



March 2022

Hello Master Gardeners!

I hope you are all doing well. I'm writing to share some news that my last day with OSU Extension will be May 31, 2022. My partner got a new job with the US Forest Service in Colorado, so we are moving back there (I lived there prior to moving to Oregon, and we are very excited for this opportunity to move back). We are actually moving in about 2 weeks, and I will work remotely from mid-March to the end of May. I will still be available by email and phone. Heidi Gehman, our administrative office manager whose office is across the hall from the Plant Clinic, will be an in-person contact for any logistical things related to the MG Program. Her contact information is heidi.gehman@oregonstate.edu

I have enjoyed getting to know and working closely with many of you over the last few years. While I'll still be 'here' for a couple of more months, I wanted to let everyone know of this transition. I wish you all the best and talk to you soon!

Erika

What Happened in the February Board Meeting?

Jane Moyer

How much do you know about what's going on in JCMGA?

See if you can answer these:

- Want to earn educational hours from home? Remember pre-pandemic when perennial (veteran) Master Gardeners could sit in on the Master Gardener classes with the students to earn hours? Those classes are now recorded and online. Find the way to access them in the February board meeting minutes.
- Want to attend some of the working group and/or committee meetings but don't know when they are? Check out the February board meeting minutes to learn where information on meeting schedules is found.
- Want to know if there will be a 2022 Spring Garden Fair? The February board meeting minutes tell what the deciding factor will be.
- The wells at SOREC (Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center) have been dry since September 2021. Wondering how water will be provided for the Practicum plants? Continuing, exciting news about this situation can be found in the February board meeting minutes.

To find the February board meeting minutes,

1. Go to the JCMGA Website (jacksoncountymga.org).
2. Click on "Member Portal" in the green stripe at the top of the page.
3. Log in.
4. At the right side of the page, click on "Board of Directors."
5. Click on "Board Reports and Minutes."
6. Click on "2022 JCMGA Board Reports."
7. The board minutes for 2022 are in the file "00 Board Minutes 2022" at the top of the page.
8. Once you have opened the file, click on the month for which you'd like to read the

board minutes. (Example: "01 January 2022")

Remember all board meetings are open to all JCMGA members and students. Meetings are 9:30 to approximately 11:30 a.m. on the second Friday of each month. Contact President Regula Pepi to get on the Zoom list.

Master Gardeners Teach Vegetable Gardening at OLLI

Colet Allen

Two of JCMGA's outstanding gardeners, Susan Koenig and John Kobal, will again be teaching during OLLI's (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) spring session. Their online Zoom class, **REC112 Vegetable Gardening in the Rogue Valley**, is open to all who register. There are eight, one and one-half hour classes on Thursdays from 9 to 10:30 AM. Classes begin on March 31 and finish on May 19. Reading assignments are based on the JCMGA text *Garden Guide for the Rogue Valley: Year 'Round & Month by Month - Vegetables, Berries, Melons, 2017 Edition*. Copies can be purchased at the Grange or OSU Extension Office at 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, telephone 541-776-7371.

You can find out more about the class and the instructors by going to [1](#). To take this class or any other OLLI class, an OLLI membership is required.

<https://olli.sou.edu/olliatsou/Course/Course.aspx?c=3183> (You can browse classes without being a member.) Find out how to register at the [OLLI homepage](#), call their office at 541-552-6048, or email olli@sou.edu.

Bottle Drive

Looking for a quick and easy way to help Jackson County Master Gardeners? Consider donating your redeemable beverage bottles and cans.

It's easy! Pick up a BLUE BAG or two (no more than two please) from the table in the lobby of the Extension office and fill it with clean, empty, beer, soda, water, tea, or juice container—ANY bottle or can that has the OR 10 cents redemption value listed on the label. Once your bag is full, you can drop it off at any of the following bottle redemption sites:

- 1179 Stowe Ave, Medford, OR 97501
- 2727 Ave G, White City, OR 97503
- 1040 Rogue River Hwy, Grants Pass, OR 97527

Then pick up another blue bag and start again. Every little bit helps!

Jackson County Master Gardeners Catch the Rain!

Lynn Kunstman

In September of 2021, the irrigation wells on the OSU Southern Oregon Research and Education Center (SOREC) campus at 569 Hanley Road in Central Point ran dry.

Watering of all campus Demonstration Gardens stopped and plants in the Native Plant Nursery began to die. Through a massive emergency effort, the nursery stock was donated to local restoration projects or taken to member's homes to be maintained until we could install a watering system.

Now, JCMGA, in conjunction with Small Farms, Land Stewards and other programs housed at SOREC, is fundraising to be able to install a large Rainwater Catchment System. The 5,000-gallon system will capture water from the roof of Greenhouse #2.

Master Gardeners will use the water to maintain the native plants in the campus nursery. The system will also be a demonstration teaching tool for Master Gardeners, Small Farms, Land Stewards, 4-H programs, and any community association that would like to bring members on campus to see what a large-capacity capture system looks like. Interpretive signs and brochures will be placed with the system for the public's information.

