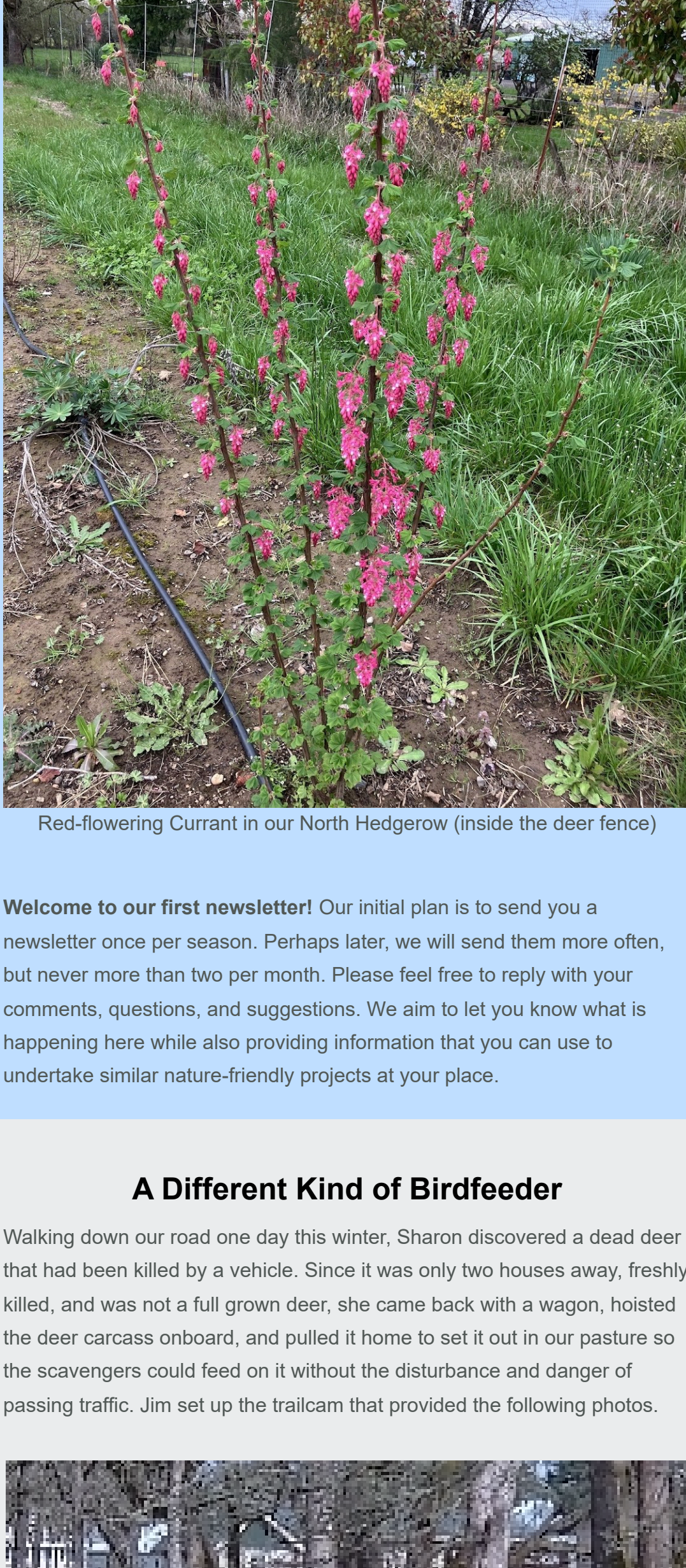


News from the Living Earth Nature Sanctuary Spring 2025



Red-flowering Currant in our North Hedgerow (inside the deer fence)

