

**TILLAMOOK COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER
ASSOCIATION**



4506 Third Street
Tillamook, OR 97141

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<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/tillamook/mg/tcmga>

2023

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February 20, 2023

The Honorable Cyrus Javadi
State Representative
State Capitol, Rm. H-373
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97310

The Honorable Suzanne Weber
State Senator
State Capitol, Rm S-405
900 Court St, NE
Salem OR 97310

Re: Tillamook County Master Gardeners Association (TCMGA) and OSU Budget

Dear Senator Weber and Representative Javadi:

We are writing to introduce ourselves and add our support for fully funding OSU's Extension Services budget, which includes funding for the statewide Master Gardener program and local Extension offices that serve Master Gardeners.

Statewide and county Master Gardener programs rely on Oregon State University for professional staffing and advice. In the last several years, that funding has been unreliable, and Tillamook County and other Extension Office resources have been reduced. Without staffing, the programs can be subject to inaccurate or out-of-date advice and resulting liability. The programs are hugely popular with rural residents; Tillamook County Master Gardeners alone field hundreds of requests for advice on topics ranging from the safe use of pesticides to proper pruning methods for home orchards and reducing food costs by growing home-raised vegetables.

FUNDING

While TCMGA is self-funded and part of Oregon Master Gardeners Association (OMGA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, OSU staffing locally is partially dependent on property tax revenues from the Tillamook County Extension Service District property tax permanent levy, as well as funding from OSU's budget, which comes from the state general fund and lottery funds.

BACKGROUND AND IMPACT

Master Gardeners is a volunteer-fueled program of Extension programs across the country. We focus on providing scientific education and research-based advice to gardeners. Volunteers are required to participate in 66 hours of scientific education, as well as 40 hours of community service work every year. The first year of training involves ten weeks of classes and lab work, with mentoring by experienced Master Gardeners. Apprentices must pass a challenging exam and perform volunteer work in the learning garden and plant clinic.

Our local chapter is 35 years old, and we are active in maintaining a demonstration learning garden at the Tillamook County Fairgrounds. The 2022 Tillamook County Fair attracted 1,500 visitors to the garden. We conduct plant clinics for the public year-round at the Extension Office as well as at all of the farmers' markets in the county. In 2022, our learning garden produced 850 pounds of fresh produce for local food banks.

We offer other programs and services, including programs for elementary students and teaching the Seed to Supper curriculum, which educates people wanting to grow their own food. Our annual plant sale in May attracts over 1,500 people and is our primary fundraiser. We sponsor a horticultural scholarship at TBCC, and provide educational materials and advice throughout the year. We have over 80 members who attend continuing education classes and perform community service annually.

In 2022, our membership engaged in 3,287 hours of volunteer service and educational time. This has a direct benefit to the community by providing research based horticultural advice to Tillamook County residents, and gives them an introduction to the benefits of OSU's Extension program.

Please let us know if you need additional information, or just want to see our learning garden and get to know us better. We'll be happy to sell you a few tomato plants at the Plant Sale the first Saturday in May at the Fairgrounds, or online. Our website is <https://tillamookmastergardeners.com>.

Respectfully,

Camile S. Hickman, President
Tillamook County Master Gardeners Association

Cc: Wiley Thompson, Regional Director, OSU (via email)
Gail Langellotto, Statewide Master Gardener Coordinator, OSU (via email)
Chris Rusch, President OMGA (via email)