

Yamhill County Master Gardeners

## Introducing the YCMGA Social Media Committee

HI! WE'RE THE YCMGA SOCIAL MEDIA COMMITTEE! WE'RE EXCITED TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES, EXPLAIN WHAT WE DO, AND HOW TO CONNECT WITH US!



LAEL WHITAKER <u>laelwhitaker@gmail.com</u>

As a new member of YCMGA, I have enjoyed promoting our events on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. My professional career has always been in Technology, and I am excited to take some of the things I've learned to help build our social media following.

DAVE GILBEY

dgilbey41@gmail.com

Dave has been with YCMGA since 2022. I've enjoyed my time with YCMGA and look forward to new opportunities to connect with the community and different generations through sharing gardening and horticulture information via social media with our community.



The events we will focus on showcasing via social media are our major public events. The posts we make are intended for the general public, not just Master Gardeners (we have the YCMGA.org and Grapevine Newsletter to cover Master Gardener-specific events).

- Yamhill County Master Gardener Training
- Garden To Table
- Spring into Gardening
- The Plant Sale

In addition to our major events, we always want to share where we have a public presence. Things like our Community Clinics (Plant Clinics), Farmers' Market Clinics, and Community Education events will be shared, ideally ahead of time by a month to two weeks in advance, and then pictures and a recap of the event. The Education Outreach Committee oversees many of these, and we will work with that committee to ensure we are sharing them to maximize their reach. Lastly, we will publish links to the Grapevine newsletter with a highlight or two from the newsletter to inform our followers.

Facebook: <u>https://www.facebook.com/yamhillcountymastergardeners/</u> Instagram: <u>https://www.instagram.com/yamhillmg/</u>

Do you have a public event coming up or news to highlight that you want to share on YCMGA Social Media? If so, please **REACH OUT**!

For event-specific posts, please add them via <u>https://ycmga.org/event-submission</u>. For non-event posts, please reach out directly to Lael or David.

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t was wonderful to see many of you at the graduation and awards ceremony last month. I enjoyed celebrating all our successes together as we recognized so many graduates and award winners. 2024 was an amazing year and I am so proud of all the accomplishments of the program.

We also have some awards and gifts from the ceremony that need to be picked up from the office for those who weren't able to attend. Carla sent you an email if there is something here with

### Happy Holidays Everyone!

your name on it. In addition, we also have recertification stickers in the office; unfortunately they did not arrive by graduation. Please stop by soon to get your sticker – we are sorry for the inconvenience!

In addition, Carla is working on sending out the Code of Conduct and Conditions of Volunteer Service forms via Docusign: once you receive them, please sign them promptly so the paperwork can be complete.

Lastly, we are currently accepting registrations for the 2025 training program. Our first in-person class will be January 19<sup>th</sup> and the trainings will end on March 20th. We are looking forward to another good year in 2025!



### Remarkable Rain Beetles

couple captivating beetles made their way into the office last week from a local client. Fall rains bring adult <u>rain beetles</u> (*Pleocoma* sp) to the surface where they are more easily found. These insects are native to our region and found only in the PNW.

Adults are brown and hairy, and are close to an inch in length with females larger than males. Mature larvae are even larger at 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> - 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>". The larvae feed on tree roots underground for up to **13 years (!!!)** before pupating and becoming an adult. In Oregon, the adults emerge from the ground in fall after the rains arrive and seek a mate. Adults don't feed, but after mating, the females will return further underground to lay eggs. The beetles have an interesting evolutionary history, with distinct populations forming after isolation from the Missoula floods. Here is an interesting <u>story</u> and <u>OPB video</u> about these insects to learn more about these fascinating native insects.





Polly Blum & Cathy Burdett

# Cathy Burdett 1936 - 2024

athy took the Master Gardener training in 2006. In 2008 she was Yamhill County Master Gardener of the Year, and in 2012 she was awarded State Master Gardener of the year (the most prestigious award any Master Gardener can earn). In 2013 she became President of the Yamhill County Master Gardeners and in the same year she was awarded the YCMGA

"Behind the Scenes" award. She worked with OMGA as their Historian and acquired 4,000 volunteer hours over her years with Master Gardeners. She was mostly responsible for our monthly newsletter for several years and with her support our Propagation Group came alive. Cathy rarely talked about her personal life, but was always focused and driven to achieve a goal.