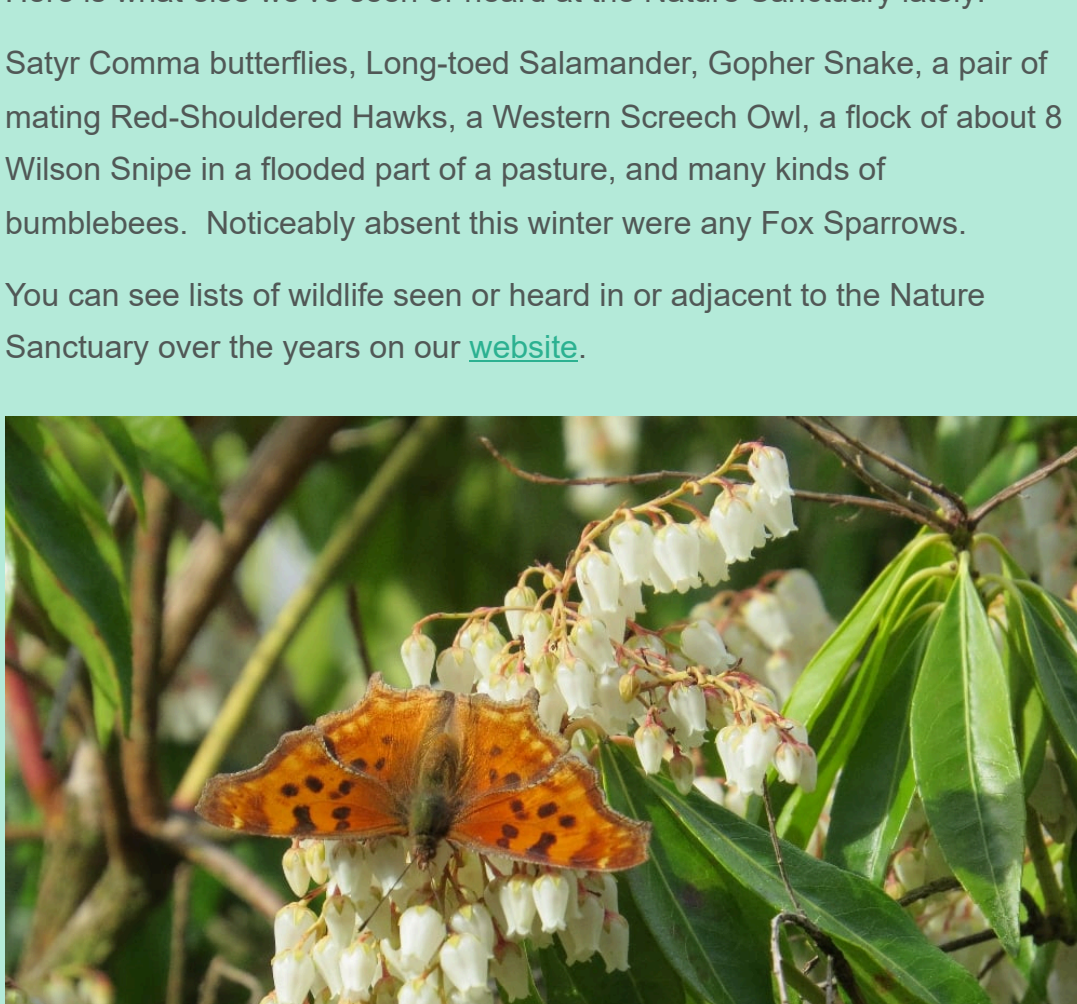
Welcome to our first newsletter! Our initial plan is to send you a newsletter once per season. Perhaps later, we will send them more often, but never more than two per month. Please feel free to reply with your comments, questions, and suggestions. We aim to let you know what is happening here while also providing information that you can use to undertake similar nature-friendly projects at your place.

