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Flavor is essential to the culinary experts. That’s why they ask for OREGON POTATOES.

Oregon potato farmers and professional chefs take a serious look at the variations in potato flavor, texture and appearance.
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**On the Cover**
Gayle Goschie of Goschie Farms grows hops in Silverton. Photo by Iwalani Carr
Bob Moore, founder of Bob’s Red Mill, visiting Williams Hudson Bay Farm in Milwaukie, Oregon.

Shop 400+ products at bobsredmill.com
I’m often asked to describe Oregon agriculture and fisheries in a few words. My response? Incredibly diverse, clean, green, environmentally friendly, innovative and high quality. Oregon produces a wider variety of agriculture and food items than almost any other state. Our growers are as diverse as the products they produce. We have small-acreage farms and large ones, organic and conventional operations, farms focusing on selling locally and directly to the consumer alongside those that grow and market products destined for other states and countries. Agriculture is an important economic driver and way of life in all 36 counties. No matter where you travel in Oregon, agriculture is woven into the fabric of the state.

I’m proud of Oregon agriculture, and when people learn more about our farmers, ranchers, fishers, food processors and ag-related entrepreneurs, they are just as proud. This third edition of Growing Oregon continues to tell some of the stories of our industry – words and pictures that educate and entertain the reader, and also draw everyone closer to agriculture. Every story we tell helps move the needle to better understanding and appreciation. Longstanding efforts like our Celebrate Oregon Agriculture campaign have strengthened the tie between Oregonians and our producers, processors and products by simply telling stories about the men and women who are responsible for our wonderful food and agricultural products. When it comes to Oregon agriculture, there is more to write and talk about than space and time available. Nonetheless, I am confident that those who live in Oregon and those who don’t will come away feeling a little more connected with our agriculture after reading this publication.

Growing Oregon is just a sampler of what we have to offer. I urge you to experience Oregon agriculture in your own special way and support the dedicated people who produce the food and fiber we all enjoy.

Sincerely,

Katy Coba
Director
Oregon Department of Agriculture
As the state’s second largest economic driver, Oregon’s agriculture industry is vital. Facts and figures help tell the story:

- About 98 percent of Oregon’s 34,600 farms are family-owned. There are 1,175 Oregon farms recognized as centennial farms, remaining in the same family for at least 100 years. Thirty-three farms have reached a 150-year status.

- Oregon agriculture is directly and indirectly linked to about $50 billion in sales of goods and services, which is more than 13 percent of the statewide total of sales involving all industry sectors.

- The state’s agriculture supports approximately 326,000 full- or part-time jobs, comprising nearly 14 percent of total jobs in the state.

- Oregon’s agricultural offerings are vast and varied, with more than 220 recognized crop and livestock commodities.

- Agritourism destinations, agricultural education, thriving agribusinesses, exports, local food partnerships and more encompass Oregon’s industry.

- Oregon ranks No. 1 in the nation for production of Christmas trees, hazelnuts, blackberries, boysenberries, several varieties of grass seed and peppermint. Oregon is second nationally for hops and sweet cherries, and third nationally for nursery stock, pears, strawberries, red raspberries and snap beans.

- Oregon’s top 10 commodities also include cattle and calves, hay, milk, wheat, potatoes and wine grapes.

- Oregon agriculture goes beyond crops and commodities and prides itself on agricultural sustainability. This includes diversity in crops, production systems, farm sizes and markets that help keep the industry resilient. Big or small, organic or conventional, growing for local or export markets, Oregon is home to all types of agriculture.

- Oregon farmers and ranchers help protect wildlife habitat and the state’s natural resources. Just a few management techniques used by Oregon landowners include planting streamside vegetation, controlling invasive species and keeping some land out of production for conservation purposes.

As Oregon agriculture continues to grow, the industry is poised for further success.

– Rachel Bertone
FRESH FOR FIDO

Consumers in Oregon have a wide array of choices for fresh, local, homemade goods – and so do their four-legged friends.

Thanks to businesses like Portland Pet Food Company, Oregon canines can enjoy artisan, all-natural dog food and treats. The company uses natural-grade human food, locally sourced and sustainable, to make fresh-frozen dog meals, grain-free dog treats and beer biscuit dog treats. They plan to expand to include cat food and treats in their offerings. Oregon is home to several other pet food companies, offering all-natural meals and treats. Find out more about Portland Pet Food products at portlandpetfoodcompany.com.

CIDER IN OREGON IS GROWING FOUR TIMES AS FAST AS THE LOCAL CRAFT BEER INDUSTRY, WITH SALES SWELLING BY OVER 50 PERCENT EACH YEAR SINCE 2011.

Source: Northwest Cider Association

SAY CHEEZE

Flavorful, cheesy and hard to put down, Chedz snacks are a must-try Oregon product.

The wholesome snack is a product of family-owned Hall Brands LLC of Portland, which uses only the highest quality ingredients for its natural products. Chedz was developed, in part, in a kitchen at the Food Innovation Center – a Portland facility jointly operated by Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The cheese bites come in two flavors, spicy and mild, with gluten-free versions of each. They are made with simple ingredients, including real cheese, and contain vitamin A, calcium and protein. Eat them straight from the bag, or toss them in with party mixes, soups, salads and more.

To read more about Chedz and other products from Hall Brands, visit chedzsnacks.com.

BEYOND SAUERKRAUT

You’re probably already familiar with fermented foods such as yogurt, but the fermented food scene is growing in popularity and offerings to include kimchi, krauts, kefirs and more. Lacto-fermented foods are probiotic powerhouses with fabulous flavors, boosting levels of good bacteria in your digestive system.

Oregon Brineworks in Hood River sources 90 percent the ingredients for their pickles and unique krauts (such as beet apple) from within a 150-mile radius in order to start the fermentation process within a few days of harvest.

Choi’s Kimchi Company in Portland makes a variety of kimchi in small batches with local produce, using traditional Korean methods. Kimchi, made with vegetables, herbs and spices, is considered to be one of the world’s healthiest foods. Learn more at oregonbrineworks.com and choiskimchi.com.

$23B

Source: Fortune Magazine

Sales of gluten-free label products, such as baking mixes and more from Bob’s Red Mill in Milwaukie, have doubled in the past four years, rising from $11.5 billion to more than $23 billion.
OREGON’S TOP AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES

A look at the state’s leading crops, livestock and other agricultural products

CATTLE AND CALVES
Oregon cattle farmers earned nearly $914 million in production value in 2015 with an inventory of 1.32 million cattle and calves. The commodity represents about 15 percent of the state’s agricultural sector. Beef cattle ranches are especially prevalent east of the Cascade Mountains.

WHEAT
Oregon wheat fields mostly grow soft white wheat, which is used to make cakes, cookies and other baked goods. In 2015, producers earned $217 million in production value from more than 39 million bushels. The Columbia Basin in eastern Oregon is a major wheat-producing area.

POTATOES
Potato farms in Oregon have the highest yields of potatoes per acre in the world. Farmers harvested 38,900 acres of potatoes for a production value of $176 million in 2015. The Klamath Basin in southern Oregon grows more for the fresh market, and the Columbia Basin grows more for French fries and other processed potatoes.

