

# The Grapevine



The newsletter for Yamhill County Master Gardeners

May 2021

**VOLUTEERS NEEDED:** Leader for the Zoom Chats  
Mentors for Garden-to-Table Program

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## Plantain

(*Plantago spp.*)  
indicates compacted  
(often trampled)  
infertile, clay soil.

## Waterwise Gardening

Online May 11, 3pm

This class will cover basic xeriscape principles, including planning and design, and how to conserve water while maintaining a beautiful landscape. We'll also take a look at how to make smart choices regarding pest management practices to protect local water resources. We'll have plenty of examples of water-wise designs (including pesticide-free) to inspire you to implement some of these practices.

**All past Gardening Classes available at this site:**

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu>

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**COLLABORATE**  
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# Save the Date

OMGA PRESENTS

## Mini-College 2021

CONNECT - COLLABORATE - CULTIVATE

**July 16 and 17, 2021**

Experience and participate in a dynamic program  
of  
interactive educational classes and workshops

*Keynote presentations by:*

**Robert Michael Pyle** and **Gail Langellotto**

Watch for the exciting details when our website *“goes live”* at:

**[mastergardenerminicollege.org](http://mastergardenerminicollege.org)**

**Registration will open in March 2021**

# Plant Sale

**Sponsored by Yamhill County Master Gardeners**

**Online Shopping Only**

**Remember your May pickup Appointment!**

*Vegetables, Annuals and Perennials all at great prices!*

Visit [ycmgaplantsale.com](http://ycmgaplantsale.com)  
starting April 5

**Scheduled Plant Pickups**  
at the  
Yamhill County Fairgrounds

**Pickup dates:**

May 6-8 and May 13-15

**Thank you for your Support!**

*Plant Sale proceeds support YCMGA educational horticultural programs in Yamhill County.*



For more details, call 503-434-7517 or go to:

[ycmga.com](http://ycmga.com)



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## *Tales from the Chef's Garden*

**W**elcome to the Chef's Garden in May. We're going to talk about tomatoes, since they consume my thoughts all month. The end goal is racks of tomatoes with which the chefs create amazing dishes.

May is probably the busiest month of the year in the sheer volume of tasks which need to be accomplished in a timely fashion. This is when all the planning and preparation done during the slow winter months pay off. I know where everything is going to be planted, how far apart to plant them, and how many or how much to plant. I know what the fertilizer needs are for each growing bed and will apply it accordingly. By the time we reach tomato planting time, all I need to do is transport the tomato plants from the greenhouse to the garden without dumping the entire load. Sometimes, that is a challenge. Many a plant has found that there is such a thing as gravity and the wheelbarrow rack can be a slippery slope to a faceplant. (This is assuming that plants think about such things!)

I grow 20 varieties for a total of 100 tomato plants. I split them roughly into four categories: large slicers, mid-size, cherry size, and saucing tomatoes. Within each of those categories, the chefs like a variety of colors and shapes. The exception is the saucing tomatoes. These they want mostly red so their sauces look right! If you are no stranger to seed catalogs, then you know that there are 100s of tomatoes from which to choose. How do I do that? What characteristics are important for me in the Chef's Garden?

***Flavor, flavor, flavor***

- Whatever Chef requests! He looks at the catalogs too, and sees things which he would like to have me try.
- Disease resistance (no blossom end rot). Some cultivars are way more prone to this disease. Consequently I will never again grow San Marzanos. End of story. No way. No how! I don't have time for finicky plants.
- Days to maturity. Earlier is better because the goal is tomatoes, not entering "largest tomato" competitions.
- Lack of splitting. The exception to this is Sungolds. The flavor can't be beat, so we put up with them splitting when it rains. One year we trialed a de-hybridized variety from Adaptive Seeds called Santiam Sunrise. Chef preferred the flavor of Sungold even though they split. I thought they were comparable.
- Color

### ***Here are our choices for 2021.***

#### **LARGE SLICERS -**

Amana Orange  
Amish Gold Slicer  
Azoychka (yellow)  
Buffalo Steak (red)  
Fantastic (red)  
Gill's All Purpose (red)  
Siletz (red)

#### **MID-SIZE -**

Siletz (early red)  
Sun (yellow). Far, far superior to "Taxi".  
Stupice (red and earliest tomato)

#### **CHERRY SIZE -**

Pink Bumblebee (red with gold/orange stripes)