Born in Scotland of American parents and coming to the United States as a teenager to attend high school, she later worked for 4 different Yamhill County sheriffs. As a Warrant Officer, she transferred prisoners to and from Yamhill County. She was also the records custodian and worked with other jurisdictions for the Sheriff's Office, eventually going to George Fox College and earning her MBA. Cathy donated hours to many different organizations, always becoming a leader and donating her talents as well as her time. She mentored new members, was a past President of Walnut City Kiwanis Club, and volunteered with the Garden Club and Yamhill County Historical Society.

Outgoing, fun to be around, and caring, she considered everyone she met as her friend. As new Master Gardeners came on board, she went out of her way to make them feel welcome. Loving to read (especially historical books), she had an extensive library and was forever collecting hardcover books of all descriptions. Wandering through her garden was an adventure, with an intriguing object (a teapot, an old boot, figures, and much more) tucked into every available space. Oh, yes, and in her "spare time," she never missed a garage sale or a book sale at the library!

Another of her many attributes was being able to recognize when there was 'a need'.

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Cathy was my MG partner, confidante and good friend. We collaborated on many MG projects and events over 12 years, had fun doing it and learned more than I can remember now. I was very fortunate to have Cathy Burdett as partner in the YCMGA. She took me under her wing as my mentor and introduced, guided and supported me through master gardening at every level - from the YCMGA local chapter to the State OMGA to International MG'ing. To me she was a *Mentor's Mentor!* Always lending an ear, always wanting to put a smile on everyone's face all while she was educating, laughing, solving something or other or getting the work done for the Plant Sale or graduation or Mini-College. She was a master at encouraging one to be their better self and give them the courage to take on a challenge.

To get a glimpse of Cathy's life as a Master Gardener, look at the plaques on the wall of YCMGA activities to see how many times Cathy's name appears over the many years she volunteered for OSU's Master Gardening Program. Her dedication, leader-



Memorial display by Carla, Koby and Vickie

ship, kind words, loyalty and friendship over the years will be missed greatly by many Master Gardeners in Yamhill County and across the state: her smile reached out to all Master Gardeners and chapters at MG activities such as educational classes at Mini-College, MG clinics, banquets, potlucks and field trips. She always greeted people with open arms and did her best to include everyone.

Folly Blum Marcia Sherry Jan Coleman Fatti Gregory

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# Freshly-Minted 2024 YCMGA







Sue Nesbitt



"Above and Beyond": Mary Ann, Pam, Carolyn, Glenda



YCMGA supporting business: Safeway's crew

COLDENTROUE ON GABARA Meist Gebre Meist Ge

"Golden Trowel": Donn

Pictures by Nancy Woodworth and Mary Lou Polvi

# "Zombie Ant" Fungus, Cancer Adversary?

n the vernacular it's called "zombie fungus" because as it infects an ant, this particular species (*Cordyceps <u>unilateralis</u>*) of fungus compels the host insect to climb onto a leaf, lay down and wait for fungal spores to sprout from the insect's body.

It's a brightly-colored relative of the infamous fungi (*Cordyceps militaris*) known to mind-control its victims. It is regularly used in Chinese traditional medicine and can cause a fugue state (but not parasitism) in other animals.



The fungus infects *Camponotus leonardi* ants that live in tropical rainforest trees. Once infected, the spore-<u>possessed</u> ant will climb down from its normal habitat and bite down, with what the authors call a "death grip" on a leaf, then die.

But the location is very specific: the infected ants land on a vein. Most had: a) found their way to the north side of the plant, b) chomped on a leaf about 25 centimeters above the ground, c) selected a leaf in an environment with 94 to 95 percent humidity *and* d) ended up in a location with temperatures between 20 and 30 degrees Celsius. The fungus then remodels the ant cuticle into a protective case by reinforcing the weaker parts. *Us"— was produced a few years ago under the premise that this fungus had infected humans, causing them to become zombies. Just so that you are reassured: no Ophiocordyceps species* 



invades any fish, amphibians or mammals. Insects are much more rudimentary. They have a much lower body temperature and a much simpler set of internal organs).

