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Master Gardeners honored at banquet

By Kathleen Alaks of the Daily Courier

The Josephine County Master Gardeners honored the cream of its crop at an Italian-themed awards banquet Thursday evening.

"You all deserve a pat on the back and special recognition for the amount of time and dedication you have given to this organization," said board president and master of ceremonies Alan Cook to the more than 100 people gathered in the newly remodeled Oregon State University Extension Auditorium. "I want to thank each and every one of you for your commitment of time and energy in this great effort called gardening."

KATHLEEN ALAKS/Daily Courier
Alan Cook awards the Golden Trowel to Lori and Peter Pernarelli at Thursday's Italian themed Master Gardeners awards banquet. The Pernarellis coordinated the Master Gardener booth at the Growers' Market this year.

The award recipients were:

• Pattye and Craig Ingram, Master Gardeners of the Year Award. "They have been immersed in the greenhouses for a long time," said Cook, adding that they were not there to accept their award because they were water skiing at Lake Havasu, a mantra that became an ongoing joke throughout the evening.

• Lori and Peter Pernarelli, The GoldenTrowel Award. "This is something that's passed on year to year. We have a long tradition of honoring the person who has given and given and given without asking, whining or crying," Cook said. "Lori and Peter have dedicated their summer to the Grower's Market project...and never without a smile on their faces."

• Ruth and Art Reel, Behind the Scenes Award. 'This is given to the person who you don't really see out there, but who puts in a lot of work and who's heart is poured into this organization without equivocation," Cook said. Ruth Reel puts together the Master Gardener newsletter. Art Reel is the media outreach coordinator.

Staff of the OSU Extension office were honored for their contributions:

• Lyn Phelps, OSU Extension office coordinator, and Lorena Becker, OSU Extension office specialist. "You know we can't do it without you. There's the left hand," Cook said pointing to Phelps, "and there's the right hand," gesturing to Lorena. "We couldn't operate, Extension couldn't operate without you two ladies."

• Tal Blankenship, the outgoing OSU Extension agent, who "brought a host of interest and excitement to the new (Master Gardener) class."

• Bob Reynolds, the incoming OSU Extension agent, "a diamond."

• Chris Names, 4-H and youth development

• Sue Hunt, 4-H

• John Punches, OSU Extension staff chairman

Other individuals who were honored:

• Jim Smith, longtime Master Gardener who retired from the plant clinic last month. "He was in the plant clinic every Tuesday for forever, it seems," said Cook.

• Master Gardeners who volunteered to prune trees and shrubs for Paint Your Heart Out. "I think it's one of the most enjoyable projects we're involved with," said Chuck Mould, the project coordinator.

Volunteers also were honored for their volunteer hours:

• Skeeter Guardione, 184.5 hours; Jim Porter, 198 hours; Julie Kaszuba, 202 hours; Craig Ingram, 218 hours; Jim Smith, 257 hours; Barb Finch, 287 hours; Lori Pernarelli, 324.4 hours; Peter Pernarelli, 325.8 hours. Ruth Reel, 447 hours; Al Cook, 498 hours; Sandy Stephens, 828 hours; Wilma Christian, 879.6 hours.

Forty-six students graduated from the 2009 Master Gardener class. Each received a certificateand badge, a $10 gift certificate from the Grange Co-op and a 1 pound bag of mycorrhizae.