

The Gardener's Pen

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News for Oregon's Master Gardener Volunteers

20TH ANNIVERSARY

10-Minute University reaches a milestone. See page 4.

STORY IN SALEM

Budget cuts could greatly impact us this year. See page 3.

OMGA WEBSITE

New look and helpful links. See page 2.

In 2026, the OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program is celebrating 50 years of growing gardening knowledge, partnerships and community across Oregon. This milestone belongs to all of us—volunteers, partners, educators and communities who have shaped the program over five decades.

To support this anniversary year, a 50th anniversary toolkit has been developed and will be rolling out soon. It includes easy-to-use messaging, official anniversary logo files, and guidance for sharing stories about the community partners and Master Gardener volunteers who make this work possible.

In the meantime, we're excited to offer a sneak peek at the official 50th anniversary logo for the year. More to come—stay tuned, and thank you for growing with us.

—LeAnn Locher, *Statewide Outreach Coordinator, OSU Extension Master Gardener Program*





Oregon Master Gardener™ Association

We Grow Master Gardeners



Visit Our Gardens



Have Gardening Questions?



Local Chapters



Awards & Grants

The [OMGA.org](https://www.omga.org) website has been updated to help you get the information you are looking for – quickly! Awards and Grants winners and applications are in one place. Member Resources is loaded with help for board officers, handy sites for researching gardening questions as well as volunteer reporting links. The goal of the website is to help YOU - the Oregon Master Gardener volunteer.

Refreshing our awards to reflect who we are as a program

The OSU Master Gardener Program is always growing—shaped by our volunteers, our communities, and the evolving needs of gardeners across Oregon. As the program has changed, we took time this past year to step back and ask an important question: Do our awards truly reflect the work, values, and impact of Master Gardener volunteers today?

A statewide working group of Master Gardener faculty and staff reviewed the existing awards system, gathered feedback, and looked closely at how recognition aligns with our mission and priorities.

What we heard was thoughtful and consistent. While recognition is deeply valued, the process had become confusing, some volunteers were unintentionally excluded from statewide awards, and several categories no longer captured the full scope of leadership, education, and community impact happening across the state.

The refreshed awards structure is designed to be clearer, more inclusive, and more reflective of the program we are today. **County-level recognition remains local** and flexible, allowing counties to celebrate volunteers in ways that fit their communities.

Statewide awards are now fully administered by the OSU Master Gardener Program, with shared criteria and a streamlined nomination process open to all certified Master Gardener volunteers, regardless of OMGA affiliation.

The new statewide OSU Master Gardener Volunteer Awards include:

- **Master Gardener Volunteer of the Year**
- **Program Champion Award**
- **Growing and Belonging Community Award**
- **Distinguished Educator Award**

As part of this refresh, the Oregon Master Gardener Association (OMGA) is focusing its efforts on **grants and scholarships**, continuing to support volunteers through funding opportunities while the program oversees awards.

We invite you to learn more, [explore the new awards](#) and help us celebrate the many ways volunteers make a difference across Oregon.

Keeping our statewide programs funded

In response to recent economic forecasts, state agencies—including the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC)—have been asked to provide potential budget reductions to the Legislature. In February legislators will be enacting budget reductions based on the proposals. Unfortunately, the HECC has proposed a disproportionate cut for OSU Statewides compared to other agencies or the university.

• **Under a 5% agency budget reduction scenario, HECC has proposed cutting OSU Statewides by 7.1%.**

• The OSU Statewides which include OSU Extension Service, Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station and Oregon Forest Research Laboratory, are essential parts of Oregon's educational and economic ecosystem and should not and cannot take a disproportional cut.

• Reductions at this level disproportionately harm rural communities, impact public service programs in the metro area, weaken Oregon's natural resource industries and remove critical support for farms, forests, fisheries, youth and families.

Update from Heidi Luquette, director of OSU Extension External Relations

Over the past two months OSU Extension has been holding meetings with legislators in their districts across the state. In many of these meetings we have included local Master Gardener program volunteers.