The good news is that

*Cordyceps unilateralis* produces a compound – cordycepin—which has anti-inflammatory and other properties that could make it valuable in <u>treating cancers</u>.

Scientists determined that the compound mainly works by blocking pathways that govern cell growth. The <u>findings</u> suggest that cordycepin or synthetic cousins derived from it could be used to suppress cancer cell growth. There are still more mysteries to be solved about cordycepin but this research is a strong start to finding a new weapon against cancer.





Condensation of article from Scientific American magazine July 31, 2009

(**REASSURANCE**: An HBO show—"the Last of

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# Counting the Ways...

Community

Gardeners have been busy counting.

• How many pounds of produce did we contribute

to our community this year? (About 12,500 pounds).

- How many beds need replacing? (Not as many as last year).
- How much can we spend to replace our leaking pressure tank? Do we have a choice?
- How many seeds do we need to order? (Lots!)
- How many beds do we have available to offer next year? (79, with many already taken for 2025).
- How many of Wark Dental's crew helped to tidy up our Garden for winter? (Twelve!)
  Does your business need a volunteer activity? We'd love to hear from you!
- And how many hours do we have to report to YCMGA?

The answer to that last question was **SO MANY!** At the recent YCMGA Awards Program, Community Garden volunteers Jennifer Scott, Russell Weaver and Pam Israel received awards for recording over 500 hours. Susan Burdell, Tom Canales and Marilyn MacGregor recorded over 2,000 hours; Glenda Hulett Wenner recorded over 4,000 hours, and our own Mr. Amazing Alan Wenner broke the YCMGA record with over 9,000 hours reported! So if you are looking for hours, you've come to the right place and we can find the perfect job for you.

Row gardener Norma Jean Williams received her MG certification and Early Bird award for 100 hours. Many of our garden volunteers recertified and received Appreciation Awards for their work at the Garden and other places, and Pam Israel received an "Above and Beyond" award for her work.

> Congratulations to all for having a great year in the Garden!





Lori Anderson

### **Gophers Initiate Plant Life on Mt. St. Helens**

In 1983, the land around Mt. St. Helens consisted of collapsing slabs of porous pumice. At that time, there were only about a dozen plants that had learned to live there. A few seeds had been dropped by birds, but the resulting seedlings struggled. All that changed when gophers dug their burrows, exposing beneficial bacteria and fungi on the surface again.

After <u>scientists</u> left a few local gophers on two fenced pumice plots for just 24 hours, the land exploded again with new life. Six years post-experiment, there were 40,000 plants thriving on the gopher plots. The untouched land remained mostly barren. The benefits from that single day were undeniable—and are still visible 40 years later.



Irritated gopher in his temporary habitat

### "Kamikaze" Termites Explained

amikaze termites (*Neocapritermes taracua*) in French Guiana have evolved a unique defense mechanism — carrying "backpacks" filled with a toxic liquid that they can trigger to explode, poisoning their enemies in the process. Now, scientists have solved the mystery of how these deadly backpacks can be safely carried around, then detonated on demand.

In 2012, <u>researchers discovered</u> that older worker termites are armed with blue spotted backpacks that explode when they are threatened. The workers have a specialized pair of glands in their abdomens that gradually secrete, over their lifetime, the <u>enzyme</u>"blue laccase BP76" into pockets on their backs. As they age, the termites accumulate "rucksacks" filled with these blue, copper-containing crystals.

When faced with a threat, the aging workers rupture their bodies, mixing the enzyme with relatively benign secretions produced in their salivary glands. The result is a sticky liquid, rich in highly poisonous benzoquinones that can immobilize or kill predators.

The enzyme is stored as a solid on the termite's back, the researchers found. This bond acts like a special locking mechanism, ensuring that the enzyme retains its shape and remains fully func-



tional, ready to be deployed in an instant when the termite needs to defend its colony.

This function results in worker termites too old to be of use for labor being put to a new and valuable use. Workers who are young and useful have little of the defensive chemical, but as they age and are able to do less and less their value as self-destructing defense mechanisms keeps increasing. In this species, you are never too old to earn your keep, though being of use to others also means you are dead.



