

CROPS THROUGH TIME IN YAMHILL COUNTY



Created by Russ Karow, OSU and Gloria Lutz, Yamhill County Historical Society through a grant from Trust Management Services in 2016.

Yamhill County was settled by farmers who recognized good soil and the right kind of weather for growing crops. Native Americans were here prior to these settlers. These early people harvested many crops that were native to this area. The crops they harvested grew wild. Three of those crops were used not only for their own consumption but to trade with others.

Camas-it was an important wintertime food source. The bulbs were baked for two or three days and then mashed and made into camas cakes to be eaten throughout the winter months.



Hazel-The hazelnut was used as food (eaten fresh or stored for winter) and the shoots were used for baskets and fish traps. Twisted hazel sticks were used by the Molalla tribes to make homes and sweats houses. Once the Tribal people were relocated to the Grand Ronde Reservation, they used the wild hazel as a basketry material to make baskets to sell or trade in the cities.



Wapato-was an important food resource. It grew in wetland areas and was an important trade source. The women of the tribe would wade out in the sloughs and low water areas and dig up the Wapato bulbs with their toes. The bulbs would float to the top of the water, were gathered and baked over hot



coals.

Some other very important native plants the Native Americans used were:

bear-grass (basketry, mats, ceremonial clothing, ornamentation),
cattail (food, basketry, mats, clothing),
huckleberry (food),
Oregon White Oak (acorns as food),
Tarweed (seeds made into flour and sometimes mixed with camas and hazelnuts),
Western Red Cedar (a very important source for canoes, houses, clothing, ropes, basketry)
yampa (food {Champoeg is named after the Kalapuya term for "place of the yampa."}).

Source: "Native Plants and Tribal Uses in Western Oregon" by David Lewis and Greg Archuleta.
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To continue with the importance of farming in Yamhill County, we have attempted to list all crops that have been commercially grown since the pioneers arrived in the 1830s. This is an ongoing project. If you have documentation that gives an earlier date, please contact me and we will add it to our timeline. We have tried to locate the farmer that first grew this crop and the year they started. We have used Century Farm records, the county extension records, and personal interviews with farm families.

Field Crops

Barley—Thomas Davis started in 1850

Canola/rapeseed (the later before 1990)—Miller Bros. 1960, Canola in 1990

Christmas Trees—First started by Clyde Ramsby in 1854 near McMinnville.



Clover—various varieties started as early as 1850 by Darling Smith

Corn silage/grain—Extension Report mentions the grain in 1927. Fred Muhs started corn for grain before 1941.

Flax—James/Albert Johnson in 1844. Flax was no longer grown as a crop after WWII. The last reported flax field was in 1954. Synthetic fabric was used after that.



Grass Seed-bentgrass—1935

Grass Seed-Fescues—various varieties are mentioned in the Yamhill County Extension Reports starting in the 1930s.

Grass Seed-Kentucky Bluegrass—1928 It is now almost totally grown on the east side of the Cascades.

Grass Seed-Meadow Foxtail—1930, Burlingham/Meeker Seed Co. cleaned this seed from the 1950s on. It was a very difficult seed to harvest because it had to be hand harvested. There is no report of it after 1980.

Grass Seed-orchardgrass—Miller Bros. raised it in 1945

Grass Seed-Ryegrass—First mentioned in the Yamhill County Extension Reports in 1930. This seed is used for pastures and soil erosion control.

Grass Seed-Timothy—Darling Smith grew this in 1859. No mention is made of it after 1910 as a seed crop.

Hay-alfalfa, clover, grain grass, wild—Sebastian Brutscher started this in 1850.

Hops—Thomas Davis started raising them in 1850. During Prohibition (1910-1930) there were no hops grown. The state of Washington grows most of the hops now. We have a few in Yamhill County at the present time.

Meadowfoam—started in 2000. It is used for oil in place of whale oil.

Mint—Thomas Davis started growing this in 1850.

Oats—Mark and Susan Sawyer started growing this in 1850.

Peas-dry and Austrian—first reported in the Yamhill County Extension Reports in 1928

Potatoes—1847

Radish Seed—1980

Rye Grain—1960 No more mention is made of it after 1980.

Sugarbeet Seed—1970

Vetch, common and hairy—Nelson Flint 1888

Wheat—Ewing Young in 1840 sold his crop to John McLouglin. In 1844 John Baker exported the first load of wheat.



Tree Fruits and Nuts

Apples—Albert Alderman started in 1847

Cherries, sweet—Sebastian Brutscher started in 1849



Cherries, tart/pie—Elisha Sharp in 1925 planted 2 acres in Yamhill.

Grapes table and then wine—1919

Hazelnuts—Miller Bros. in 1939

Peaches—1930

Pears, Barlett—Charles Fendall in 1850

Pears, winter/Asian—1950

Prunes/plums—started in 1849 by Sebastian Brutscher

Walnuts—started in 1849 by Sebastian Brutscher. Not many walnut trees left in county after the Columbus Day Storm in 1962

Small Fruits and Berries

Blueberries—started in 1960

Boysenberries—started in 1930



Raspberries, red and black—1910

Evergreen and Marion blackraspberries—1960

Strawberries—1909

Loganberries—started in 1919

Vegetables and truck crops

Beets—1960

Corn—1920 by the Miller Bros.

Broccoli—1960

Beans—1960

Cucumber—1920 by the Miller Bros.

Squash/pumpkin—1920 by the Miller Bros.

Watermelon/cantaloupes—1920 by the Miller Bros.

Nursery Stock

Nursery stock is mentioned in the extension reports in 1927

Holly—was started in 1930

Bulbs and Miscellaneous Seed

Bulbs—started in 1927 and narcissus bulbs in 1930

Oddities

Cranberries—1909

Sweet sorghum and sugar—1930-1940

Celery—1915

For questions or to share information contact:

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