PEARS
Oregon farms grow a plentiful variety of pears thanks to the region’s unique climate. In 2015, the state produced 179,100 tons with a production value of $152 million. Oregon mostly produces winter pears, which includes Bosc, Anjou and Comice varieties.

WINE GRAPES
Nationally, Oregon ranks sixth in wine grape production. Farmers produced 58,000 tons in 2015 with a production value of $147 million. Oregon Pinots have put the state on a national and world stage for quality. One of the fastest growing sectors of Oregon ag, wine grapes can be found in many parts of the state but flourish in Yamhill County and the Willamette Valley.

ONIONS
Most of the nation’s onion production takes place in Oregon’s Malheur County and across the Idaho border. In 2015, Oregon onions had a production value of $125 million and continued to find their way into internationally known brands and products.

GREENHOUSE AND NURSERY
Greenhouse and nursery products are big business in Oregon, earning the state $894 million in production value in 2015 and ranking third of all states. A majority of production takes place in the Portland metro area and surrounding counties.

HAY
In 2015, Oregon farmers harvested 1 million acres of hay. This valuable commodity earned the state a production value of more than $604 million. Southern and eastern Oregon counties lead the way in hay production.

MILK AND DAIRY PRODUCTS
Milk produced in Oregon consistently ranks among the top five states in the nation for superior quality. In 2015, state dairy farmers earned a $474 million production value with 2.55 billion pounds of fluid milk. Dairies can be found throughout the state, but many of them are concentrated in Tillamook County on the Oregon Coast.

GRASS SEED
Oregon is the world’s major producer of cool-season forage and turf grass seed. Oregon grass seed is mostly farmed in the Willamette Valley, including Linn, Benton and Marion counties. In addition, the state is a widely recognized center of seed production expertise. In 2015, the state’s grass seed industry earned a $384 million production value.

Sources: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Farm Bureau

1 IN 8 OREGONIANS ARE EMPLOYED IN AGRICULTURE.

Oregon ranks No. 4 nationally in organic sales, with $237 million in sales in 2014.

OREGON PRODUCES OVER 220 DIFFERENT TYPES OF CROPS AND LIVESTOCK.
EMBRACING

The Eigurens, a ranch family in Southeast Oregon, keep Basque traditions alive.

Photos by Todd Meier
Never was there a doubt that Elias Eiguren would one day return to his family’s Southeast Oregon ranch. As an FFA officer just out of high school, he traveled around the U.S. He then spent four years away from home earning a bachelor’s degree in animal science from Oregon State University. Rarely, however, was the family ranch far from his heart.

“I like it here,” Elias says. “It really is a unique way to grow up, and it is how I want to raise my family.”

Elias is a rarity these days. He is among a smattering of Basque descendants who have chosen to stay on the farms and ranches their ancestors settled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in this remote part of Oregon. Now, you will drive for hours without cellphone coverage passing through sagebrush-dotted desert punctuated by lush valleys and canyons with unique rock formations.

**BASQUE DESCENDANTS CONNECTED TO THE LAND**

According to historians, Basques, who are native to northern Spain, migrated to Oregon’s Jordan Valley beginning in the 1880s. Most were shepherders. As shepherders, the Basque walked the landscape and came to love the wild beauty. Many, like the Figuerens, switched to cattle in the 1930s and 1940s in order for future generations to continue to work the family land. Today the Eiguren family has three generations living on the ranch.

Elias’ father, Fred, estimates that today only half a dozen or so of the many ranches once owned and operated by Basque ranchers in southern Malheur County are still in their original families. Most have been sold to people outside of the Basque community.

The change is both good and bad, Fred says. Bad because with each departing Basque goes a little more of the Basque heritage that once permeated this area. Good because the new landowners have brought with them new ideas about ranching and caring for the land.

Over the years, Fred has watched technological advancements replace hand laborers. And he’s seen many
“It really is a unique way to grow up, and it is how I want to raise my family.”

ELIAS FIGUREN
Oregon rancher

Three generations of the Eiguren family live on ranch land originally settled by their Basque ancestors.
neighboring Basque descendants migrate the 120 or so miles from the farms and ranches of southern Malheur County to the Treasure Valley, home to Boise, Idaho.

“Especially the girls,” he says. “The girls tend to move away. They get married, and they go on with their life somewhere else.”

Elias, 32, says it was different for him. “Being the oldest, and only son, I always assumed growing up that I was going to come back here,” he says.

PRESERVING HERITAGE

Today, Elias is trying to revive an appreciation of the Basque heritage and keep alive traditions that once were so prominent in this southeastern Oregon enclave. He and his wife, Toni Jo, are learning the Basque language. And Toni Jo takes their son, Thales, 6, to a nearby town for Basque dancing lessons once a week.

“There are about 15 kids,” Elias says. “They are all 5 and 6 years old. They have traditional clothing that they wear – white shirts, white pants, special shoes, red berets – and they do partner dancing.”

Elias and Toni Jo also encourage Thales and his younger sister, Zada, to use the Euskara language. The children refer to Elias as “Aita,” the Basque word for father, and call Fred “Aichicha,” Basque for grandfather.

“I think it is very important that we pass down the language,” Elias says. “It is one of the dying languages in the world, but it is seeing a great resurgence.”

He also hopes to pass down the tradition of caring for the land and managing the family ranch for the generations to follow. Whether his efforts result in another Eiguren taking over the family ranch remains to be seen, though. Asked what he wants to be when he grows up, Thales says: “A sheriff.”

– Mitch Lies

Oregon Blueberries are delicious, healthy, simple and convenient. Adding a handful of blueberries to your day will energize and help achieve daily nutritional requirements. They are low in fat and full of nutrients like Vitamin C.
Travel along Oregon’s agritourism trails, which are mapped out exploration destinations, and you will experience a journey into the heart of the state’s rural agricultural community. Fresh foods, local dining, Oregon culture and charismatic farmers await those who take on these paths.

Oregon’s trails are promoted by Travel Oregon, which has a vision to create a better life for Oregonians through strong, sustainable local economies, says Alexa Carey, who leads Travel Oregon’s culinary and agritourism development initiatives.

“It’s our goal to inspire locals and visitors alike to share in this passion for food and farms that’s infused into the culture of our state,” Carey says. “The bounty of Oregon is unmatched with our award-winning wine, beer and food.”

She notes that Oregon tourism is a $10.8 billion industry, generating more than 105,000 jobs in the state.

“Travel Oregon promotes Oregon as a place where visitors can have authentic experiences – especially with makers and producers of incredible artisan foods and beverages,” Carey says. “We, along with our partners throughout the state, have helped to create and promote food and agricultural trails. Trails provide a clear path to explore a niche area of the culinary scene in our state, whether it’s artisan cheese, incredible craft brews, or farms where you can visit and experience the working landscape.”

