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Please contact Greeley Wells,
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WHOW!

BY THALIA TRUESDELL

WHOW! We are alive and kicking here in the Applegate. Women Helping Other Women (WHOW) is a group of versatile Applegate women eager to trade work hours to accomplish burdensome, tedious, or challenging jobs in our homes and on our properties. Most of us are workaholics by nature, so when four of us get together to tackle a task we can accomplish an amazing amount of work at a three-hour work party.

The group meets monthly for a potluck planning meeting during which time we record our credits and debits in the WHOW notebook, laugh a lot, and plan several work parties for the coming month. Usually three women attend each three-hour work party. The jobs we can tackle range from painting, rock wall building, garden drip system installation, ditch digging, tree pruning, window washing, weed pulling and housecleaning to computer help. At the planning meeting, most women choose one job from the month's selection based on interest, convenient scheduling, expertise and/or tools available—or the host's reputation for preparing an excellent lunch!

Often the host will offer a job that requires little or no direction on her part. The workers know just what to do. Sometimes a host will write out an extensive "Honey-Do" list and women are invited to select a job that appeals to them, check it off, and then start another. In three hours, the list is done!

Other times the work for the day is a real education. WHOW women have learned to stucco a straw bale home, install and texture sheetrock, build a cob house and raised beds. We share knowledge of composting, gardening, carpentry, fuels reduction, and even interior design. We share not only our talents, but also our tools, reducing the need to buy or rent tools for an occasional job. One woman owns a carpet shampooer, another a tree pruner.



From left: Karen Giese, Sioux Rogers, Thalia Truesdell, Kaye Clayton

Need a power washer? Just ask.

We utilize a system of credits and debits similar to a checkbook to maintain balance within the group. Every three-hour work party worked earns one credit. Likewise, the host is debited a credit for each woman who comes to help her. At the planning meeting someone will cry out, "Oh, no! I am a negative three!" Someone else will rejoice that she is a "plus two" and decide to splurge and have a party to divide the irises and weed the strawberries.

The work parties often start at an early hour in the summer to beat the heat, later in the winter, and always end with a delectable lunch prepared by the host. Frequently workers leave with a bag of cuttings from the flower bed, fresh lettuce and arugula from the garden, seeds, eggs, or a recipe for the dessert they just shared.

WHOW welcomes new members at any time. The club has no dues. We are a very diverse group of able-bodied women from all walks of life, all ages and backgrounds. What we have in common is a desire for camaraderie while we work. We meet the second Thursday of each month at the home of Thalia Truesdell at 6:30 pm for our potluck planning meeting. Call Thalia at 541-899-8741 with any questions.

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thalia@thaliaweaver.com

Yoga for the garden

BY TERI AUKER BECKER

As the weather gets warmer and days longer, the outdoors summons many of us to come outside and plant anything from tomatoes and peppers to impatiens and petunias. The first bloom of spring is like a gun at the starting line. Out we go, full of great intentions, but out of shape, to take on the some of the most demanding tasks of the year. Unlike ballet dancers who warm up for hours to perform for a half hour, gardeners dash outside to spend three or four hours crouching over flower beds, weeding, digging, and pushing wheelbarrows. Then comes the ice packs and Motrin for bruised muscles and stiff joints—you get the picture!

The ancient art of yoga and gardening have many parallels. Both require agility and physical strength. They each require discipline and persistence. Gardening and yoga are both known to enhance calmness and balance. Both are in harmony with nature and hope for growth and change. Yoga can teach a person the skills with which to avoid the strains and injuries that come from gardening. It teaches us to become more aware of the muscles involved, to move more slowly and, most of all, to remember to breathe. Breathing sounds so simple, but every one of us tends to inhale and hold our breath during exertion. Yoga teaches us to focus on breathing, to let out deep sighs, to relax.

Some of the best stretches for gardeners are the ones learned by yoga beginners. Most yoga sessions begin with relaxation exercises such as simple breathing, neck and shoulder rolls, wrist and hand warm-ups, gentle back bending, side stretches and chest openers. Some warm-up examples include

stretching out your hands by opening the fingers wide, followed by making a fist. As you close the hand, roll each finger toward the palm, starting with the pinkie finger. While working in the garden, you will no doubt be stooping and bending over a lot. The back and legs will need to be warmed up and strengthened. Some good warm-ups include gentle lunges, either with the back leg straight (runners stretch) or resting the back knee on the ground (low lunge). Remember never to let the front of your knee go farther forward than your ankle. For the back, you can do cat and dog stretches. Starting on your hands and knees, round your back up and drop your chin and tailbone. Then reverse that by lifting the tailbone and arching your back, chin and head rolling up last.

There are many choices and many different styles of yoga classes offered in the Rogue Valley. If you have never done yoga before, keep in mind your age, your lifestyle and your body type, then take the time to choose the right style of yoga for you. If you feel that you do not have the time for a class, there are many books and DVDs available. Be sure to look for a beginner's version. Two that I recommend are "Yoga for Gardeners with Gail Dubinsky" (DVD) and *Yoga for Your Life* by Margaret D. Pierce and Martin G. Pierce (book). And remember, spend the last few minutes of your gardening day just looking at and appreciating the fruits of your labor.

Teri Auker Becker • 541-846-9149

Editor's note: Teri Becker is a yoga instructor and gardener in the Applegate Valley.