A Different Kind of Birdfeeder

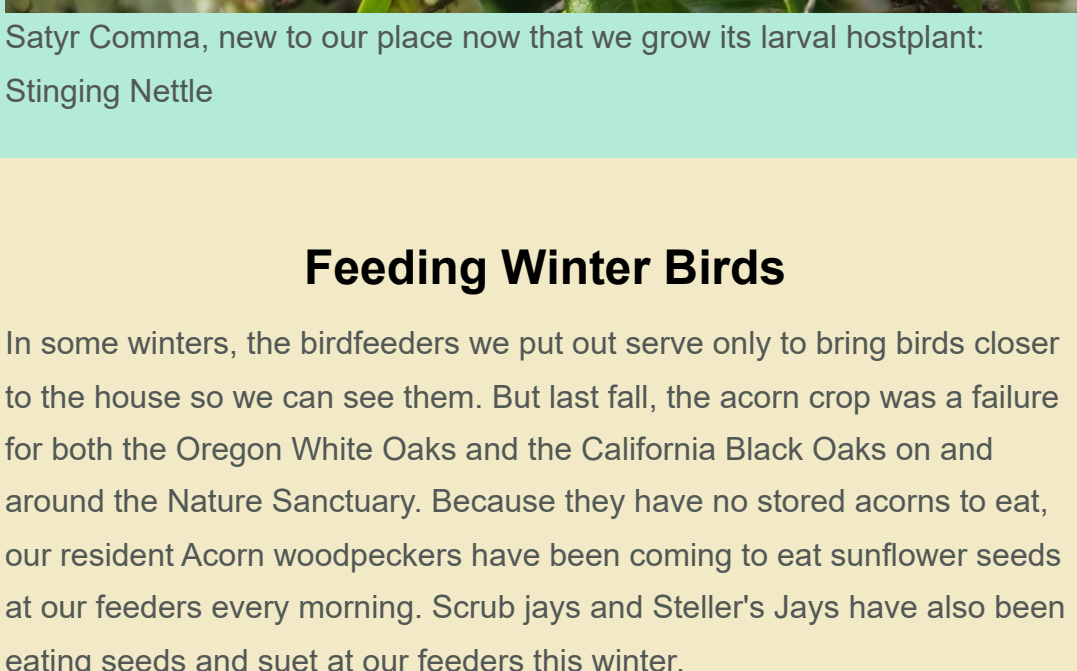
Walking down our road one day this winter, Sharon discovered a dead deer that had been killed by a vehicle. Since it was only two houses away, freshly killed, and was not a full grown deer, she came back with a wagon, hoisted the deer carcass onboard, and pulled it home to set it out in our pasture so the scavengers could feed on it without the disturbance and danger of passing traffic. Jim set up the trailcam that provided the following photos.



Common Raven and Turkey Vulture



Immature Bald Eagle (one of two seen)



