

## The Edible Garden at the Oregon Gardens

by Jude Hobbs and Rose Marie Nichols



Entry to Edible Gardens

It's worth traveling off the beaten path (I-5) to visit the Oregon Gardens, a 70 acre Botanical Park located in Silverton. It all started in the 1940s when the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) came up with the idea. It took 40 years, but in the '80's the City of Salem took hold of the idea and started contemplating the Master Plan which was completed in 1996. The only feasible cost effective way to pull something this momentous was to partner with many organizations and businesses, such as: governmental and tourism officials, local citizens, industry, educational institutions. Ground was broken in 1997 and since then it has been a work-in-progress. This year is the fifth season for the garden and the plantings are developing in size and character.

The site was selected as a solution to the problem of where Silverton was to discharge its treated wastewater. From May to September the sophisticated water treatment process is utilized. Treated wastewater leaving the Silverton Wastewater Plant exceeds the stringent standards of EPA and Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality. The City discharges the treated wastewater to both Silver Creek and the Oregon Garden. The Garden recycles the water through landscaping irrigation and wetlands features.

There are 18 diverse specialty gardens all with unique characteristics. The Water Garden is 1060 feet long with sixteen terraces that fall over 37 feet of grade.

The Children's Garden is nearly an acre and has a Dinosaur Topiary, an amphitheater with a child pleasing echo-chamber, a Bamboo Grove and the Taper Tunnel. There many other theme gardens such as the Rose Garden, a Conifer Garden that is truly world class and the Sensory Garden.

Our involvement with the Nichols Garden Nursery/One Green World home demonstration garden has been to present to Oregonians and visitors from around the world how one can incorporate food, medicinal, bird attracting plants in a fun and educational display. The Edible Garden is the newest addition to the Home Demonstration Garden area. We are the showing off the latest trends in vegetables, fruits, vines and herbs of these premier growers.



Art in Edible Gardens

Co-designed by Jude Hobbs, of Cascadia Landscape Designs and Liz Deck a landscape Architecture student from the University of Oregon along with the plant providers, the renowned Nichol's Garden Nursery with Rose Marie Nichols McGee and One Green World's Jim Gilbert. Both of these nurseries are unique in the wide scope of plant species that they offer for the edible landscape. The Garden features plants with a purpose that are placed in beautiful design patterns.

The breeding efforts and plant material from other local grower's has contributed to this garden as well; Alan Kapuler from Peace Seeds in Corvallis has bred Metamorph marigold and Sunflower Supreme Mix, an exquisite example of open-pollinated sunflowers. His pioneering work on Oca and Yacon, both South American tubers can be enjoyed in the foreground of the garden. Frank Morton, of Wild Garden Seeds in Philomath, has been breeding beautiful and good tasting lettuces and garden greens which are showcased in the salad circle. Representing the research of the department of Horticulture at Oregon State University is Legend Tomato, the first ever late blight resistant tomato and Oregon Sugar Pod II the world's most widely grown edible pod pea.

Divided into several small sections the edible garden features:

\* A Tea garden - *Camellia sinensis*, our source of true tea, mints developed in Oregon and other herbs good for tea. An Insectory garden with plants that attract insects that are pollinators and others that harbor predators to insects that cause damage to plants. *Limnanthes douglassii*, Meadow Foam, attracts the predatory syrphid fly as well as bees.

The Salad circle - is a colorful exhibit of how to combine salad greens, tomatoes, nasturtiums. This is now replanted for fall with colorful kales, rainbow Swiss chard and lettuces. the nasturtiums are producing a glorious late season flash of color.

A small planting of Nichols Ecology lawn is an alternative turf mix of a low growing grass, nitrogen producing clovers, hardy yarrow and wild English daisies. It does not require a rigorous maintenance schedule and is fairly drought tolerant.

The straw bale garden has been a source of intense interest from garden visitors. This easy to grow display has featured lettuce, mesclun mixes, peas and green beans this season. Wheat straw bales provide the base, compost the seed bed and with a good dose of compost tea and legume inoculant for the peas and beans they've taken off and been very productive. One of our objectives is to demonstrate methods for those who garden in limited space. The bales and container plantings provide some new ideas for gardeners. The panels covered with growing vines are a way to gain privacy and shade while growing food in a small space.

The Edible Garden demonstrates what we can easily grow in the Pacific Northwest. A stroll through the garden gives one the opportunity to see what plants to combine with each other and possibilities to incorporate into the food gardeners own plot.

--  
You can contact Jude Hobbs at [hobbsj@efn.org](mailto:hobbsj@efn.org) or 541-342-1160