- Purple Bumblebee (red with green striping)
- Sunrise Bumblebee (yellow with red striping)
- Sungold (golden goodness also very early)
- Harvest Luck (red)

**SAUCING**

- LaRoma III (red)
- Jory (red)
- Pozzano(red)
- Giant Garden Paste (red)

*INTERRUPTION.....*

Captain Gray reporting. I'd like to report that the Gardener is not giving any space for the garden rodent patrol to have a say, so I lured her away with a tasty mouse so I could sneak onto her

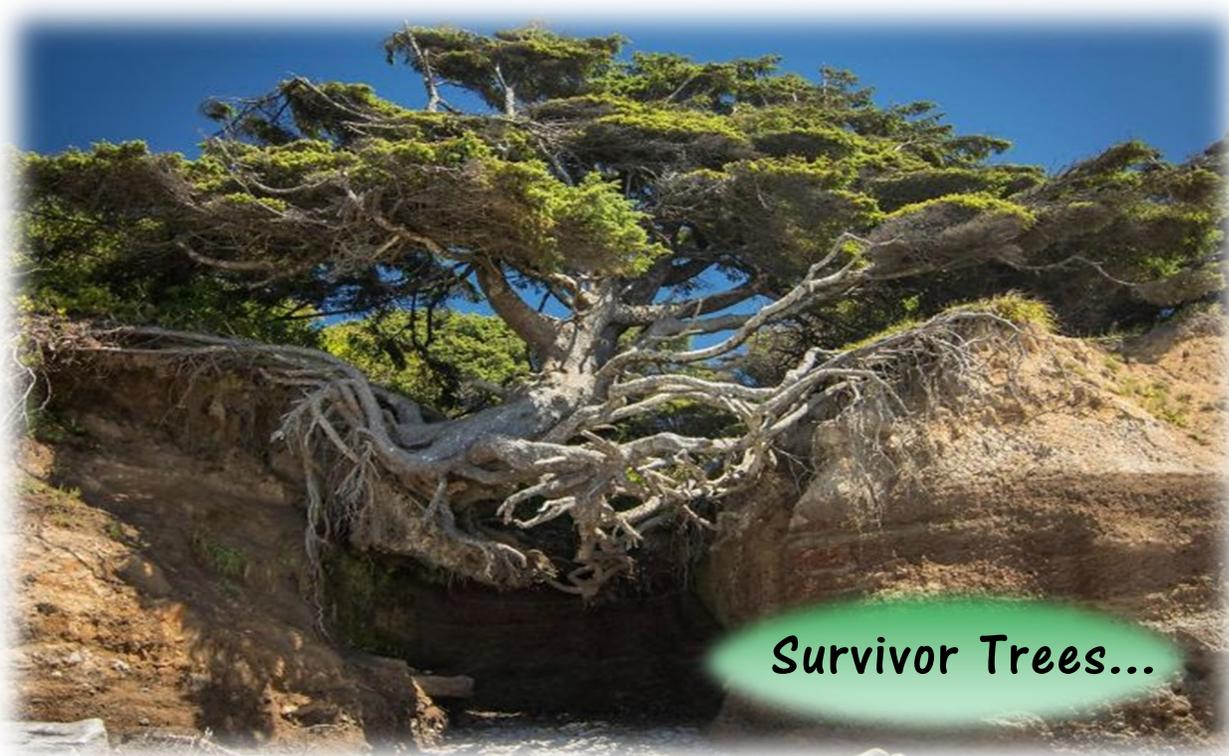
computer. Since my brother, Lieutenant Knife, and myself were transported to this new hunting ground, we have been busy. Things here were in a terrible state of affairs.

The mice were bold. The voles were voracious and multiplying. The gophers had staged a grand invasion, Operation Over-the-road, they called it. Even the ground squirrels were seeking homes within the sacred confines of the Chef's Garden. We are working tirelessly to harvest the meals-on-legs. But we can eat only so much. The Gardener just buried the whole bird and mouse that we left her, so now we just leave a little evidence, feathers or entrails, so she doesn't think we're slacking. Time to return to the hunt. Stay tuned for the next time I can lure her away. *Captain Gray signing out.*

Each fall the chefs and I compare notes to decide which cultivars we liked and which ones didn't meet our criteria. Then the cycle starts again with the seed catalogs...