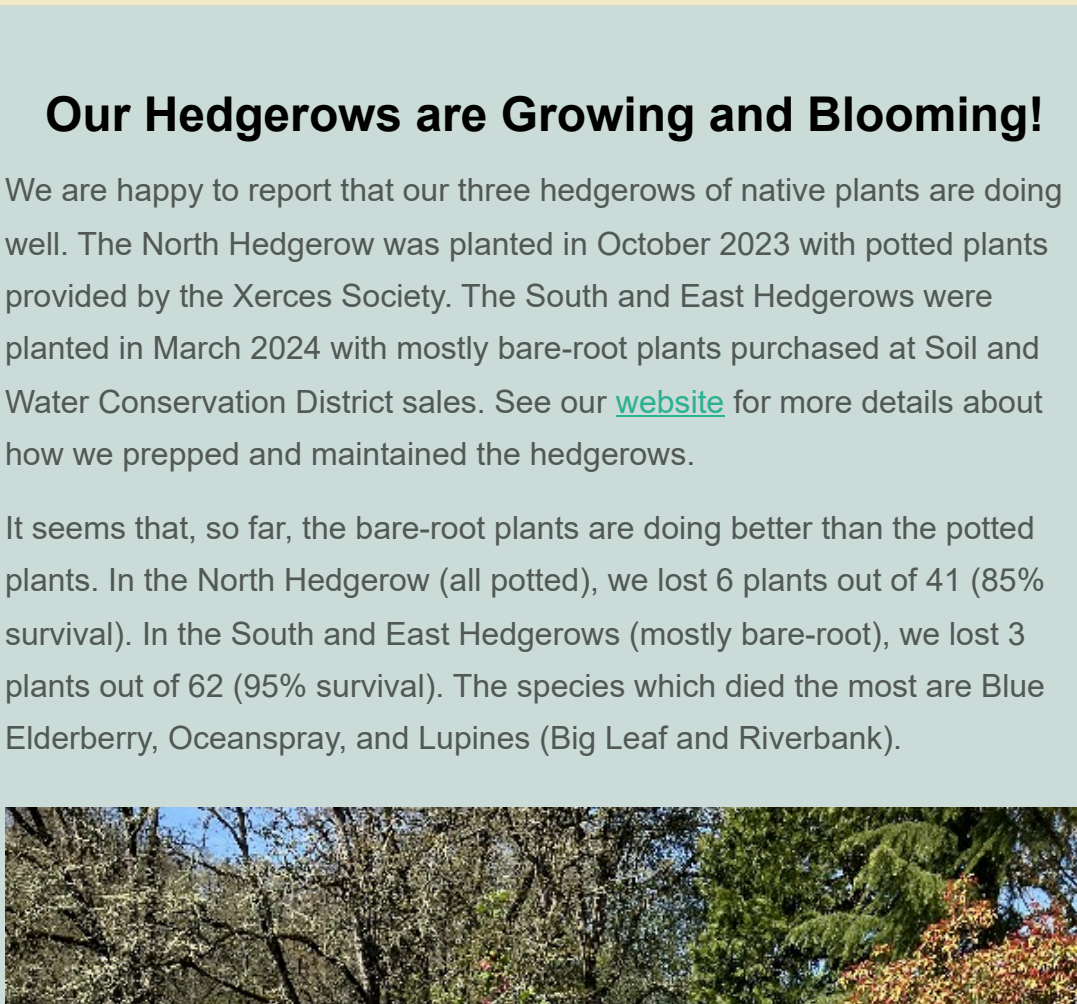
Gray Foxes

In addition to these animals, a Great Horned Owl, two deer and an opossum visited the carcass.

Other Interesting Sightings

Here is what else we've seen or heard at the Nature Sanctuary lately:
Satyr Comma butterflies, Long-toed Salamander, Gopher Snake, a pair of mating Red-Shouldered Hawks, a Western Screech Owl, a flock of about 8 Wilson Snipe in a flooded part of a pasture, and many kinds of bumblebees. Noticeably absent this winter were any Fox Sparrows.

You can see lists of wildlife seen or heard in or adjacent to the Nature Sanctuary over the years on our [website](#).



Satyr Comma, new to our place now that we grow its larval hostplant: Stinging Nettle

Feeding Winter Birds

In some winters, the birdfeeders we put out serve only to bring birds closer to the house so we can see them. But last fall, the acorn crop was a failure for both the Oregon White Oaks and the California Black Oaks on and around the Nature Sanctuary. Because they have no stored acorns to eat, our resident Acorn woodpeckers have been coming to eat sunflower seeds at our feeders every morning. Scrub jays and Steller's Jays have also been eating seeds and suet at our feeders this winter.

Did you know that you can make your own suet to feed the birds? If you buy lamb, mutton, or beef fat from local farms that sell pasture-raised meat, the suet you make yourself will be much healthier for the wild birds than mass-produced suet from the store (undoubtedly from CAFOs). Don't use pork or chicken fat because it is too soft and might melt onto bird feathers (plus make a mess on your deck). See our [website](#) for details of how we make our own suet.



Rendering sheep fat into suet using a crockpot

Our Hedgerows are Growing and Blooming!

We are happy to report that our three hedgerows of native plants are doing well. The North Hedgerow was planted in October 2023 with potted plants provided by the Xerces Society. The South and East Hedgerows were planted in March 2024 with mostly bare-root plants purchased at Soil and Water Conservation District sales. See our [website](#) for more details about how we prepped and maintained the hedgerows.

It seems that, so far, the bare-root plants are doing better than the potted plants. In the North Hedgerow (all potted), we lost 6 plants out of 41 (85% survival). In the South and East Hedgerows (mostly bare-root), we lost 3 plants out of 62 (95% survival). The species which died the most are Blue Elderberry, Oceanspray, and Lupines (Big Leaf and Riverbank).



Blue Elderberry blooming in North Hedgerow (inside the deer fence)

