



Oregon State University Extension Service Marion County

Forestry Education is Online, and in the Field

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Extension Forester Glenn Ahrens assessing fire damage to trees

OSU Extension Forestry and Natural Resources operations are ongoing, with restrictions due to Covid-19. Tree School Online classes are continuing as webinars every first and third Tuesday through June 2021. Other educational events are also planned for 2021, including webinars and workshops on Seed and Seedlings, the Basic Woodland Management series, forest weed management, wildfire preparedness, and other topics. These may be a combination of online sessions and field workshops with precautions as needed, pending developments with the pandemic. For details on upcoming programs, please check the OSU Extension Forestry & Natural Resources website

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/clackamas/forestry-natural-resources>, or subscribe to the *Woodland Notes Newsletter* and monthly *Forestry Corner E-News* at <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/newsletter/woodland-notes-newsletter>.

People miss the experience of in-person workshops and classes. But for the time we spend preparing and teaching, we are reaching more people with online events, since we are not limited by classroom space and travel time for participants. For example, Tree School Online and Wildfire programs recorded more than double the number of person-hours of engagement online in 2020 compared to in-person events in 2019. At the same time, we are continuing printed material and more personal communication via individual consultation as an alternative to the online environment. Please call or email us with your questions, ideas, and requests for printed material.

Since the onset of Covid-19, individual consultations have increased greatly via email, telephone, and the extension online **Ask-an-Expert** system. We are also able to do field visits with individuals and small groups. The overall volume of consultations with clients and partners on trees and forestry nearly doubled in 2020, to about 50 per week. The

most common questions are about forest and tree health, how to manage the forest, wildfire preparedness, and post-fire recovery. All the important seasonal tasks required to manage a woodland enterprise must go on in spite of Covid-19 (and what better way to get away than being in the forest). Whether it's out at Hopkins Demonstration Forest or in a client's own woodland, we are capturing some of the teachable moments with photos and video to share with others in online education events.

After the Fire

Since the terrible Labor Day wildfires in September, we have been preoccupied with post-fire damage assessment and assistance to landowners affected by the fires. The full extent of the damage is becoming apparent. Over 400,000 acres burned just in Clackamas and Marion counties, including almost 100,000 acres of private land. Focusing on non-industrial family forests, the fires affected hundreds of land-owners and about 40,000 acres in Clackamas and Marion County. OSU Extension Forestry, Oregon Department of Forestry, and other partners are collaborating to meet the need for assistance with post-fire assessment and recovery in the forest, including assessment of damaged trees and planning for salvage harvest and reforestation.

REPLANTING AFTER A FIRE

Availability of tree seedlings and tree planters is expected to be far short of what is needed over the next few years, due to the fires along with many acres of previously planned reforestation. A multi-agency partnership has formed to assess the reforestation need and develop extra capacity to produce seedlings and plant trees. If you need to plant trees and have not been able to find seedlings or tree planters, please contact Glenn Ahrens at glenn.ahrens@oregonstate.edu or 503-655-8631. Your input will help us determine the extent of unmet needs and we can put you on the list to aggregate seedling orders.

It's clear that extraordinary measures will be needed to provide local capacity to help landowners get the work done. This includes foresters, loggers, tree planters, and nurseries to supply the need for tree seedlings. The demand for these services and supplies over the next few years will be far greater than usual, so it may take some time to meet the needs of everyone affected. In wild forests, recovery after fire, including natural regeneration of trees, may take 10 to 15 years. In managed forests, we usually strive for immediate site preparation and planting in the first year. But it may take 2-5 years to deal with all the acres burned, which can still provide for relatively rapid recovery.

As part of our effort to provide post-fire assistance, we offered a series of webinars called *After the Fire*. Recordings of these are available for viewing at <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/fire-program/fire-program-online-webinar-guide>.



Extreme wind-driven fire scorched tall trees all the way up to the top in this mature timber stand

Key information resources for each *After the Fire* topic are posted with the recorded webinar. We also have printed summaries on the key topics that we will mail to you on request if you don't have access to online material.

I am extremely grateful for the dedicated efforts of fire-fighters and first-responders – both official and un-official. Continuing support for them and their capacity to help us all in the future is a big part of helping communities be prepared for wildfire. As I visit landowners in various neighborhoods affected by the fires, just about everyone has a story of how they or some of their neighbors used their equipment, knowledge, and skills to successfully fight the fires. As in most disasters, a big lesson from these fires is that you can't assume that help from others will come when you need it - be prepared, use your judgement, and take action when needed.

Woodland owners in general are pretty independent, pro-active, and prepared. But when it comes to fire in western Oregon, we just don't expect it to happen very often, so we may still be caught off-guard when it does. As a forester and woodland owner myself, I think it is important to continue seeking guidance and training in order to be prepared to take appropriate and effective action.

Preparing for more fire

Reducing the severity of fires in the relatively wet forests of western Oregon is challenging due the rapid regrowth of vegetation. In the dry forests of southwest Oregon or east of the Cascades, removal of accumulated fuels (pine needles, branches, shrubs, small trees, etc.) can effectively change the forest back to a "low-severity" fire type, such that the level of fire damage will be low the next time it burns. In the moist forests of western Oregon, a pattern of infrequent but severe "stand replacement" fire is often the natural condition.

Maintaining low fuel hazards across large areas of productive and moist forest may not be feasible to the extent needed to resist those rare intense fires driven by extreme fire weather. But we can manage forests to change fire behavior during less extreme conditions. Fortunately, there are steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of losing your home and woodland to damaging and deadly wildfire. These include:

- Focus on strategic fuels reduction at the interface between dense forests and communities or infrastructure.
- Promote building with materials and designs that resist ignition from embers – in both new construction and retrofitting.
- Accomplish home landscape management and fuels reduction in the Home Ignition Zone across neighborhoods.
- Ensure ingress and egress for all and access for fire fighters.
- Reduce human caused ignitions due to carelessness, powerlines, and other sources.
- Prepare communities for evacuation



Moderate-severity fire stopped at the edge of this stand where thinning and ground fuel reduction had been done

We need to increase our investment and commitment to implement the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (<https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/thestrategy.shtml>). The “National Strategy” is a strategic push to work collaboratively among all stakeholders and across all landscapes, using best science, to make meaningful progress towards three goals:

- Resilient Landscapes
- Fire Adapted Communities
- Safe and Effective Wildfire Response

To pursue this in Oregon, our Extension Fire Program is moving forward with six new faculty coming on board this year. The OSU Extension Fire Program <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/fire-program> is your gateway to resources on all aspects of preparing for fire and recovering from fire.

OSU Tree School Online (next page)



FREE WEBINARS

First and Third Tuesdays of each month

3:00pm - 4:30pm

Learn more and register at:

KnowYourForest.org/TreeSchoolOnline

These webinars are presented by the Partnership for Forestry Education.

The **FREE** presentations include topics such as:

- Tree health and biology
- Ownership succession
- Maps and management
- Fish habitat restoration
- Wildlife management
- and much more!