*Anna Ashby, Master Gardener  
Master Beekeeper*



TREE OF LIFE  
in Olympic  
National Park,  
Washington  
State

**Survivor Trees...**

# PESKY PROFILES

By Heather Stoven

## Moss (and Lichen) on Trees

**M**ore noticeable in winter and spring, prior to leaf emergence, is the presence of moss and lichen growing on trees. We have had a number of questions come into our desk clinic this last month about removing moss from trees.

Perhaps more of these questions have arisen since landscape trees have gotten more attention this spring after clean up from ice storm damage. We are fortunate here in the PNW to have ample rainfall for lush, green environs, which includes moss. Both moss and lichen (which typically accompanies moss on trees), succeed in a habitat with moisture and diffuse light, which can often be found within the interior of older growth on trees and shrubs.

Moss and lichen produce their own food, and are merely looking for a substrate, or habitat for attaching themselves. Most typically mosses and lichens will not harm a tree or shrub: however on occasion, if they are wet, they can make tree branches heavier which can make them susceptible to breakage. In most cases I

would not recommend removal of moss or lichen. However sometimes gardeners may find them unattractive and ask about how to remove them. A first step may be to evaluate the tree to see if there is a way to increase sunlight and air movement to the interior of the tree or shrub, perhaps by thinning the canopy or removing other nearby shade.

If the moss is reachable, it can be physically removed by hand. As a *last resort* it is possible to hire a professional to apply chemical control; however the trees can be damaged by the chemicals and products can be toxic. Therefore, this should be avoided, and instead gardeners can relax knowing that moss and lichens are not causing harm to tree growth due to their presence on the trunk or branches.



For more information:

<http://bryophytes.science.oregonstate.edu/page19.htm>

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/what-s-that-growing-on-my-tree>



**Extreme Topiary**



*Euphorbia stellispina* (baja costero)

# Heather's Highlights

**H**ello everyone! This has been an amazing spring with all our warm, sunny weather. I hope you have been able to spend ample time in your gardens soaking up the sunshine. Some of our Master Gardener committees have been busy with limited in-person activities at the community garden as well as at the fairgrounds with greenhouse and plant sale committees. Virtual activities such as Garden-to-Table and Spring-into-Gardening took place on Saturdays during April. It was really wonderful to see so many of you attending and participating in these different activities. The online Master Gardener desk clinic has also been busy with questions from the public.

I know many of you will be volunteering in person to assist with the plant sale order pick-ups which are coming up quickly. I appreciate your willingness to assist with this event; it is exciting to be able to host a plant sale again this year. Please keep in mind our COVID case num-

bers have increased in the county, and we need to be extra careful to keep up our safety measures. At the end of April our county's risk level increased to high, which affects some of our face-to-face activities.

When volunteering in person, please follow all safety protocols such as watching the COVID safety video and signing the paperwork (contact Carla if you plan to volunteer in-person and haven't done this yet), utilizing advance sign-ups (so we do not exceed participant numbers on-site), sign in when you arrive (for contact tracing), wear a mask, do not share food, and maintain at least 6' of distancing.

These procedures do not change even if you are vaccinated. Thank you to all of you for your flexibility and dedication to the Master Gardener program during these unconventional times. Stay safe everyone and enjoy spring!



*Heather*



## AN HERBICIDE ALTERNATIVE

By

DEWEY CARON,  
SUBMITTED BY  
ANNA ASHBY

## The New “Brown Gold”--Pine Needles

**WARNING: IT IS A FELONY TO STEAL PINE NEEDLES IN NORTH CAROLINA** AND HERE IS WHY...

The longleaf pine’s most obvious attribute is its strong, straight timber — perfect for utility poles. But the reason that longleaf pines are prized in North Carolina: their needles. The dropped needles are in such demand that a lucrative business has grown up around raking, baling and selling them to landscapers and homeowners as mulch.



