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By KTVZ news sources
Published December 13, 2021 9:36 AM



Grow This! OSU Extension statewide seed giveaway set to return for third year



Laura LaMotte/ OSU

Grow This! Oregon Garden Challenge household seed kit.

CORVALLIS, Ore. (KTVZ) – The Grow This! Oregon Garden Challenge, Oregon State University Extension’s statewide seed giveaway, returns for a third year in 2022, featuring pollination-themed kits for educators and an enhanced partnership with the Oregon Potato Commission.

Starting in January, individuals and households, schools and groups can sign up to receive an individual/household seed kit, group kit or seed-starting teacher classroom kit through the mail.

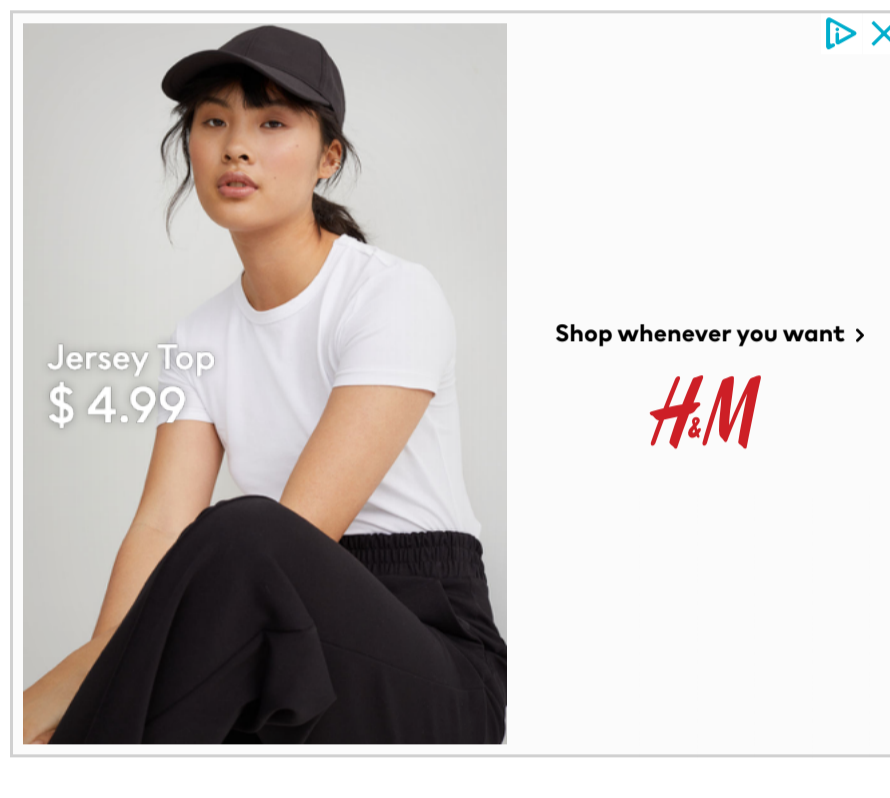
The seed-starting classroom kits also include two copies of Explore the Bees of Oregon, a bee-themed nutrition and garden environmental education activity book, bee stickers, foil pans, seed markers, a spray bottle and a peat pot for each child. While supplies last, teachers can request additional activity books for every student in their class.

ADVERTISING

The challenge is spearheaded by Food Hero, a statewide initiative of the Oregon Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) program that was developed by OSU Extension in English and Spanish. This year’s goal is to mail seed kits to 3,500 individuals or households and serve thousands of teachers and groups in Oregon, said Lauren Tobey, Food Hero coordinator.

“We want to grow food together and share gardening tips and experiences to learn together,” Tobey said. “Food Hero’s bottom-line goal is to increase fruit and vegetable intake and access among all Oregonians.”

For kids, digital lessons will be released every Thursday from early April through mid-June, first through Growing Healthy Kids, a garden-themed nutrition-education curriculum developed at OSU, then the Explore Oregon Bees virtual toolkit. The lesson plans were developed in partnership with the Oregon Bee Project and OSU horticulture faculty. Students will learn about food-related gardening, how bees help make healthy food and how to identify several of Oregon’s bees.



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Throughout summer and fall, participants will receive a monthly Grow This! Oregon Garden Challenge email with gardening information, harvest recipes and storage tips. Challenge information will also be available in English and Spanish on the Food Hero gardening page.

The individual/household kits will include seeds for bunching onion, cilantro, kale, mesclun (lettuce mix) and a flower that encourages pollination. As they have been in the past, the seeds were donated to Extension by Bi-Mart Stores Inc.

The kits also include a bookmark with a link with guidance on how to plant the seeds, either in the ground or in a container.

Oregon AgLink, a new partner in 2022, will host three potato-related events showing how Oregon potato farmers plant seeds, harvesting potatoes and how potatoes can be cooked.

“We have data that salad is in the top five favorite vegetables among Oregonians,” Tobey said, “so you can make a salad out of all of the vegetables.”

The partnership with the Oregon Potato Commission is the result of a nearly \$175,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Oregon Potato Commission collaboration will fund the inclusion of seed potatoes, soil and grow bags in the classroom kits.