Synopsis of scientific abstract in New Science magazine volume 337, issue 6093

## More Zombies Among Us

ature is actually full of <u>zombie creatures</u> being sacrificed for their parasite hosts—a phenomenon known as **adaptive parasite manipulation**. In Central America, ants that eat bird droppings end up ingesting a nematode parasite that lays eggs in the ants' bellies, turns them bright red and rounds them out. The color and shape change leaves the ants <u>looking just like local berries</u> that birds like to eat, thereby passing the parasite onto another bird. And one wasp (the emerald cockroach wasp, or *Ampulex compressa*) attacks cockroaches with venom that blocks a neurotransmitter that allows the victim insect to control its own movements. The wasp is then free to <u>lead the walking zombie roach</u> into the wasp's nest —to have it serve as host and food for a wasp larva.

July 31, 2009



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## Plants Photosynthesize with no Light

Microalgae living deep in the Arctic Ocean have recently been discovered which are photosynthesizing with almost no light at all, at depths of 164 feet. To put this in context, typical light conditions outside on a clear day are between 1,500-2,000 micromoles of photons, which is more than 37,000-50,000 times the amount of light required by those Arctic microalgae. They require just .04 micromoles of light to thrive!

Now that we know how little light is required for photosynthesis, scientists could develop crops that (probably through gene editing) require much less light to thrive. Some of the possibilities are:

• **EXTENDED GROWING SEASONS:** Areas around the world which receive too little sunlight because they are far from the equator, have long winters, or are persistently covered by cloud, could support productive farms.

- SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE: There could be additional benefits for growing plants indoors as in polytunnels, greenhouses, or vertical farms. Al these systems rely on artificial lighting, which is both energy-intensive and costly.
- **FARMING IN SPACE:** This research could potentially make it easier to grow <u>plants in</u> <u>space</u>, overcoming one of the primary challenges for space missions.





## Botanical terms-terms of description

- atum	Variegated flowers	
- flora	(suffix) Referring to the flower	
- folium:	Of the flower	
- phylla	Of the leaf	
acro	Toward the top	
variegatum	Variegated flowers	
paniculatum	With flowers in panicles	
capillus	Hair	
caudatum	With a tail	
dioeca	"two houses"	

formosum	Beautiful
hispidulum	Finely bristled
mollis	With soft hairs
villosa	With soft hair
iliaris	fringed with hairs
fistulosum	Hollow-stemmed
sativum	Edible
striata	Striped
vera	True (ex. Aloe vera)
triphylla	Three-leaved

## Spilling the Tea on Camellia Sinensis

magine frost-chilled hands wrapped around and warmed by a favorite mug. Steam filters the view of the winter garden. At first it further



dulls the December landscape. But through this foggy lens water droplets sparkle. They are not icy crystals but little white chandelier flowers filled with cascading, golden-nectar lights. A hummingbird guickly confirms the sight is not just filaments of the imagination.

*Camellia sinensis* shrubs and small

trees are a winter garden party. A delicate, flowering surprise full of life-giving warmth. The soft-green stained liquid in our mugs comes from the glossy leaves. The tea sipped in the backyard could be our very own backyard tea.

*Camellia sinensis (var sinensis* in particular) is the mother plant of all tea. The leaves, leaf buds, and flower buds are the source for green, black, and white varieties. The evergreen is sun-loving, acidic soil craving, and hardy to zone 6. Your oolong dreams could be a reali-tea!

When first planning my sunny herb gardens, I pictured myself sitting in an Adirondack. I would be immersed in the sweet and spicy scents. Surrounded by the buzzy sounds of the pollinators. It would be an all-in, relaxing vibe.

But as the herbs thrived I could no longer stand by and not "do something" with them. I popped the heads off the chamomile and dried the mint leaves and lavender buds. The backyard herbal tea bug had bit. And I quickly wanted to explore "real" tea. It helps that no anthophile could resist a fall/ winter flowering shrub that is a boost to the garden, the gardener, and garden friends. The leaves and buds of *Camellia sinensis* perk up the winter views. I now sit in my herb garden all year long. I highly recommend a chiminea to keep warm and burning dried herb sprigs like incense in the cold sunshine.

The tea leaves also perk people up with that lovely caffeine. And the tea flowers deliver muchneeded energy carbohydrates to pollinators. Anna's hummingbirds have adapted to be yearround residents. True, they supplement their diet with insects in winter – hence the ants and mosquitos deposited and floating in my feeders. But flowers are Anna's preferred dish.