The Rainwater Catchment System is a \$15,000 project, so we need to raise considerable funds. Please consider donating. No donation is too small. Give through this link, <http://gofund.me/23100a1f> or on our website: <http://jacksoncountymga.org/>

Thank you for supporting Master Gardeners in Jackson County in our ongoing efforts to educate and serve the citizens of Jackson County!

Garden for Life!

It's an Itsy-Bitsy Teenie Weenie Micro Tom that's Truly Keenie

Gardening Gourmet

Sydney Jordan Brown MG 2000

While Tom Thumb, no larger than his father's thumb, may have been a long-ago fairy tale figure, Micro Toms are quite real.

Not familiar with this little tomato gem? You aren't the only one. *Solanum lycopersicum* 'Micro Tom' was developed in 1989 by Dr. J.W. Scott and Dr. B.K. Harbaugh at the University of Florida, but it's unlikely to be seen at local nurseries.

Where then does one find this charming and smallest tomato? Fortunately, it's carried by a few specialty seed catalog companies.

So, why sow this miniature plant with its pea-sized fruits instead of a dwarf tomato? Genetic dwarf tomatoes (plants for another tale), while compact, are still too large to perch on a windowsill or ledge.

They are *not* GMO but bred conventionally. Most are open pollinated, growing true-to-type unless crossed with another variety.

Micro Toms grow best in very small 4–6" pots. The plants grow to a whopping four inches and sometimes up to six inches! Their unique size is due to three genes, each from a spontaneous mutation.

A dwarfing gene is common in dwarf tomatoes. Another self-pruning gene is responsible for its being determinate. The third, sun-dwarfing gene results in extremely short internodes under high light intensities. Under less intense light, Micro Toms might be a bit taller, but not much.

Anticipate harvesting around 10 to 15 under-an-inch big fruits per plant. Remember, you can have several plants in a very limited space. Micro Toms will even grow and give you fruit during the winter months, when planted in a petite pot on the window ledge.

No, you can't expect to feed your family on these dazzling little dainties, but you can surely have some fun in very little space.

Their taste is not bad. While not claiming to duplicate something like "Sungold" (not many tastes better than that cheery little hybrid cherry), Micro Tomatoes taste sweet just the same.

Micro Toms produce fruit in 90–115 days like larger tomatoes. They prefer pots to open ground. Also, seeds sown in April–May will give you plants that won't mature in summer, so you'll have fruits for winter!

With a bit of gravel in the base of a 4-6" pot filled with good potting mix; you can transfer seedlings sporting their first true leaves to their new homes. Watering with a 50% solution of fish and kelp should keep them well-nourished throughout the season.

Put each plant in a little pot tied with ribbon. Micro Toms make the perfect winter gift resembling a compact Christmas tree that will soon be complete with its own red, orange, or gold ornaments to decorate a delicate holiday dinner salad.

So, if you have quite limited garden space or a sunny windowsill, but are passionate about your own home-grown tomatoes, then the Micro Tom is for you!

Seed Sources:

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

<http://www.rareseeds.com>

Micro Tom, Orange Hat, Spoon Tomato, and Cherry Berry

Plant World Seeds

<http://plant-world-seeds.com>

Tomato Micro

Urban Farmer

<http://www.ufseeds.com>

Micro Tom

Trade Winds Fruit

<http://tradewindsfruit.com>

Micro-Tom

Recipe:

Tom Thumb Angel Hair Pasta (serves 4)

This is a lovely mixture of different tomato varieties.

Sauce:

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 ½ cups Micro Tomatoes (cherry or grape tomatoes may be substituted)

4 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced

½ cup of half and half or nondairy substitute (soy, almond, cashew milk)

1 tablespoon homemade or fresh-purchased pesto

1/8 teaspoon each sea salt and fresh ground pepper

One 6 oz can organic tuna

6 pickled organic pepperoncini peppers, seeded, stemmed, and sliced thinly

1 tablespoon capers

Zest and juice from one organic lime

8 oz organic whole wheat or spinach angel hair pasta

2 cups home grown or organic arugula, washed and dried

10 Kalamata olives, sliced

Fresh shredded Italian cheese (Trader Joe's Quattro Formaggio is great for this dish) or Parmigiano-Reggiano and Fontina

Pasta:

Bring 4 quarts water to boil and cook angel hair pasta al dente, about 2-3 minutes. Drain, toss with a little olive oil, then return to pot covering with lid to keep warm.

Sauce:

Heat olive oil in skillet then sauté garlic on medium until golden, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and sauté about 1 minute. Pour in half and half or non-dairy milk, pesto, sea salt, and pepper. Gently stir to mix. Add tuna, pepperoncini, capers, lime zest and juice, then stir again to mix.

Coil angel hair pasta in 4 shallow pasta bowls. Top each with sauce, shredded cheese, arugula, and Kalamata olives. Serve immediately