**WILD RIVERS COAST FARM TRAIL**

To get a taste of what’s farm-fresh in Oregon, explore the Wild Rivers Coast Farm Trail, which grew out of the Travel Oregon Rural Tourism Studio program. Featuring 11 farms, food...
WILD RIVERS COAST FARM TRAIL STOPS

Old Town Marketplace Farmers Market
Farmers, artisan and seafood market
250 First St. SW
Bandon, OR 97450
(541) 347-3206

Twin Creek Ranch Blueberries
U-pick blueberry farm
87432 Cranberry Creek Lane
Bandon, OR 97411
(541) 347-4262

Valentine Blueberries
U-pick blueberry farm and farm stand
West of Hwy. 101 on Sydnam Lane
Langlois, OR 97450
(541) 348-2363

Dragonfly Farm
Farm stand and nursery
49295 Hwy. 101
Langlois, OR 97450
(541) 515-8672

The Spoon
Restaurant and specialty foods
48396 U.S. 101
Langlois, OR 97450
(541) 348-1015

Valley Flora
U-pick produce and farm stand
Floras Creek Road
Langlois, OR 97450
(541) 348-2180

Jensen Blueberries
U-pick blueberry farm
46760 Hwy. 101
Langlois, OR 97450
(541) 348-2473

Wild Woods Farm
Farm stand
92584 Silver Butte Road
Port Orford, OR 97465

Golden Harvest Herban Farm
Delia and bakery
620 9th Street
Port Orford, OR 97465
(619) 451-1370

Port Orford Community Co-op/Farmers Market
Farmers market and grocery
Hwy. 101 and 8th Street
Port Orford, OR 97465
(541) 366-2067

HIT THE OREGON DISTILLERY TRAIL TO TASTE MORE THAN 120 DIFFERENT KINDS OF SPIRITS PRODUCED THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

Source: Oregon Distillers Guild
businesses and farmers markets from Bandon to Port Orford, the trail offers many experiences ranging from U-pick blueberries, plant nurseries and a local diner serving food from nearby fields and farms, as well as a full-service farm complete with a farm stand, U-pick and CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) baskets, and much more.

“Our Farm Trail is filled with interesting locals who love this area of the southern Oregon Coast; it’s the place they call home,” says Cathy Boden of the Eat Fresh & Local Action Team, a group that spearheaded the creation of the trail. The Action Team encourages local businesses to support local food as a way for tourists to experience the area. “Many of our farms have been in the same family for 100 years. These folks love sharing what they know about our area, which is deep in history. Port Orford is the oldest town site on the Oregon coast.”

According to Julie Miller, director of the Bandon Chamber of Commerce, the trail has had a tremendous impact on the area despite just launching in 2015.

“The number of people coming into the visitor’s center at the Chamber asking about the farm trail was really surprising to me,” she says. “This is something the community, local people and visitors have been looking for. They clearly felt the need.”

Actively promoted by the Chamber, the Farm Trail is a milestone for rural areas trying to make their mark in the farm-to-table movement, Miller says.

“We can do our own farm-to-table movement here just on a more basic level, and we are proud that we can do this. It’s just the beginning.”

OREGON CHEESE TRAIL

Taking visitors on a tasty adventure through the state, the Oregon Cheese Trail helps enthusiasts explore local cheeses and cheesemakers, as well as restaurants, farmers markets and shops that sell the artisan treats.

Katie Bray, executive director of the Oregon Cheese Guild, which created the cheese trail, says travelers can find 16 creameries open to the public, where delicious cheeses can be tasted and bought.

“As with all of Oregon’s culinary bounty, Oregon’s artisan cheese industry is blessed with an incredible abundance and diversity,” she says. “Our members make cheese with cow, goat and sheep’s milk, with the possibility of water buffalo milk coming soon.”

About the trail’s members, she says, “In addition to being an international group hailing from all over the world, they make cheese with techniques and recipes from places you might expect like France and Italy, but also from Mexico, Argentina, England, Holland, the Alps and more, not to mention all of the original formulas they’ve created right here in Oregon.”

Oregon’s agritourism trails are more than just fresh produce and fine food. For example, glasses are raised across the state along the Oregon Distillery Trail. Proclaimed as the first of its kind in the nation, the trail was formed by the Oregon Distillers Guild to showcase Oregon spirits. It features a variety of tasting rooms, bars, restaurants and liquor retailers to enjoy craft spirits.

“Our rural Oregon communities produce an incredible array of products that are genuinely world class,” Carey says about Oregon’s ag trails. “We are lucky that we only have to travel a short distance from Oregon’s urban areas to have those authentic agritourism experiences.”

Explore all of Oregon’s trails at traveloregon.com.

– Brittany Stovall

Learn more about Oregon agritourism and where to visit at or-agriculture.com.
First came the transition from overhead sprinkler irrigation to drip. Then the benefits started pouring in.

By watering only where and when their hops plants need it, Gayle and Glenn Goschie, a brother-and-sister team that runs Goschie Farms in Silverton, found their water and fertilizer applications have decreased; weed, insect and disease pressure has been reduced; and their yields have improved.

The Goschies are among hundreds of Oregon farmers reaping the benefits of using less water and power after transitioning from high-pressure overhead sprinkler systems to drip and linear systems.

Ironically, though, it wasn’t a desire to lower water use and increase productivity that drove the Goschies to switch irrigation systems. It was the finicky nature of hops they wished to grow.

“We were looking at growing a variety of hops that was, unfortunately, susceptible to downy mildew,” Gayle says.

Downy mildew, it turns out, flourishes in high humidity, so the Goschies looked for ways to reduce the humidity they were bringing into the field.
DRIPPING WITH BENEFITS

“The beautiful spring rains, we can’t control those,” Gayle says. “But in changing from sprinkler irrigation to drip irrigation, we removed the humidity that would have been placed into that planting through the summer and close to the fall harvest season.

“Then we started to see other advantages,” she says. “By only putting water to the plants and not irrigating that whole parcel of land, we found the amount of trips we needed to make through the field to cultivate the weeds were reduced, because the weeds weren’t popping back up every time we irrigated.”

Also, because the system allowed them to spoon feed liquid nutrients to plants through the drip lines, the farm was able to refine the delivery of nutrients to better meet plant needs.

“A gentleman I know had a good analogy as far as the difference between drip and how our fathers would have used fertilizer,” Glenn says. “His analogy: You would have six hamburgers on Sunday, then you wouldn’t have anything else for the rest of the week. With drip irrigation, the plants are able to have food every day. Both with the nutrients and the water, we are...
maintaining just what the plant needs.”

The system also essentially eliminates evapotranspiration on Goschie Farms, a natural process in which moisture moves from the earth to the atmosphere. Irrigation specialists say evapotranspiration can result in water losses approaching 40 percent.

LATERAL TRANSITION

About 30 miles south, the father and son team of Steve and Daniel Keudell of Keudell Farms is seeing similar benefits from upgrading their irrigation system.

The Keudells, who produce vegetables and other crops on the 1,600 acres they farm near Aumsville in the Stayton-Sublimity area, have transitioned 900 acres from big-gun irrigation systems to low-pressure linear systems that move laterally across fields.

Les Bachelor, a district conservationist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, which provided technical and financial assistance to the Goschies and the Keudells, says linear systems are about 30 percent more efficient than high-pressure, big-gun irrigation systems. The Keudells “are using significantly less water and energy” since the transition, Bachelor says.

Still, given the extensive upfront costs, Steve Keudell says it was not an easy decision to make the transition.