### A Sip of Tea History

*Camellia sinensis* is indigenous to south China. Legend has it that Emperor Shen Nong, a skilled ruler and renowned herbalist, accidentally discovered tea in 2737 B.C.E. While boiling water in the garden, a leaf drifted into the emperor's pot. The infused amber water was declared pretty wonderful and tea was quickly incorporated into Chinese medicine.

Sometime in the third or fourth century A.D., tea leaves steeped in hot water became a part of the Buddhist religious practices. Tea elevated the meditation experience by stimulating the mind while enhancing a state of contemplative calm.

The first European writings on tea began not until the

1560s, when exports began by both Dutch and British traders. Tea



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famously played a vital role in the establishment of our nation. A revolution brewed from the passing of the Tea Act and the Boston Tea Party. A tempest in a teapot for sure, yet no one thought to grow the coveted *Camellia sinensis* until



hundreds of years later.

It wasn't until 1987 that Charleston Tea Plantation in South Carolina began growing tea. It was the sole commercial

tea grower in the nation for a long time. Though almost simultaneously in 1988, an experimental half acre of *Camellia sinensis* popped up in Oregon. At the time the farmers were just hopeful that the tea plants might survive. To their great surprise, the shrubs not only survived, they thrived. Minto Island Tea Company in Salem now calls it the beginning of the "Oregon tea movement."

#### Harvesting and Growing Backyard Tea

My first search for tea plants was a failure at my usual nurseries. So much *Camellia sasanqua* and *japonica* but not *sinensis*. The growers seemed surprised by my surprise. I eventually turned to ordering two plants online and later found a more respectable specimen at Portland Nursery. In the second year, the plant sizes are evening out. But only the local purchase is blooming. It had just enough new growth for my first cuppa backyard tea.

The art of hand-harvesting tea is an artisanal practice beginning with the first flush of new growth in spring. A rule of thumb is to pluck the last two leaves and a leaf bud. Then return a few weeks later for a continuous harvest through summer.

Smaller young leaves and leaf buds are used for making green tea, the older larger leaves for oolong and black tea, and the fall flower buds for white tea. My small harvest was left to whither overnight, rolled to lightly oxidize, then dried in the oven at 200 degrees for 20 minutes. The oolong-style result was fragrant and lovely. *Camellia sinensis* can be both a tree (as tall as 49 ft!) or a more typical hedge shrub. For optimal tea production, prune to 4-5 feet just before spring growth to encourage shoots. If you are regularly harvesting the leaves, you will likely be removing the stem tips or buds before the plant flowers. I plan to be less aggressive with mine as it is important to me to enjoy and share the blooms come winter.

The plants are reported to be mostly trouble-free. A few fungal leaf spot sightings have popped up in Oregon and Washington, but only on stressed or sunburned plants. Deer appear not to fancy the tea plants, but voles and soggy soil can harm the roots.

It's now clear that three plants will not suffice to accomplish both my winter garden retreat and backyard tea aspirations. To grow my collection I can propagate with softwood cuttings this spring. Bottom watering and heat is recommended for successful root development.

Propagating means an agonizing three years to harvesting. That's a long wait for tea time. So I may hasten things along with a trip to Minto Island's farm stand this April. They sell plants grown from seeds gathered in their 30-year-old tea garden. A few headstart plants – or five or twenty – seems a necessi-tea.





Angie Windheim

The GRAPEVINE 05-2023

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t has come to my attention that the esteemed rodent patrol has been neglected lately in my "Tales". This tale will remedy that oversight.

We have all been busy this summer. The gardeners, of course, have been busy gardening. The

cats have been busy catching rodents. However, they are steadfast in their refusal to do anything about the gophers. We even brought them a live one which they simply observed, probably making notes for future interactions.

The cats certainly landed on their feet when they were adopted by the chef's garden team. I'm sure that they did not think so at the time. According to the sketchy December 2020: the kittens arrived cowering in a kennel.



records which we received, they had been captured and neutered in August of 2020. The organization tried to tame them enough to adopt them out as house cats. They were not interested in that scenario, so the organization downgraded them to "barn cat" status and we received them in December.

