

PLACES TO GO...PEOPLE TO SEE...THINGS TO DO

TAKE ONE!

WILLAMETTE VALLEY *Life*

Volume 6 Issue 3 / Summer 2015
(Display until October 1, 2015)
WillametteValleyLife.com

Managing Zena Forest

Page 8

Gilgamesh's Mama Beer

Page 10

DAYCATION **P.14** |
DESTINATION: WILLAMETTE
HERITAGE CENTER

Start. Do. Now. **P.16** |
SAY "YES" MORE

VINEYARD **P.18** |
WINE TASTING AT
ITS PEAK

EAT **P.20**
ORZO CHEESECAKE
FRUIT SALAD



MANAGING ZENA Forest

PHOTOS & STORY BY SUZANNE REINGANS



Sarah Deumling, forest manager, and a venerable Oregon white oak.



(Above) A sustainable forest grows a valuable crop, lumber—but it also produces clean drinking water and a safe haven for diverse flora and fauna. (Left) Ben Deumling, sawyer at Zena Forest, measures timber destined to become oak flooring.

Because Sarah Deumling manages a forest, the future looks brighter. Because Ben, her son, takes the oaks from that forest and mills wood for local use, the future has a smile.

The future looks bright because at Zena Forest, a 1300-acre forestland in the Eola Hills near Salem, the Deumling family's goals are to nurture the woodland in all its health and diversity while harvesting trees for milling on-site. The native white oak and bigleaf maple gleaned from the forest would have been "thrown down the canyon" in the crush to harvest Douglas firs in the former days of regional logging. Now, it's made into gleaming wood for local floors, furniture and cabinetry.

Ben Deumling, a tall man with a ready smile, started Zena Forest Products in 2007 at age 25. He wanted to find a better outlet for Zena's hardwood logs than the industrial sawmills, where prices were low and good management practices weren't rewarded. His brother, Reuben Deumling, designed the European-style mill building, which is made of timber harvested on-site.

Ben spends his days eagerly overseeing the process of turning trees into lumber. "People ask me what I do for a living, and when I tell them I'm a sawyer, they look puzzled," he says. It's an unusual occupation. One part he enjoys is watching the beautiful grain

of a tree revealed as the saw makes its first cuts.

"Most days I think I'm the luckiest guy in the world. I get to work with big machines in the middle of a beautiful forest," says Deumling. He is currently adding to the scope of his mill production by refurbishing and operating the planers and other work-horse machines common a century ago.

While Ben runs the sawmill, his mother, Sarah, manages the wood source, Zena Forest. Zena Forest is one of the largest contiguous blocks of mixed conifer forest in the central Willamette Valley. It includes areas of endangered oak savannah and oak woodland. Protected by a conservation

ement, it's stipulated that the land will continue as a working forest in perpetuity. Several threatened and endangered species safely live there. When local citizens turn on the water tap, they reap the benefit of living near a vibrant forestland that filters and stores their water before releasing it to fill reservoirs and wells.

Petite and cheerful, Sarah works hard in the forest, planting young trees, hacking away invasive blackberry vines and overseeing restoration and logging. She wields a machete for hacking back weeds; she doesn't use chemicals.

"The way we do forestry is no clear-cutting, no chemicals, no soil compaction," says Sarah. These "three Cs" are the standard in most industrial forestland, where these damaging practices are employed to increase profit.

"We aim to show that ecology and economy are one and the same in the long run," says Sarah. "It's not an either/or thing." She believes that with care, a forest can produce wood efficiently and keep producing forever.

"As time goes on, the highest value of forests will be clean air, clean water, biodiversity, even recreation. These are going to be more important than getting a few more board feet."

By making the best use of local hardwoods, the Deumlings provide jobs in Polk County while preserving a vibrant forest habitat that may become

"Most days I think I'm the luckiest guy in the world. I get to work with big machines in the middle of a beautiful forest," says Deumling. He is currently adding to the scope of his mill production by refurbishing and operating the planers and other work-horse machines common a century ago.

scarce in the future. In addition, their forest allows locals to buy wood from a source that is sustainable and local.

"All wood, no matter what kind – even particle board – came from somebody's backyard," says Ben. "That's what I'm about: engaging people to think about the source."

If that backyard source is a carefully managed, healthy forest like Zena, the future looks bright. **W**

Want to tour Zena Forest Products or view their selection of products? Visit their website at www.zenaforest.com.

Suzanne Reingans, a mother of four grown children, likes reading, writing and living a home-centered life in her native town of Dallas, Oregon. Between rain showers, she hikes or mountain bikes in the mossy forests of the Coast Range west of town, where she keeps an eye out for edible fungi and any other wild flora and fauna.



New-sawn oak boards dry for a year in this breezy, shady shelter.



Sarah Deumling shares her insights about managing healthy forests with a tour group.