“But we found it was more efficient, and you get better coverage with the linear system,” Steve says. “We also found it would increase our yields because you wouldn’t have dry spots in the field where the big guns missed.”

“We’re saving on labor,” Daniel Keudell adds. “We’re saving on power. We’re using water more efficiently. We’re utilizing more of our land. And our yields are increasing.”

“It really is a win-win,” Steve says, only multiple times over.

– Mitch Lies

Source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Daniel Keudell and his dad Steve have installed an efficient irrigation system that saves money and increases yields.
Hops, From Farm to Pint
Learn how hops are planted, harvested and used in brewing beer

1. PLANTING AND GROWING
The hop plant is a perennial crop cultivated from root cuttings called rhizomes. The climbing vines grow more than 18 feet during the growing season. In the spring, the hop shoots are trained clockwise around twine, allowing them to grow upward to the top of a trellis. Throughout the summer, hops receive regular crop management, including irrigation and pest control.

2. HARVESTING AND DRYING
Hop harvest starts in August and concludes in late September. Different varieties peak at different times during the season. After hop cones are harvested, they are dried in on-farm kilns and baled into 200-pound bales. Many hops are then processed into hop pellets by grinding the hops using a hammer mill and pressing the powder through a pellet die. Hop pellets are vacuum sealed in Mylar bags to prevent oxidation and deterioration of the resin and oils, which are essential to making beer.

3. BOILING AND FERMENTING
A brewer acquires the hop pellets and starts the brewing process. After malted grains are mashed and drained to make unfermented beer, or wort, hops are added to the liquid for flavor and as a stability agent. The wort and hops are boiled to kill bacteria and extract the flavor, as well as the bitterness, from the hops. Wort is then cooled and moved to a fermentation tank, where yeast is added. The mixture typically ferments for at least two weeks. Here, most sugars in the wort convert into alcohol.

4. CONDITIONING AND FILTERING
The brewer now has beer, but it’s flat. Beer is moved to a conditioning tank or may be conditioned in the same tank, where the yeast settles and the beer ages and mellows. Beer may or may not be filtered afterward, which helps improve flavor and clarity.

5. BOTTLING
Beer is packaged in cans, bottles and kegs, ready to enjoy.
Expanding CROP DIVERSITY

Photos by Isaac Lane Koval
This is not your father’s farm.

Father-and-son team Tom and Jason Hunton have created a farm that does everything from grow and clean grass seed to produce beans for soup mixes that help feed the hungry.

Their Junction City operation is in contrast to the commodity-based operations that once dominated Oregon agriculture, and it provides a glimpse into the depth and variety of the state’s farm production.

FROM THE GROUND UP

Diversification on Hunton’s Farm started innocently enough when Tom’s father, Everett Hunton, built a seed-cleaning facility in the 1960s. The idea was to take more control of the farm’s grass seed production and to custom clean seed for neighbors, Tom says.

In the 1980s, the farm launched Sure Crop Farm Services, which provides crop production services to farmers, such as tissue analysis for determining fertility needs and custom application of crop inputs.

In 2008, the farm branched out again, this time with an eye on the local food movement. “We started looking at what we could do to get us out of strictly a commodities play,” Tom says.

After some research, the Huntons found that a plethora of fruits and vegetables were available at the local farmers markets, but high-protein grains and legumes were in short supply. Two of the first crops they produced for the local food movement were hard red spring wheat, used for making bread, and teff, a gluten-free fine grain used in baking.

Until then, incidentally, most farmers and researchers believed hard red spring wheat couldn’t be grown successfully in the Willamette Valley. The Huntons have since proven otherwise.

They’ve done the same with pinto beans, which they are growing for the local food bank.

“Growing pinto beans in the Willamette Valley
“Is unheard of,” says Ron Detwiler, director of operations of Food for Lane County. “That is something that, until a couple of years ago, no one even thought was possible. But the Huntons are saying, ‘Let’s not say it’s impossible. Let’s try some different things.’”

In 2010, the Huntons branched out again, this time building Camas Country Mill to process wheat into flour.

Today the Huntons produce a wide array of crops, including triticale, rye, garbanzo beans, spelt, grass seed, clover seed, meadowfoam and radish seed.

Their crops are used for livestock forage, turf, as cover crops helping revitalize soil in Midwest corn and soybean acreage, and, in the case of lentil beans and barley, for dry soup mixes that the local food bank purchases to help feed the hungry.

“For a long time, I thought that what we do is raise three kinds of crops,” Tom says. “We raise food for humans. We raise forage grasses, so food for animals. And we raise cover crops, so food for the soil. Now we have a fourth kind, and that is food for the soul.

“There is real satisfaction in knowing that we are able to feed a lot of people,” Tom says.

– Mitch Lies
In 2015, when Beth Satterwhite of Even Pull Farm was considering leasing 2 acres from Zach Christensen of Christensen Farms, the two Yamhill County producers talked. And they’ve talked ever since.

Satterwhite says she was initially concerned about farming next to Christensen’s large-scale commercial operation. To be specific, she worried her small-acreage, organic vegetable production would be subject to herbicide drift from adjacent grass seed and wheat crops.

“But we talked through it when we sat down to discuss the lease,” she says. “Zach explained his management practices, and we talked a little bit about what a buffer is for organic certification and our needs, and it has been pretty painless.

She adds, “Zach has been very forgiving of our weeds, and we trust him not to spray our stuff.”

The communication between Christensen Farms and Even Pull Farm provides a glimpse into efforts taken by farmers throughout Oregon to coexist in a state where crop needs often conflict.

Particularly in the Willamette Valley, where high-value broadleaf crops, such as wine grapes and blueberries, grow adjacent to grass seed and grain crops, chances of conflict are considerable.

Communication, according to Satterwhite and Christensen, is one key to fruitful coexistence.

“They always give us a heads up when they are going to spray,” Satterwhite says. “They spray when we are upwind, and all that good stuff. And we’ve never had an issue.”

Christensen, who farms adjacent to several high-value crops, including hazelnuts, wine grapes and silage being produced for an organic dairy, says he takes several steps to avoid damaging crops.

“We’ve gone away from using the more volatile (herbicide) compounds as much as we can,” he says. “We look very closely at climatic factors before we spray, such as which way the wind is blowing and how hot it is going to be the next three days.

He adds, “We monitor all of those mitigating factors that we can use to essentially eliminate the potential for injury.”

Christensen also participates in continuing education courses put on by Oregon State University Extension Service and others.

“We are always learning about the new crop protection products, so we know what we are dealing with,” Christensen says. “When we get into a situation where we are unsure of the risks involved, we make a phone call and ask the neighbor if there is anything he is aware of that we need to be aware of.

“Knowing what you don’t know is sometimes just as important as the things you think you know.”

In the rare instances where issues have arisen, Christensen says the farm works one-on-one with neighbors to resolve the conflicts.

“In our case, we have a really good relationship, and we are able to work with them individually to resolve any problems we’ve had.”

– Mitch Lies
Through Oregon’s Adopt a Farmer program, middle school students visit farms and talk with farmers, such as Shelly Boshart Davis of Tangent.
The sheer size of the combine stops the children in their tracks. Then come the questions. “Can I sit in it?” the children ask. “Sure,” says the farmer.