Battling Poison Oak

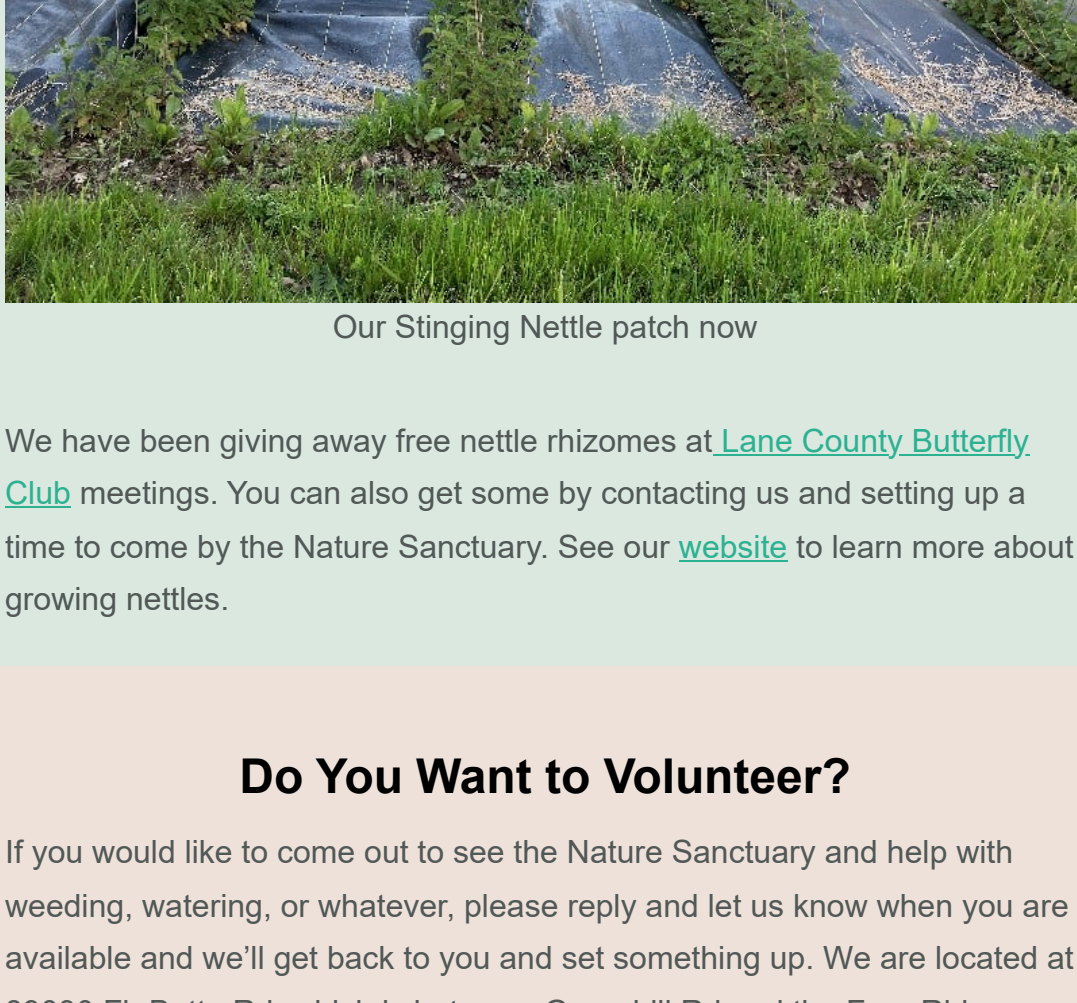
One native plant that we are trying to keep out of our hedgerows is poison oak. While poison oak surely has many valuable contributions to make to the ecosystem, both Jim and Sharon are highly allergic. But we are refusing to fight poison oak with poison: we are controlling it by cutting and digging only, no herbicides.

Last winter, Sharon cut out two garbage cans full of poison oak along our South Hedgerow/fenceline and managed to avoid getting a bad case of it. This year she was not so lucky. Her first job this year was taking out the front fence next to our East Hedgerow which had poison oak growing in about 20 feet of the fencing. The poison oak had grown big enough to send roots under the mowed strip and now poison oak was sprouting up in the hedgerow. Her second job was to finish cutting poison oak along the south fenceline so that it wouldn't flop over the South Hedgerow and so that we could cut the English Ivy climbing up the oak trees which lean over from the neighbor's property. Mission accomplished! Two more garbage cans of poison oak are ready for the dump.

To learn more about Poison Oak, check out the [Rasor Park website](#).