Their first 5 weeks with us were spent in the dog kennel on the counter of our storage shed. We were in and out daily but they stayed as far away from us as possible. Eventually they learned that we provided food, including freshly caught mice, for them like a good mom. After their 5 weeks in jail, we released them to the freedom of the 10 x 20 shed. They needed to strengthen their muscles before we were willing to grant them outdoor privileges. The shed has ventilation grills at the top and bottom of the walls. We would often find them with their noses plastered to the grills trying to figure out their new world.

It was an act of faith on our part to finally open the shed door to let the cats out into the garden. We simply kept their food and water dish

supplied and prayed that they wouldn't abandon us.

That first summer Mr. Gray was around every day but Hercules would disappear for two weeks at a time. Each time we would wonder whether he had met his demise or not. But he kept coming back. We also kept an eye on the amount of food being consumed to give us hope that indeed he was around, but we didn't see him because he came at night.

By the end of summer Mr. Gray was getting more and more obvious in his want for affection and his trust for his garden humans. Once he allowed us to pet him

there was no turning back. He loved the attention and probably told Hercules that he, Mr. Gray, was the favored one!

It was another year before Hercules would allow us to pet him. Since then he has been the more needy of the two. We figure that he is trying to make up for lost pets. So far both cats scurry away when anybody other than the gardeners are in the garden. This is a good thing as nobody wants cats prowling around trying to steal food or pets at a fancy garden dinner.

The cats have not abused our trust in their hunting instincts. They repay us for providing a great

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*Hercules & Mr. Gray on the lookout for mice or maybe supervising us. November 2024* 

home by doing their best to keep the garden rodentfree. They catch mice and voles daily. We sometimes see them with the fresh prey, or sometimes all we see is guts on the greenhouse floor! Besides the obvious

mice and voles, each summer they have brought in a cottontail bunny, which they completely consumed. As you would expect they catch birds which neglect to pay attention, and unexpectedly, they have caught two weasels! First of all, I didn't even know that weasels lived around here and secondly, wouldn't you expect them to be more fierce fighters than gophers???? What is going on with the whole gopher business? The other mammal they have caught but did not eat was shrews. Maybe insect eaters don't smell or taste as good as seed eaters?

Hercules is better about hanging around the garden than he was at first, but he still ventures across the road at night to snoop around The Allison. There is a time of year when he meets us in the morning in the parking lot and escorts us across the road to the garden. In the summer sunrise is much earlier so he is waiting in the greenhouse. Anyway, Hercules had an adventure this summer, which has kept him closer to home since then.

About midsummer, it dawned on us that none of us had seen Hercules for a few days, which was not his usual behavior since he was trying to make up for his missing pets. Within a day or two of our realization, we saw him limping along, but outside of the garden fence, he did not come in. Hmm, what was going on? We had various ideas, mostly we worried that he had been hit by a car. That possibility was fresh on our minds as the neighbor's dog had recently been hit and killed on the road.

A few more days passed before he finally showed his face. Was he embarrassed? Don't cats usually hole up somewhere when they're hurt? Why not in the garden shed? We had so many questions. At any rate, upon examination, we discovered that he had been in a fight with an animal with thin sharp claws. Was it another cat? Was it another weasel? We don't know.

Then a possible answer came from a fellow employee. She took a picture of an unknown cat perched on the wall outside a spa treatment room. As soon as we saw the photo, we turned to Hercules with this question, "You



got beat up by a spa cat?" But he chose not to answer. So now you are welcome to make up your own story as to what he encountered.

As you can see, he has recovered fine, but he is staying closer to home now.

That brings you up to date on the garden cats and their adventures.







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Oregon State University

Extension Service Master Gardener<sup>™</sup>



The Grapevine is published monthly by the Yamhill County OSU Extension Office in cooperation with the Yamhill County Master Gardener™ Association, 2050 Lafayette Avenue, McMinnville, OR 97128-9333. (503) 434-7517.

> For free subscription by email, send request to above address.

General meetings of the Yamhill County Master Gardeners™ Association are announced in this newsletter and are open to the public. Contributors vary by monthly edition.

GRAPEVINE EDITOR: DONN CALLAHAM

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/yamhill/

#### Yamhill County Master Gardener™ Association Executive Board 2024

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