Score another memory for Adopt a Farmer. The program, started five years ago and operated by Oregon Aglink, is one of several farm programs in Oregon that help educate youth about agriculture.

In the program, middle school students visit a farm and then welcome the farmer into their classroom for two or three follow-up sessions.

While the “wow factor” that students experience in the on-farm visits helps get their attention, it is only a small part of the program, says Geoff Horning, executive director of Oregon Aglink.

“We have a ton of activities that are science-based for the classroom,” Horning says. “And the field trips are more than just hanging out around the farm equipment. We bring in experts to talk about farm production. We bring in GPS guidance systems and show how they work and how the farmer utilizes the systems. Often, the farmer’s agronomist comes out and talks about soil types, soil erosion and what the farmers are doing to avoid erosion. They talk about irrigation practices – what farmers are doing to conserve water.”

EDUCATING YOUTH

The program started with just three schools. Today, 47 middle schools, from Medford to Portland and from Bend to The Dalles, participate.

Grass seed and straw farmer Shelly Boshart Davis, who has participated in Adopt a Farmer for three years, says the program provides an excellent vehicle to educate youth about farming and is rewarding for farmers.

“Just to open the children’s eyes to this is tremendously rewarding,” Davis says. “Some of these kids have never been in an orchard. They’ve never been in a wheat field or a grass seed field. They have no idea what is inside these barns.

“Adopt a Farmer is one of the really amazing ways that we can teach the next generation about farming and the great world of agriculture,” she says.

Another program helping educate youth about agriculture in Oregon is Ag in the Classroom. Established in 1981, the program encourages kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers to integrate agriculture...
into their curriculum by educating teachers about agriculture and providing them in-class materials.

Jessica Jansen, executive director of the program, uses the example of a pumpkin when describing how the program works. “We have a pumpkin math and science lesson, where we are encouraging teachers to use pumpkins to teach circumference and diameter,” Jansen says.

Then there are the seed kits, where children plant seeds in cups of dirt and watch the seeds turn into vibrant plants over the course of the school year. “The seed kits are wonderful. The kids loved growing the plants,” says Melissa Doherty, an elementary school teacher from Hermiston. “Science has become their favorite class.”

Then there is the wheat grinder. “Teachers who rent our wheat grinder say their students love this lesson,” Jansen says. “One teacher said many of her students had never watched fresh bread being made and had never seen wheat being ground.

“Our generation today is becoming more and more removed from production agriculture,” Jansen says. “Before, students had some not-too-distant family members – generally grandparents – that were involved in production agriculture. That is not the case anymore. And it is really important that students have an understanding of the source of their food and fiber.”

The program reached 120,000 students last year, Jansen says, providing school children throughout Oregon a little more knowledge about an industry that touches their lives on a daily basis.

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INTERESTED IN ADOPT A FARMER?
For more information about how your farm or classroom can be a part of Adopt a Farmer, contact info@aglink.org.

Both the Adopt a Farmer program and Oregon Ag in the Classroom help the state’s students, most of whom are several generations removed from production agriculture, learn more about farming and where their food comes from through a variety of hands-on experiences.
A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Consumers invited to the farm for conversation and fresh food

Each summer, organizations bring the dinner table outside to local farms, allowing guests to experience fresh food while learning about where it came from – straight from the source.

Plate & Pitchfork founder Erika Polmar started working on the concept as a summer project in 2003. More than a decade later, she is still committed, now with a mission to bring complex issues facing the agriculture industry to the forefront while educating consumers on what farmers do.

“It seems commonplace now, but if you were to beam back in time before smartphones, most consumers were focused on how quickly they could get dinner to the table, not who grew their dinner,” Polmar says. “We wanted to try and change that trend, and thought by giving people a reason to visit farms to see both the places and people that grow their food, we could change that behavior.”

The farms that host Plate & Pitchfork meals are anywhere from 10 to 110 acres. Every dinner begins with a tour of the farm. Guests are encouraged to get to know the farmers and producers beforehand, learning about how they run their business.

Attendees are greeted with a glass of wine and appetizer before heading out on the tour. Throughout the meal, producers who grew and raised the food being served talk about their agricultural journey, leaving room for questions throughout.

“Guests hear about the history of the farm, how they grow their crops and the business model, and most importantly, they have a chance to ask questions,” Polmar says. “They see and hear about the relationship the farmers have with their customers, two of whom are the chefs cooking dinner in the field that night. By the time they sit down to dinner, they may very well have a whole new perspective on the food that’s on their plate.”

Polmar says the organization will continue to seek out ways to support Oregon agriculture and connect consumers, whether it be holding dinners in more remote areas or supporting other regions in developing their own sustainable agritourism enterprises.

More information on farm to fork experiences that may be available near you can be found at: travelportland.com/article/farm-dinners-around-portland.

– Rachel Bertone

Learn more about how farms connect with consumers at or-agriculture.com.

PARTNERING MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE PROGRAMS with OREGON’S FARMS AND RANCHES

CONTRIBUTE TODAY BY CONTACTING OREGON AGLINK at 503-595-9121 or INFO@AGLINK.ORG.
Oregon agriculture is famous for its diversity. From grass seed that grows the turf of World Cup soccer fields to its U.S. leading Christmas tree, blackberry and hazelnut industries, Oregon produces a bountiful variety of agriculture products.

“It is a joy and a challenge to market our agriculture because it is so diverse,” says International Trade Manager Theresa Yoshioka, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

INTEREST FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Each year, Oregon’s quality food and agricultural products attract domestic and international buyers who travel to Oregon and see the state’s agriculture first hand. In 2016, Oregon hosted buyers from China, South Korea, Japan, Canada, the European Union and Russia, among others.

“What our team of ODA trade managers does is help make connections and build relationships between the buyers and potential suppliers to help facilitate trade and business opportunities,” Yoshioka says.

ODA invites these buyers out to Oregon farms and food processing facilities to meet producers and processors.

When buyers from other countries come to Oregon, the international trade team at ODA arranges for them to go to the field to see the state’s agriculture. This gives food buyers the chance to see the farms and meet the producers, and is a great opportunity to show them agriculture before it is frozen, dried or packaged. It lets buyers experience the story behind the Oregon products.

BOB’S RED MILL

Bob’s Red Mill in Milwaukie, a company founded by Bob and Charlee Moore, is one location that Yoshioka often takes international buyers. Strongly pursuing sales and brand growth outside the U.S., selling in markets all over the world anywhere from Australia to Vietnam, the agribusiness is putting exponential efforts into marketing its goods to overseas consumers.

Jan Chernus, vice president of international sales for the
NATIONALLY, OREGON RANKS NO. 1 IN VOLUME OF EXPORTED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.

OREGON’s total processed food exports grew 80 percent between 2009 and 2013. This rate outpaced the 55 percent growth in overall national exports.

About 80 percent of Oregon’s agricultural production leaves the state.

OREGON’s top ag exports

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<tr>
<td>Fruits and Nuts</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>$141.1M</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$93.6M</td>
</tr>
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15,900 jobs supported by ag exports in Oregon

About 40 percent of the state’s exports are internationally marketed.
company, credits the company’s growing overseas success on its focus to keep consumers happy.