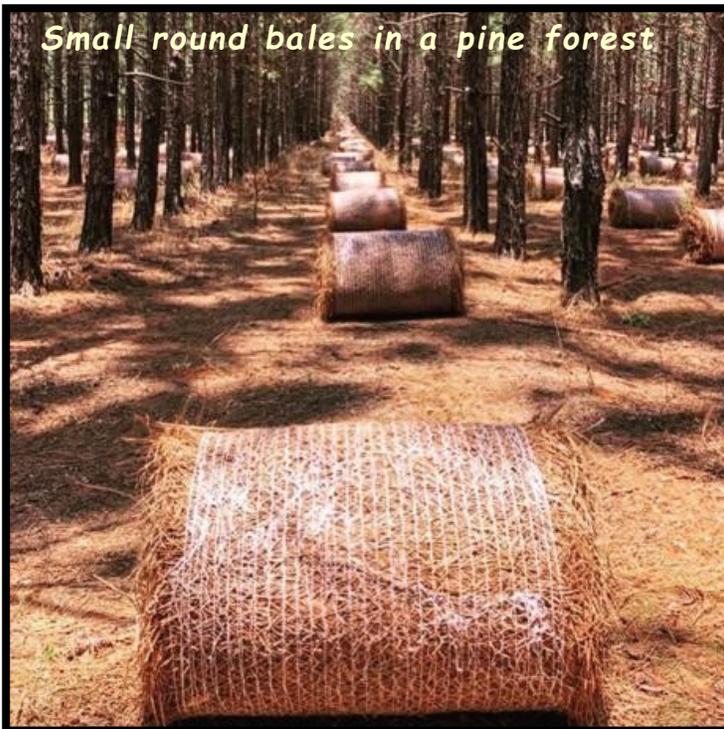
straw operation here, two hours east of Charlotte.

He could get \$4,000 an acre for clear-cutting his mature (50-year-old) longleaf pines for timber. Or, he said, he could earn \$1,200 an acre collecting pine needles from the same trees — **every year.**

It’s more expensive than wood bark or chips. But it’s preferred as a ground cover because it doesn’t attract termites. Needles from slash and loblolly pine trees are also sold as pine straw. But the longleaf stands out.

Collecting the needles is tricky and still done mostly by hand. The needles are raked away from the base of the trees. A lawn tractor with a rake and backpack blowers can help. But a worker still fluffs the pine straw with a pitchfork to shake free any dirt and leaves. Pine cones need to be sorted out (and the longleaf can produce pineapple-sized pine cones). The cleaned needles then are stuffed into a hand-baling machine (about the size and appearance of a rectangular garbage bin) which presses the needles into a wire or string-bound rectangle. There now are also small balers, which are essentially miniature round balers for hay, pulled by a lawn tractor or all-terrain vehicle.

Workers are paid by the bale, and it is tough, seasonal work. But they can earn \$900 a week, and the best balers pull in \$1,400 a week. Santiago has baled pine needles for several years. He stands under a thick canopy of longleaf



Three varieties of pine needles are farmed, but the discarded debris of a longleaf pine is the most sought-after — and fetches the best price — because of its unusual length and high resin content, making it an attractive, water-retaining ground cover for gardens. It’s a case of one person’s trash being another person’s treasure — and, in this case, generating an estimated \$200 million in annual sales across the Southeast.

The pine straw industry, as it’s known, also helps preserve existing longleaf pine forests and supports the creation of new tree stands “You can sell the timber only once. The pine needles come every year,” said Mike Wilson, who runs a pine

piners, shaded from the afternoon heat. Mariachi music plays from a cellphone propped up on a nearby limb. Surrounded by small hills of brown longleaf pine needles, he pushes handfuls into the baler. His wife stands nearby, using a pitchfork to prepare fresh piles for him to bale.

The pine straw is now marketed worldwide, at garden retailers and of course online. The small square bale costs \$19 plus shipping, and weighs about 15 pounds. The round bales (seen in these photos) sell for \$30 each plus shipping. Still, the suppliers cannot keep up with demand.

The market for pine straw has reduced the pressure on landowners to sell longleaf pine for timber or sell out to developers, said Marcus, a scientist with the Nature Conservancy. Managers of the 33,000-acre Bladen Lakes State



Once considered a waste product interfering with lumber production, pine needles have now become the most valuable product of southern forests, while actually preserving the forest and giving it the opportunity to continue maturing permanently.

(Based on an article in the March 31, 2021 *Washington Post* by Todd C. Frankel. Condensed and with additions from other sources)

For a short video of a glamorous pseudo-gardener listing the attributes of pine straw:

<https://www./Baled-Pine-Straw-826669/202534871#overlay>



*Hand-baling pine needles in North Carolina*

Park used to sell logging rights to its old longleaf pines to raise money to run the park. Now they sell rights to the park's pine straw instead. That's allowed the number of mature pine trees to soar, a boost for birds needing old trees for nesting, such as the red-cockaded woodpecker.