Volunteers have done a wonderful job sharing the impact of their work in each district. The Seed to Supper program and partnerships with food banks have been especially well received. We are grateful for their support and participation. We plan to continue to meet with legislators through the session, which will run February 2 through March 8.

I also want to thank OMGA for signing on to the Coalition letter that was sent to the Co-Chairs. The letter garnered media attention by the Capitol Press who ran the following story: [Ag groups seek to stop \\$7 million in OSU statewide program cuts.](#)

The Joint Ways and Means Committee Co-Chairs are working now on the budget reductions that will be voted on in February.

It is important that they hear from a diverse group of supporters from across the state. Helpful suggestions and links to connect with your local legislators are [in this tool kit.](#)

Gleaning support from other MGs

Consider joining a statewide committee.

OMGA Seed to Supper Committee:

lindseykmcnab22@gmail.com.

Growing and Belonging Committee:

shelby.e.schuppe@gmail.com

New: [Updated Plant Sale Guidance](#)

























2026 GOALS of the Oregon Master Gardener Association

1. Improve Communication with chapters.
2. Increase Growing & Belonging resources.
3. Expand our excellent summer conference.
4. Encourage members to advocate for funding.
5. Provide training in new technology.
6. Donate 50 tons of food for our 50th.
7. Begin to create a 3-year plan.

[OMGA Strategic Goals 2026](#)

2026 Webinars : Let's Grow Together!

Every Wednesday @ noon 1/7 to 4/29 • FREE w/ pre-registration • Details @ cmastergardeners.org

January 7  PRUNING SOLUTIONS	January 14  REGENERATE YOUR GARDEN	January 21  FRUIT TREE PRUNING	January 28  GROWING BLUEBERRIES	  Healthy Plants  Nutritious Food  Beauty  Biodiversity
February 4  PATH, PLACE & WALLPAPER	February 11  FOODSCAPING	February 18  EARLY-SEASON VEGETABLES	February 25  GROWING ROSES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST	
March 4  THE BEST GARDEN TREES	March 11  TOMATO TIPS	March 18  PLANT THIS, NOT THAT	March 25  DAZZLING DAHLIAS	
April 1  NON-BEE POLLINATORS	April 8  CREATE A GARDEN OASIS WITH A WATER FEATURE	April 15  BEYOND SPRAY IN GROWING VEGETABLES	April 22  PLANT PROBLEMS CAUSED BY WEATHER & WHAT PEOPLE DO	
				DIY COMPOSTING 
		In collaboration with and in support of the Oregon State University Extension Service Master Gardener™ Program		
		OSU Extension Service prohibits discrimination in all its programs, services, activities and materials. Accommodation request related to a disability should be made 7 days prior to Catalina Santamaria: 503-655-8631 Catalina.Santamaria@oregonstate.edu		

Celebrating 20 years!

If you've never watched a 10-Minute University session, you're missing out! Easy to sign up for, the *Let's Grow Together* webinar series is free for all gardeners and a great continuing education opportunity. You can register for all topics of interest even if you can't attend at the scheduled time. Registration includes a recording that is emailed two days after the session.

UPCOMING EVENTS

[More events at the OSU Extension calendar](#)

- Feb 7** Weekend Warriors Gardening Course
- Feb 7** Propagating Native Plants: A Gardener's Guide
- Feb 7** Insights into Gardening
- Feb 12** Understanding Seed Catalogs and Seed Packets
- Feb 21** Blueberry Care
- Feb 28** The Complete Mason Bee
- Mar 7** Spring into Gardening
- Mar 21** Tropical delights: Growing and Preparing Tropical Produce
- Mar 24** Pruning Spring Bloomers and Rhododendrons
- Apr 18** Basics of Plant Propagation
- May 8-9** 34th Annual Polk MG Plant Sale



The advocacy position on the OMGA board is currently vacant. If you are interested in being our voice in Salem, please reach out to Chris Rusch at crusch3837@gmail.com



The Oregon Master Gardener™ Association is a statewide, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose purpose is to enhance and support the OSU Master Gardener™ program. Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials without discrimination based on age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.