“No other company our size puts in these stellar efforts,” Chernus says. “That is why our export sales are growing at 25 percent per year, and that is what will keep us competitive in the world marketplace.”

Bob’s Red Mill Natural food products include an array of healthy, whole-grain, organic and gluten-free foods, such as flour, granolas, oats, cereals and baking mixes, as well as beans and seeds.

“Bob has given the company strong direction to pursue sales and brand growth outside the USA. After all, 98 percent of the world’s population does not live in our country,” Chernus says. “I think we can all agree with Bob when he says the entire world would be healthier eating our delicious whole-grain foods.”

Yoshioka adds, “The company has such a great culture. We love taking buyers there because it only takes one tour through the facility to get a better understanding of the company’s values and its product line.”

**IMPORTANT TO THE ECONOMY**

Oregon is a state with more acreage in agricultural production than many countries but with far less population. This means that it has more land to grow its diverse commodities, and the trade generated from these products has a huge economic impact on the state.

Oregon is helping to supply a premium-quality product to another country that they cannot grow themselves. And in turn, Oregon relies on other countries for products it cannot grow.

For example, Oregon supplies shade trees and grass seed for the green spaces China is beginning to develop in its largest cities.

Many international buyers visit Oregon to attend trade shows. In industries where Oregon is strong, these trade shows attract people from across the country and even overseas. The Farwest Trade Show, featuring nursery and greenhouse products, is one such event. Buyers and influencers from Europe, Canada, China and Japan attended this show in 2015 and many are expected to return for 2016.

One of the newer events to start up in Oregon is Feast Portland. Now in its fifth year, this annual four-day event has become one of the premier food events in the country.

Building on the success of Feast Portland, which put Oregon on the national stage, ODA used a grant to create the International Culinary Ambassador’s Program. This program brings key influencers in the culinary community to Oregon during an event that showcases the state’s high-quality ingredients and bountiful food products.

— Blair Thomas
Farmers work to attract native pollinators naturally.
In 2001, Mike Omeg, a cherry grower from The Dalles, planted native plants near one of his orchards to attract beneficial insects to help suppress black cherry aphid.

The response was better than he had hoped.

“What I noticed at the orchard where we did this planting was that the fruit set on one of our cherry varieties, notorious for not setting many cherries, was much better. And as you got closer to the insectary planting, the fruit set got better,” he says.

“I thought, ‘Wow, that is interesting. There could be something here,’” he says. “That is when I started investigating the benefits of native bees for pollination of our crop.”

ALL THE BUZZ

Today, Omeg has established insectaries on 70 acres of his 335-acre cherry farm, which is now 100 years old.

“We have some pretty sizable hedgerow plantings and we have what we call pollinator islands, which are areas outside our orchards that are islands of plants that attract pollinators and beneficial insect species,” he says.

A few miles southwest of Omeg, in the Eagle Creek area, Brian and Rhoda Gibler of Captain Blueberry also are using insectaries to attract native pollinators to help set their fruit crop.

“The reason we started it is because we were in contact with the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service to help us put in drip irrigation for eight acres of blueberries,” Rhoda says. “Then we found out that they have a program for native pollinators and they would help us establish an insectary. I thought, ‘Boy, that sounds like a good idea.’ So we took them up on it.”

Today, the Giblers have dedicated about an acre of their small farm to insectaries, and, they say, their crop has never looked better.

With beekeepers losing bees at an alarming rate in recent years – estimates put bee losses at between 25 and 40 percent annually – efforts by farmers like Omeg and the Giblers to attract pollinators are becoming more and more important, according to Mace Vaughan of the Xerces Society.

BRINGING BACK THE BEE

Several factors are contributing to the dramatic bee population declines in recent years, according to scientists, including diseases, parasites, stress caused by moving bee hives long distances and land-management practices.

“When you see pretty extreme fence-row-to-fence-row farming, specifically in the Midwest, it shouldn’t be a surprise that we lose the abundance of diversity of bees in that landscape,” Vaughan says.

Vaughan notes that insectary plantings likely will never replace the need to bring in hives to pollinate certain crops, but, he says, “Long term, we are going to have to invest in farm practices that support the bees. And as farmers are looking to diversify their source of pollination and spread out their risk, I think these practices become more and more valuable, and there are more and more growers who are recognizing that this is an important tool for their toolbox.”

Omeg says he still relies on migratory honeybee hives to pollinate his crop but he has seen sizable benefits from his insectaries, both in increased cherry production and reduced pesticide use.

“I’m not trying to replace all pesticides,” he says, “and I’m not trying to replace honeybees. But what I am trying to do is complement the honeybees and pesticides by being able to reduce pest population by natural enemies to a level that is low enough that maybe instead of having to spray pesticide five times a year, I only need to spray three times a year.

“That has a direct financial benefit,” he says, “but it also has benefits in areas like worker safety and the environment.”

– Mitch Lies
In southeast Portland, a Latin American public market and kitchen spreads the aroma of locally grown and made smoked meats, pressed masa and fresh herbs and pulls you in. Brightly colored food carts in the open-air plaza tempt you to stop for a taste, while the food market welcomes you to try out the produce, ice cream and more. A colorful mural invites you in to shop and eat at the many businesses inside. These are the sensory delights of Portland Mercado.

“You can sip locally roasted coffee featuring beans that come directly from the owner’s farm in Nicaragua, or lounge at BARRIO – neighborhood in Spanish – which features house Willamette Valley red and white wines, amidst a Latin-inspired menu,” says Jamie Melton, Portland Mercado marketing and outreach coordinator. Along with Manuel Marin-Foucher, general manager of development, the two work to bring the area a taste of Latin America.

A LOCAL TASTE OF LATIN AMERICA

Portland Mercado, a project by locally based Hacienda CDC, a nonprofit that focuses on Latino development, features nine food carts as of June 2016, and there are plans to add more, according to Melton. Overall, there are 19 full-time businesses and more than 30 temporary vendors at the mercado. Carts feature freshly made food using locally sourced products for dishes from El Salvador, Mexico, Colombia and more. Inside the public market, merchants sell both locally made fresh and packaged products.

“The meat counter features locally made chorizos. A Colombian bakery leads back to the commissary kitchen that supports over 30 businesses making and selling packaged products and prepared foods from organic, fresh ramen noodles to salsas,” Melton says.

Not only does Portland Mercado give Portland a taste of Latin American agriculture and food, but it helps bridge cultures as well, connecting the merchants with consumers through its public market, café, bar and other shops.

“Portland Mercado has given the Latino community a voice and a place to feel safe and to celebrate the diversity within their cultural heritage,” Melton says. “Many Latinos originally came to Oregon to improve opportunities for their families by working in the agricultural sector. They are now able to use that experience to make great food and great products. The conversation for entrepreneurs here and for the community at large involves a greater understanding that our
Latin American community consists of not only hard workers, but successful business owners who are an integral part of the Oregon culinary and cultural experience."

**SATISFYINGLY FRESH SEAFOOD**

Further south in Newport on the Central Oregon coast, Local Ocean Seafoods is fishing for the best locally sourced seafood experience it can offer. The market-style restaurant features open-air grilling and floor-to-ceiling windows so customers can watch nearby fishing boats in the harbor.