*Typical small square bales for homeowner use*

# Weed Electrocution!

It's a gardener's favorite fantasy: the graphic violence of electrocuting a weed, then the instant gratification of seeing the dead plant. And now, it is a reality. Currently a weed electrocution machine is available for field use. The system provides it all: big sizzling bolts of electricity, the sound of electricity arcing, the smell of ozone in the air, and best of all the instantly-dead weeds in the machine's wake.



At this stage in development it is still a cumbersome and expensive machine, requiring the use of a large tractor. It consists of a massive alternator (about the

size of the 4-man cab on a pickup) on the rear of the tractor and a high-voltage bar on the front. The units blast high voltage (from 2,500 volts to about 14,400 volts) through plants. The current boils the water inside the plant's cells, bursting the cell walls just as a tree will explode when struck by lightning. The plants left behind are blackened and twisted skeletons of their former selves.

Although this is about one-fourth the cost of hand-picking weeds, it is still slow compared to agricultural spraying. Spray rigs travel 10 mph and have a boom width of 90', whereas the electrocutor runs at about 3 mph and covers only about 8' to 20'. However, for specific applications (particularly in row crops) it is an environmentally safe alternative to herbicides.

The system has obvious benefits, but also weaknesses. It is highly dependent on soil type and amount of moisture in the soil, as it needs to send the electrical surge down one plant, across to the roots of another plant, and back up that second plant. So very dry soil can inhibit the transfer of electricity, and overly wet soil may disperse the power before it kills the plant. Another factor is the plant itself: the intended victim must have a hollow stem made of water-

filled cells. Because of that, some grasses in particular are not effectively controlled.

Interestingly, manufacturers claim that no soil organisms (even including earthworms and rodents) are harmed by the voltage, though nowhere could I find an explanation of how that could be. And yes, people are warned to keep at least 20' away from the discharge bar, though it is likely that anyone watching the bolts of electricity arcing into the ground (and the subsequent fire and smoke) would be quite eager to keep their distance.

Probably the best feature of the electrocution system is that plants cannot develop a resistance to it, unlike the inevitable resistance



built up to herbicide chemicals. Unfortunately, this is not yet something that you will be using in your garden. Yet it has proven to be efficient and effective, and no doubt the technology will keep improving rapidly.



<https://Univ/canada>.

<https://www.capitalpress.com/agsectors/organic>

*Donn Callaham*



# The Invasives

**Annual ryegrass**  
***Poa annua***



If you see this short grass in your lawn now, you have an infestation of annual ryegrass. Fortunately it is usually not invasive anywhere other than in lawns. But in lawns it shows up at this time of year (and until summer) as lighter-green areas of the lawn. Once it is summer, this grass dies (as it is an annual) leaving large dead areas in the lawn for the rest of the year.

Never growing more than about 4-6" tall (even without mowing) it moves in wherever there is bare ground, or the lawn grass is weak. It can be found from the Arctic to the Antarctic in



Variations in lawn color in spring

practically all terrestrial ecosystems. It grows in a wide variety of soils,

tolerates trampling, mowing, and frozen conditions, and is a frequent weed in areas heavily trafficked by livestock or humans.

*Poa annua* is a prolific seed producer but is well managed by most preemergence herbicides labeled for lawn use. The seed will remain in the

soil all summer long and will germinate again early during the next fall. It completes its life cycle in only about 6 weeks.

Conditions in which it prospers are: full sun to part shade, wet areas, packed clay soil, open (bare) areas in which to establish, and a slightly acid pH. So, the first actions to banish it from a lawn are to give it the opposite conditions.

To get rid of *Poa annua*, the following steps should be taken, in this order.

1. Be sure the lawn has good drainage, even if that means changing the grade or installing drain lines.
2. Check the soil pH, and probably add lime.
3. Aerate the lawn to counteract packed conditions. (Avoid heavy foot or animal traffic, particularly when the ground is wet).
4. Dethatch the lawn about once per year.
5. Keep your desirable grasses robust: they are effective at overcoming the bluegrass if they are growing well.
6. If you have tiny infestations, you can pull them. (It is a bunch grass, making it easy to pull).
7. Treat the lawn with a pre-emergent herbicide at the recommended time of year.



Dead areas in the summer



*Donn Callaham*



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## *The Grapevine*

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