The Grow This! Garden Challenge originated with a donation in 2019 of 800 seed packets from Bi-Mart. Those packets were separated, counted and packaged to make 14,000 individual baggies to include in 3,500 seed kits, using the West Virginia University Extension Service Grow This! Challenge as a model.

Mandy Hatfield, Extension nutrition educator for Douglas County, said the original intent was to provide seeds for school gardens across the state. In 2020, Bi-Mart donated more packets, precipitating the need to further expand the program.

For more than a decade, Food Hero has been used in communities and schools across Oregon, building children’s cooking skills through sharing the recipes and sampling new foods.

Food Hero recipes are tested according to criteria, such as overall flavor, color and texture. The meals are low-cost and feature easy to find ingredients, easy to follow instructions and minimal preparation time. Recipes and cooking tips are also shared through a Food Hero monthly publication in Spanish and English.

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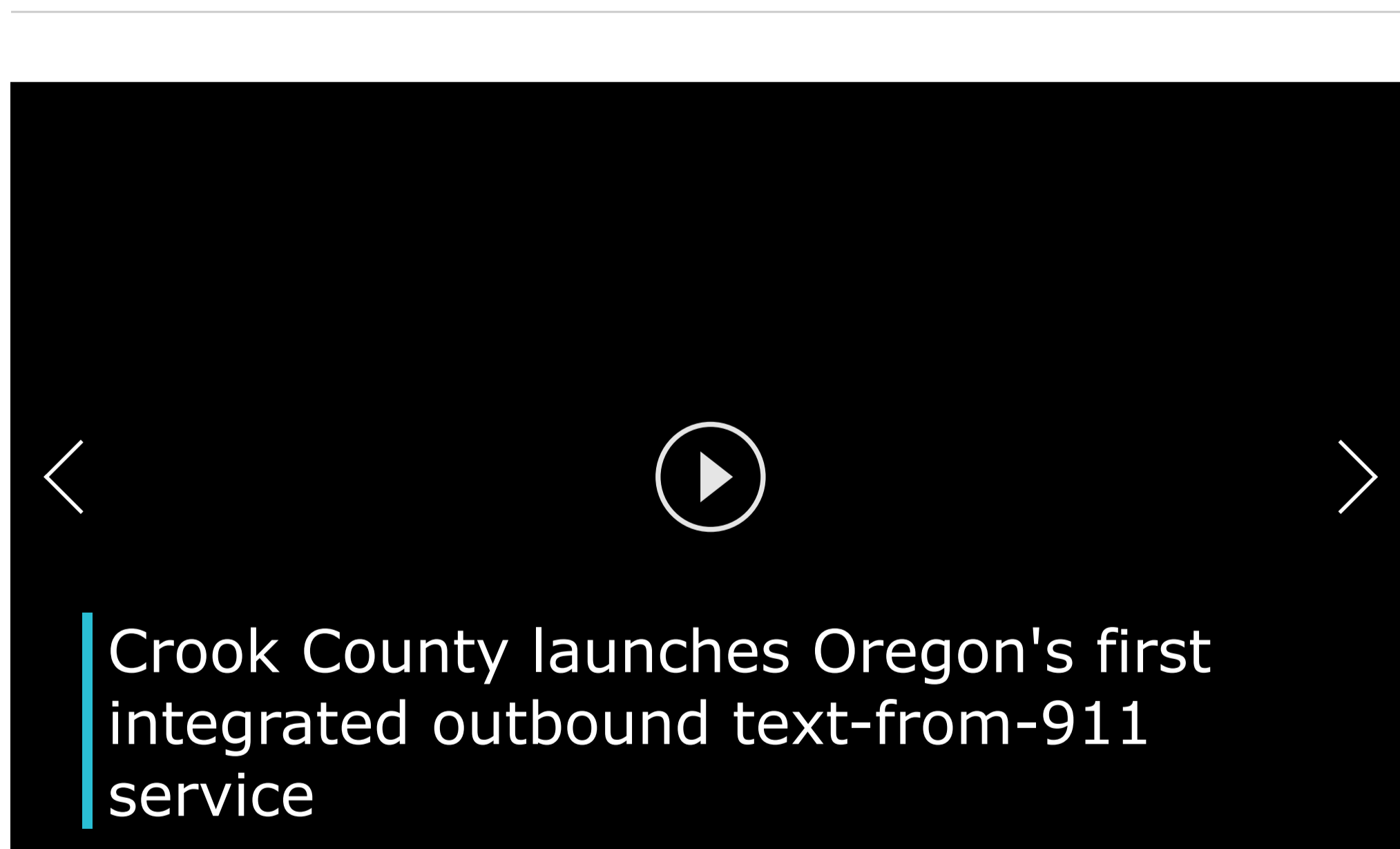
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joe_bidens_nose says:
December 13, 2021 at 8:36 PM

Good idea. Do what you can help feed your family despite Bidenflation. And...Home grown veggies taste way better than store bought. Especially heirloom tomatoes. My favorite.

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