Local Ocean was founded when Laura Anderson and a local fisherman developed a fish market and restaurant on the Newport Bayfront that could showcase Oregon seafood and provide a premium price to fishermen.

"Going local is more than just a wistful environmental plea," Anderson says. “It’s really about food security. As uncertainty grows in the global economy and food marketplace, having local access to fresh, clean, fair, sustainable food is not just good business sense, it’s a survival strategy.”

Local Ocean’s coastal market offers up crab, shrimp, oysters, salmon and seasonal fish from Oregon, showcasing a variety of fresh seafood from along the West Coast and supplied by more than 50 local fishermen.

“In our fish market we label each seafood item, who harvested it, where it was caught and how it was caught,” Anderson says. “The value of this information is different for each person. For some it helps them make more informed choices, for others it adds ‘story’ to the products, and for the fishermen it’s a source of pride to see their high-quality product in our showcase.”

And it’s no secret that seafood is rich in health benefits, Anderson says.

“But that is not unique to Local Ocean’s seafood. We definitely have a quality advantage on any grocery chain as our product comes direct from the boat, so it is fresher and generally much better quality. Also, the story and fisherman behind the seafood helps build a relationship between the harvester and consumer.”

And if seafood isn’t your menu choice? “We have worked with a handful of other Oregon producers directly,” Anderson says. “Our ground beef for our famous burger comes from McKay Ranch in Corvallis. We buy locally foraged chanterelles in the fall. And we often purchase from the farmers’ market suppliers in the summer.”

– Brittany Stovall
For nearly 15 years, the Adelante Mujeres organization has been inspiring local Latina women and their families to become community leaders, helping strengthen the Latino presence in Oregon – including those in the agricultural world.

Based in Forest Grove, Adelante Mujeres has worked with more than 3,500 families since its beginning in 2002, empowering and educating low-income Latina women and their families. The organization’s goal: ensure that Latinos are active in their communities.

To carry out this mission, Adelante Mujeres’ participants take part in a variety of holistic programs, such as Adult Education, Chicas Youth Development – and the 14-week class series, Sustainable Agriculture. Alejandro Tecum, director of Sustainable Agriculture, says many Latinos already have an ag background. Also, agriculture is critical to life and the foundation of the economy, he adds. In 2004, the organization reopened the inactive Forest Grove Farmers Market for the program. So far, Sustainable Agriculture has helped nearly 275 people. “We saw it as an opportunity for our participants to practice a skill they enjoy, and we were right,” Tecum says. “Since the beginning, those who attended the first meeting demonstrated their desire to participate in the farmers market by selling fruits and vegetables that they grew themselves.”

However, he says, they needed to learn how to grow crops in Oregon, which has a much different climate than their countries of origin. Plus, many only had experience with conventional growing practices. “We put together a program that would train Latino farmers on how to grow food using sustainable techniques,” Tecum says. “Over the years, we have realized that it was the right decision to make because many families who have participated in the program are now growing vegetables for their own consumption or to sell.”

– Brittany Stovall
Oregon Takes a Natural Approach

Naturopathic companies serve a growing need
Oregon is a hotbed of naturopathic products and health supplements. A distinct, alternative approach to health, naturopathy focuses on a natural approach of healing the body, usually employing the use of botanical medicines, homeopathic products, a focus on natural foods and more.

Using plant-based medicine to nourish and heal bodies is simply a way of life for many health-conscious consumers. And as interest in these types of products has grown, so have Oregon-based companies that are producing them.

**SUPPLEMENTING HEALTH**

In 1994, Randy Buressh and his wife co-founded Oregon’s Wild Harvest (OWH), a grower and manufacturer of U.S. Department of Agriculture-certified organic herbal supplements. Today, this family-run company, which includes son Adam Buressh, is operating across multiple farms, taking advantage of Oregon’s varying climate to produce dozens of varieties of medicinal plants.

“Our mission is to nurture healthy soil and clean water, save and replant our non-GMO seeds, and produce pure, potent and healthy herbal supplements,” Buressh says.

To accomplish this, OWH practices biodynamic methods or “regenerative farming,” leaving a smaller carbon footprint. OWH focuses on producing herb products and extracts, such as nettle, skullcap, holy basil and more, that are free of chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers and GMOs.

“The health of our land is directly connected to the health of our plants, which are connected to the quality of our herbal products and health of our customers,” Buressh says. “Our hands-on, closed-loop approach gives us maximum control over the identity, quality, potency and safety of all our ingredients, every step of the way.”

**FROM FARM TO BOTTLE**

Similarly at The Eclectic Institute, co-founded in 1982 by Dr. Ed Alstat, every step of the process from farm to bottle is handled in-house. The Eclectic Institute started freeze-drying herbs in the late 1980s. Then, in 1990, it began to use organic non-grain alcohol for consumers with gluten sensitivity.

“Different than other herb companies, our herbs need to be fresh for freeze drying so we try to grow as much as we can ourselves,” explains Christine Alstat, co-owner. “One of the advantages to this is the ability to grow unusual or genetically unique plants that are not generally available on the open market.”

For example, the farm yields four varieties of echinacea, which all hold different medicinal properties.

“Also, in contrast to some types of agricultural farms that practice mono-cropping, we leverage the benefits of biodiversity by growing a wide variety of plants that thrive in the climate of the Willamette Valley,” like native ornamental flower species and cover crops to attract pollinators.
Oregon’s Wild Harvest has more than 200 acres of farmland in Central Oregon to grow much of the plant material used in its herbal supplements.
BERRY HEALTHY

Known as a “super fruit,” black raspberries grow in Oregon’s own backyard. With Oregon as the No. 1 producer in the U.S. of black raspberries, it’s no wonder that BerriHealth, based in Corvallis, carefully cultivates the crop, creating products and testing its benefits.

BerriHealth was founded in 2009 by Steve Dunfield with leading scientists in order to supply U.S. medical research with high-quality black raspberries at Ohio State University. Since then, many other national and international medical research institutes have used the company’s black raspberry products to advance medical research.

Oregon black raspberries are also being studied in the United Kingdom, Japan and South Korea for the potential to help with cancer prevention and inhibition, as well as improving cardiovascular function.

The keystone to BerriHealth’s success is Sturm’s Berry Farm in Corbett, a fourth-generation family farm with 70 years of experience growing this fickle berry using ecological farming methods. From selecting cultivars to soil conditions, harvest timing and preserving, the entire berry process must be controlled to guarantee quality and consistency.

“Our unique location in Oregon and our partnership with a wonderful family farm gives us a unique advantage by providing us with the highest-quality black raspberries,” says Dunfield, president of BerriHealth. “We are excited about sharing our healthy berry products with the world.”

– Keri Ann Beazell
Oregon farmers are doing their part to end the fight against hunger.

Approximately 800,000 people in the state deal with hunger insecurity issues, or one out of every five people. Who better to help feed the hungry than those who are already growing our food?

ENDING HUNGER

That was the thought behind Farmers Ending Hunger, an organization founded by Fred Ziari in 2004. Since 2006, the organization has been a channel for farmers and ranchers to donate to the Oregon Food Bank.