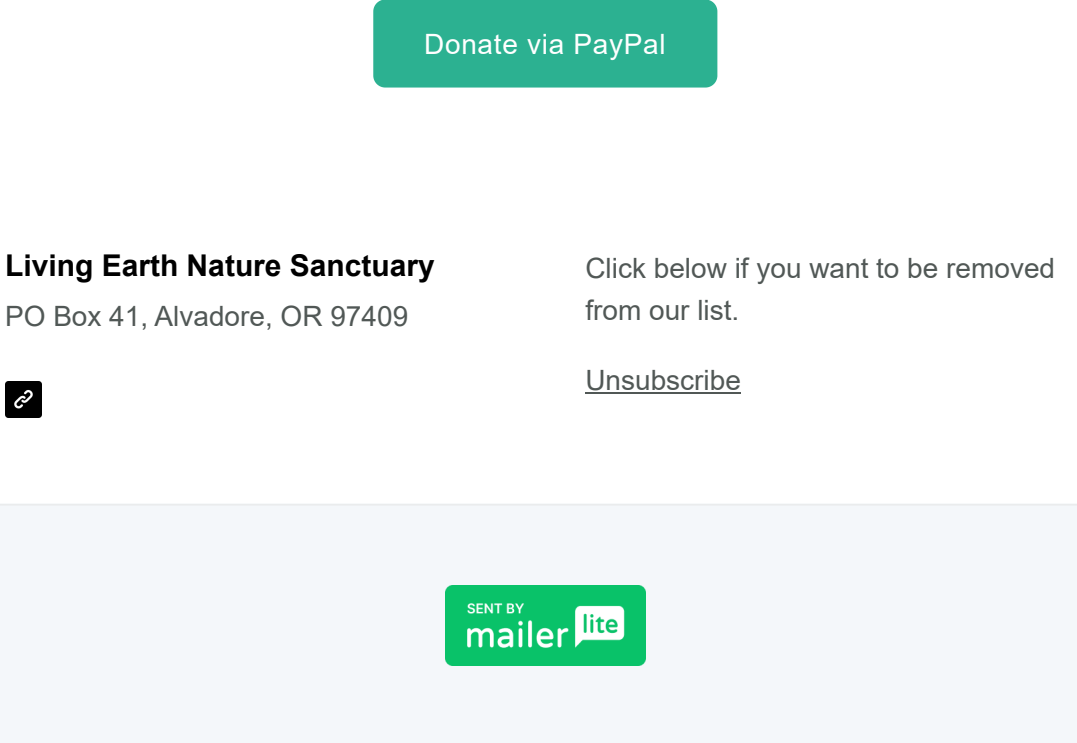
The East Hedgerow after fence removal and mowing



The English Ivy on these oak trees will die now that we have removed its connection to the ground

The Milkweed is Up!

Starting in the fall of 2023, we experimented with a new way to grow milkweed. Since milkweed emerges from the ground later than many other plants, small milkweed plants can easily get smothered out by grass and weeds. We want to grow a large patch of milkweed but we don't have a lot of time and energy for weeding and we have decided not to use herbicides, so we decided to try occultation (tarping) to control weeds in and around our milkweed patch. The idea is to keep the area under a tarp while the milkweed is dormant so the weeds never get a head start on the milkweed and then we only need to weed the area for the five months that the milkweed is green.



Our Milkweed Patch in July 2024 (with some volunteer Calendulas)

Over the past few weeks, we have been checking under the tarp to look for milkweed sprouts and on April 13 we found them, so we pulled off the tarp. See our [website](#) for more details about our milkweed growing experience.

Showy Milkweed which came up under the tarp

Free Starts of Stinging Nettle

Adjacent to the milkweed patch, we are growing 6 forty-foot rows of stinging nettle. We chose to grow this native plant because it is the larval host plant for 5 species of local butterflies. However, it is not a plant that is easy to find at native plant sales. So we planted a lot of it so that we can give away starts and get other people to grow it too. In addition to feeding caterpillars, nettles are about the healthiest thing people can eat and it is easy to grow.

Our Stinging Nettle patch now

We have been giving away free nettle rhizomes at [Lane County Butterfly Club](#) meetings. You can also get some by contacting us and setting up a time to come by the Nature Sanctuary. See our [website](#) to learn more about growing nettles.

Do You Want to Volunteer?

If you would like to come out to see the Nature Sanctuary and help with weeding, watering, or whatever, please reply and let us know when you are available and we'll get back to you and set something up. We are located at 89030 Fir Butte Rd, which is between Greenhill Rd and the Fern Ridge Reservoir, about 15 minutes west of downtown. While you are here, you might want to enjoy one of the many nice places to walk in our neighborhood (along the Amazon Canal or in the Fern Ridge Wildlife Area.) Also, depending on the time of year, we might have extra fruits or vegetables to share with you if you can help harvest. Currently we have extra rhubarb, lettuce, nettles, kohlrabi, and sunchokes.

Water Bill Moving in Legislature

In our last email from the farm, we told about how our new Water Master is now enforcing a formerly unenforced law that prohibits selling anything grown with irrigation from your well unless you have a water right. Since the Nature Sanctuary land does not have a water right, this would mean that we cannot sell nettle, milkweed, or other native plants grown here.

Good news! A change in this law is moving forward in Salem. HB 3372 will allow anyone with a well to irrigate up to 1/2 acre and sell whatever they grow there. This bill has moved out of committee and will go for a floor vote in the House next week. You can learn more [here](#).

Thank you for your interest!

To make a tax-deductible donation to our nonprofit organization via PayPal, click the button below:

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Living Earth Nature Sanctuary
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