

Taking a Bite at The Garden

By Lynn Welp [Corvallis Gazette-Times](#) May 8, 2004

Nichols Garden Nursery of Albany, in collaboration with One Green World out of Molalla, brings to the Oregon Garden - all things edible.

The Edible Garden is the newest addition to the Home Demonstration Garden at the Oregon Garden in Silverton. It will feature plants that look good in the landscape and taste good too!

Here you will see the latest trends in vegetables and herbs from Nichols, complemented by One Green World's bounty of fruiting trees, vines and unusual ornamentals.

"Those plants not edible will at least be 'useful' attracting beneficial insects and such," said Rose Marie Nichols McGee, Benton County Master Gardener and owner of Nichols.

For those of you who have not had visited the facility since its grand opening in June 2001, the Oregon Garden has become the premier botanical display garden in the Pacific Northwest and one of the region's most popular tourist destinations.

Nestled in the foothills just south of Silverton, visitors meander through 70 acres of beautifully landscaped pathways to explore 18 specialty gardens, including the Home Demonstration Garden, as well as must-see spectacular fountains and water features.

Perhaps one of the most impressive water features at the Oregon Garden is a series of terraced ponds with cascading water and pools whose source comes from the City of Silverton's water treatment plant. The treated water is cleansed as it travels through wetland plants creating a thriving habitat for wildlife. The treated water then flows into a holding tank to be used in irrigating the garden grounds.

Throughout the Oregon Garden, visitors get to see the latest developments in agriculture and plants developed specifically for the Willamette Valley.

At the Home Demonstration Garden, visitors can talk with the pros and take home ideas and tips for their own gardens. Each nursery represented demonstrates a different concept in home gardening, including hardscapes, trellising techniques, fountains, or unusual plants.

Locally grown

For their part, Rose Marie and her husband, Keane McGee, want to stress that since the Willamette Valley is a hotbed for new plant varieties, the edible garden will be used as an opportunity to showcase Oregon-developed seeds and plants.

"Seed varieties from Oregon State Horticulture program, such as Legend tomato, Oregon Sugar Pod II peas, and Summertime lettuce are some of the varieties we will be growing and tasting in the edible garden this summer, Rose Marie said.

Alan Kapuler from Peace Seeds in Corvallis has bred Metamorph marigold and sunflower Supreme Mix, considered by many to be the finest open-pollinated sunflower mixture available.

Frank Morton, of Shoulder to Shoulder Farm in Philomath, is introducing new vegetable selections every year. Each year the edible garden will introduce the latest varieties of edibles and 'useful' ornamentals to the public.

Garden design

Landscape architects Jude Hobbs and Liz Deck from Eugene designed the edible garden. The plantings in it will feature an aesthetically pleasing way to bring nutritious and delicious food within a few steps of your back door.

Divided into several small sections the edible garden features:

€ Tea garden - with plants grown for brewing tea, such as *Camellia sinensis*, a true tea that does well here in the northwest. "Tea Breeze" has a white flower and "Blushing Maiden" has a pink flower.

€ Insectory garden - highlights plants grown to attract pollinators and predators. *Limnanthes douglassii*, better known as Meadow Foam or poached egg flower because of its yellow center and white petal edging, attracts the syrphid fly as well as bees.

€ Salad circle - contains salad greens, tomatoes, nasturtiums, and more. Bright reds, such as Outrageous Romaine lettuce and loose leaf Merlot will provide vibrant color to this 15-foot diameter bed.

€ Ecology lawn - For those reluctant to get involved with intensive mowing, spraying, fertilizing and irrigating here is an alternative that comes from a carefully blended turf mixture of grass, sweet clovers, wildflowers and herbs.

€ Straw bale garden - features lettuce and peas that grow in a bale of straw. It's as simple as moistening the wheat straw, heating up the bioactivity, then fluffing it up a bit, sprinkle on some compost, and keep it watered.

€ For those things that climb - trellis panels will feature shade loving vines on the north side of the arbor and sun-loving ones on the south.

€ Ornamental grains are both edible and attractive. This section of the garden will feature golden flax, Job's tears, Quinoa, and ornamental wheat.

Locally developed, the *Echinacea purpurea*, Ruby Giant, has a long-lived bloom that attracts butterflies. It was introduced by Terra Nova, a wholesale nursery in Portland, one of the world's leading ornamental perennial developers.

"Take a look at their website (<http://www.terravanurseries.com>) and you will be astounded as to how many of the recently introduced choice perennials came from Terranova - right here in Oregon," insists McGee.

Jim Gilbert and Lorraine Gardner, One Green World owners, contributed some unusual plants such as: columnar apples, Scarlet Sentinel, that look like brussel sprouts with fruit growing up the stem; a dogwood, Cornelian cherry, Cornus mas, that is valued for its tasty fruit as well as for its ornamental value; Sea Berry, Hippophae rhamnoides, prized for its attractive, narrow, grayish-green foliage and fall display of large clusters of bright orange-yellow berries. It is valued for its high Vitamin C content (seven times more than lemons,) plus Vitamin A and E.

Garden prep

Oregonians are blessed to have such a beautiful garden at their fingertips. But beauty doesn't come easy. Preparing the hard-packed red clay soil at the Home Demonstration Garden was a challenge that entailed several work parties of local Master Gardeners, volunteers, as well as the nursery owners to accomplish. They literally had to use a jackhammer with a spade attachment to 'soften' it a bit, then a spading fork and rototiller to mix in the amendments.

With not much topsoil to begin with, amendments had to be added in an effort to help improve the soil. Used coffee grounds were donated by Allann Brothers, a coffee shop in Corvallis; compost, chicken & steer manure was donated by Whitney Farms out of Independence; and Shepard Smith of Soilsmith Service in Corvallis/Philomath gave two huge applications of compost tea.

Earthworms from a compost display already at the Oregon Garden will be added later to help in the process of opening up and aerating the soil.

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