Executive Director John Burt says that Oregon farmers, ranchers and food processors have continually stepped up to the challenge when faced with hunger issues.

“Farmers understand feeding hungry people,” Burt says. “When they know there’s a hunger problem and an urgent need to address food insecurity, they help out.”

The process is simple. Producers donate a portion of their harvest. Food processors donate services, and the organization uses cash donations from individuals to help with sorting, storage, trucking and more to deliver food to the hungry.

“It really grew through word of mouth,” Burt says. “We do publicize and go to growers’ meetings, but people in the organization knew a lot of growers and connections that helped spread the cause.”

Burt says farms such as Amstad Produce in Sherwood and River Point Farms in Hermiston are some of their biggest donors, supplying thousands of pounds of potatoes and onions.

“They’re giving us first-cut product, right out of the harvest,” Burt adds.

Other growers donate specific amounts of products, whether a certain number of bushels, cows for fresh hamburger, milk and more. Burt says there’s always something new and different, and they’re constantly trying to reach more growers.

ADOPT-AN-ACRE

Anyone can participate in the organization’s Adopt-an-Acre program, which helps fund the costs associated with handling and packaging the farmer’s crop. Options range from “adopting” one row to as much as 2 acres, which can provide fresh vegetables each day to 1,000 families of four.

“It’s so important to get the word out to the public that Oregon agriculture is giving back and feeding people in our community. They see what farmers are doing and that they want to do the right thing,” Burt says.

Last year was the organization’s most impressive yet, with 4.2 million pounds of food donated by Oregon farmers and ranchers.

Katie Pearmine, strategic sourcing manager at the Oregon Food Bank, says that farmers are
such a natural fit in the fight against hunger because they’re rooted in community.

“They’re neighbors and friends who have a real vested interest in getting healthy food to folks that need it,” she says.

The Oregon Food Bank Network, which is made up of 21 regional food banks across the state and southwest Washington, serves 900,000 people per year on average. Pearmine says they are shifting the focus from collecting any and all food to strategically sourcing food that assures those facing insecurity have access to food that promotes health and wellness including produce, proteins and pantry staples.

“We’re so grateful for the generosity of the food and agriculture community,” Pearmine says. “We couldn’t do this work without them. It will take everyone to end hunger, and growers and producers are leading the way.”

— Rachel Bertone

THE OREGON FOOD BANK INCLUDES ITS FOUR BRANCHES, 17 INDEPENDENT REGIONAL FOOD BANKS AND APPROXIMATELY 960 PARTNER AGENCIES.

Farmers help provide 57 percent of the food donated to the Oregon Food Bank Network.

57%

800K

ONE IN FIVE OREGONIANS FACES FOOD INSECURITY.

Approximate number of Oregonians facing food insecurity

Source: Oregon Food Bank
Lory Duralia specializes in native plants at her Bosky Dell Natives nursery in West Linn.

Photo by Isaac Lane Koval
I
n the late 1980s, Lory Duralia decided it was time to grow her dream of having a native plant nursery at her West Linn, Oregon home. Today, the lush backyard sanctuary, which she named Bosky Dell Natives, is home to 3 acres of more than 300 native plant species she sells to customers throughout Oregon.

Duralia says native plants were difficult to find when she started the nursery, but today, business is blossoming.

“It’s really nurturing to just hang out in my backyard, which is all native, and have an abundance of beautiful plants and an array of wildlife, such as dragonflies, frogs, and birds,” she says.

LABOR OF LOVE

Of the many plant varieties for at-home planting, one favorite she recommends is the evergreen huckleberry, a flowering shrub.

“They’re a labor of love to pick because they’re tiny but absolutely delicious,” she says about the plant’s berries, adding that it’s favored by bees and hummingbirds. “In our family, if you didn’t help pick berries for the huckleberry pie, then you didn’t get a piece of it. It’s just really fun to walk into your own garden and pick huckleberries and eat them.”

Another favorite is the trillium, a beloved wildflower in Oregon. “It takes seven years for a young trillium to be mature enough to produce its very first blossom,” Duralia says about the beautiful yet fragile wildflower. “If you pick it, you’ve depleted your bulb of next year’s blossom, and it takes a few years to recover.”

Promoting a philosophy about the importance of being a good steward of the earth, Duralia says using native plants is important because the act promotes local sustainability.

“As we continue to build homes and develop land, we displace wildlife,” she says. “So it’s increasingly important for all of us as homeowners and business owners to give back some of which we’ve taken away. As we become more populated, it will become more and more important to help bees, birds and all of our wildlife.”

Additionally, gardens offer certain emotional health benefits by creating a personal sanctuary. “It creates both a sanctuary for the wildlife and the gardener,” Duralia says.

When choosing what native plants to use, Duralia says, “Gardeners should look at their land and go with the flow of pre-existing conditions for a successful garden. For instance, if you have a spot that’s dry and sunny, use plants that like dry, sunny locations.”

Bosky Dell Natives helps customers pick and choose what native plants to populate their personal gardens, providing tips and guidance about how to go native online at boskydellnatives.com.

WELL ADAPTED

According to Heather Stoven, extension horticulturalist at Oregon State University, native plants are defined as those found in an area before colonization. For the U.S., that means before European settlement. She says native plants are great to use in gardens because they are well adapted to the area.

“This means that they will
require less inputs such as water and fertilizers,” she adds. “There are many beautiful native plants in all shapes and sizes to fit your specific site and gardening style.”

Overall, there are 3,500 native plants in Oregon, with many to choose from in hundreds of nurseries, conservation districts and flora organizations across the state. The Oregon Flora Project provides botanical information and a list of native plant nurseries and plants they sell on its website, oregonflora.org.

“Some common native plants to western Oregon include sword ferns, snowberry and Oregon grape, which is our state flower,” Stoven says. “One great thing about using these plants in the landscape is that they really give you a ‘sense of place’ and bring a unique feel to a garden located in your region.”

Like Duralia, she stresses the importance of choosing appropriate native plants when forming a garden.

“A plant native to western Oregon may not do well in central Oregon, so it is important to pay attention to the particular region a plant is native to,” she says. “That being said, in western Oregon, commonly available native plants in landscapes include Oregon grape, currants, Lewis’ mock orange, manzanitas, vine maple and various ferns such as sword fern and deer fern, however, there are many more attractive plants available for every eco-region.”

Native plants have numerous environmental benefits; for example, they are adapted to Oregon’s unique climate and do well without supplementary water, reducing water usage on property. “Native plants are also adapted to our soils, need less fertilizing and often experience less pest pressure from insects and diseases. These plants provide food and protection to local wildlife. Lastly, native plants are established in our ecosystems and will not become invasive in our wild spaces,” Stoven says. “This does not mean, however, that some will not spread in garden settings; pay attention to the habit of the plants you are purchasing to be sure they will do well in the space you have available.”

And although native plant usage has been booming in recent years, the use of native plants in gardens has a rich history, Stoven says.

“Thomas Jefferson played a large role in the use of native plants and their introduction into horticulture. In Oregon, we also have a long history conserving and studying natural vegetation and native plants. Although each of the 50 states has a native plant society or similar organization, the Native Plant Society of Oregon has been in existence longer than most, being founded back in 1961.”

– Brittany Stovall

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