are more resilient, likely to act, and feel more connected to others.

Most grief research is based on sudden and isolated losses. In complicated deaths, including death by murder or suicide, griever often experience anger, powerlessness, and regret. Likewise with climate grief, ecological losses are preventable. Feelings and thoughts are highly complex and intense, spanning from rage at politicians and oil companies to guilt for personal choices to abject terror in the face of scientists' predictions.

Some types of grief are more socially supported than others. All cultures have rituals associated with the death of a close family member. The appropriateness of grief, in this context, is recognized and validated through cultural practices and community validation. Of course, this does not make the loss of a loved one easy, but social support provides a space, and tools, for a person to deal with their grief in the company of others. In contrast, some losses are not communally acknowledged, and do not have a cultural context for expression. This category of grief is known as disenfranchised grief. Climate grief is considered a disenfranchised grief because in most cases, social and cultural supports for processing climate grief do not exist.

A new program out of Oregon State University's Extension program is supporting farmers in recognizing the mental health effects of climate grief and providing spaces to express difficult emotions.

After sharing specific losses, the farmers gathered at OSU Extension's workshop begin to brainstorm healthy strategies for coping with their distress. A flower farmer reports that she regularly lobbies her local politicians. "Local is where we can make a difference." Another vegetable grower says he uses nervous system regulation practices to calm his nervous systems, like box breathing. One woman plants trees. Another engages in guerilla wildflowers plantings—throwing handfuls of seed into empty

lots near her urban farm and waiting to see what emerges in spring. “It gives me hope for unexpected outcomes,” she said. Another woman tells us a story—she had been farming with a group of friends in California in 2016 when a catastrophic wildfire caused them all to leave and move to different places. She’s still sensitive to wildfire smoke. Whenever she smells smoke and begins to feel her lungs hurting, she texts the friends she had in California. It’s her way of remembering to stay in touch with them.

A sense of solidarity emerges as people speak about their coping strategies. The shared sentiment is that

they are in this together and more resilient when they speak openly about how climate change affects them.

We’ll be offering this workshop at the Small Farms Conference in February. ∞



Oregon State University

DRY FARMING COLLABORATIVE WINTER CONVENING (ONLINE)

LEARN ABOUT THE LATEST INSIGHTS
IN DRY FARMING AND CONNECT WITH
OTHER GROWERS!

[HTTPS://BEAV.ES/QQH](https://beav.es/qqh)

February 7th, 2024 9am - 12pm
*Stay after 12:00pm for
open discussions*



Take Conservation to the Next Level with CSP

By: Will Fett, USDA NRCS



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Producers and forest managers interested in taking their conservation efforts to the next level are encouraged to consider the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. This year there is approximately \$29M in available funding for Oregon producers and the deadline to apply is March 29, 2024.

CSP offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural and forest producers. The program compensates agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintain their baseline level of conservation. the minimum annual payment for agricultural producers participating in CSP has increased to \$4,000 (previously \$1,500). The increase addresses challenges faced by small scale, underserved, and

urban producers and improves equity in the program by making participation more financially beneficial for smaller operations.

Conservation practices that are eligible include herbaceous weed treatment, precision pesticide application, improving nutrient uptake, forage testing, precision agriculture, wildlife refuge, and a variety of other conservation practice tailored to the landowner goals. Those activities that are on the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation list may be eligible for consideration in two different funding pools as they have dedicated funding.

To get started, contact a local USDA NRCS office and Local Service Center to develop a conservation plan that meets operational goals. ∞



Come a day early for the Farm to School Conference!

This year, the Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network (OFSSGN) is hosting the Farm to School Conference at the OSU Alumni Center the day before the Small Farms Conference! Many schools and early childhood centers are interested in purchasing from small local farms. Workshop topics include:

- Understanding the school market
- Crop planning for school sales
- Local proteins in schools
- and more!

In addition, there will be a purchasing connection event where food producers and school food buyers can meet!

50% off registration for anyone attending the OSU Small Farms Conference!

Learn more and register at <https://oregonfarmtoschool.org/conference/>

2024 LAMBING SCHOOL

Sponsored by Oregon Sheep Growers Association

DATE: SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 2024
TIME: 8 am to 5 pm
LOCATION: Mont Alto Ranch, 2800 French Creek Rd,
Glide, Oregon
PRESENTED BY: Dr. Paul Bailey, Bailey Veterinary Clinic
Gene Pirelli
Josh Sutch
John Fine



This is an excellent opportunity to learn how to increase your odds of getting live lambs on the ground and off to a good start! This school will be held in a commercial sheep lambing barn, so there will be ample hands-on opportunities depending on the number of ewes that decide to lamb on that date.

“EMPHASIS TO BE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE”

Ewes: Lambing problems, obstetrics, grafting, foot trimming and health.

Lambs: Castration, docking, vaccinations, and emergency situations as they arise.

The school will also include discussions on sheep nutrition and facilities. Participants are also asked to wear warm, appropriate barn clothing and bring clean rubber boots! All footwear will be disinfected before entering the barn.

Cost: \$50 per person. The school will be limited to 12 participants. Selection for the school will be based on the first 12 registered. Preference will be given to those attending for the first time. Lunch will be provided with registration. Refunds for cancellation will only be paid if the position in the class can be filled.



DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION

**Monday, January 8, 2024
(Or until the class is filled)**

Remember, first come, first served, because, unfortunately, we can only accommodate twelve people in the class. Fees will be returned if the class is filled. If you must cancel your plans to attend, please notify us four (4) working days prior to the lambing school, so that we can still refund your money.

To register for the class, please fill out the enclosed form. Registration forms and fees must be received by January 8th to reserve your place in the class. All class participants will receive a packet of information.

For more details on the Lambing School please call John Fine at 541-673-0369 or email at johnandpeggyfine@charter.net.