Bob Walchli walks through his field in Hermiston, Oregon, searching for a ripe watermelon.

“You want them not too high pitched or dull sounding,” he says.

Bob taps his hand on the melons. After finding the desired tone, he checks to see if it is symmetrical. He looks at the spot where the watermelon sat on the ground, making sure it is a creamy yellow color.

Bob pulls a knife from his pocket, pierces the melon and spins it around the knife, cracking it open on his knee and revealing the deep pink fruit. He carves out the heart of the watermelon—the sweetest part—and hands it over, smiling.

It’s mid-July and, from the taste of this melon, it is time for the harvest.

The Hermiston Melon Co. has supplied watermelons to major retailers for years and is a prominent name throughout the Northwest when it comes to quality watermelons.

Bob’s family is deep-rooted in the Hermiston farming industry. His grandfather came from Switzerland in the 1920s and raised cows and chickens. Bob’s parents, Skip and Sherry Walchli, started Walchli Farms in 1957 and grew produce and hay. Bob and his brother, Tom, have continued the family’s farming tradition.

“That’s what we grew up with,” says Bob. “Our father put work ethic in our heads since we were little kids. He taught us to do a good job, work hard and be proud of what you do.”

Bob developed the Hermiston Melon Co. in 1986 as an offshoot of Walchli Farms to promote the farm’s melons. His watermelons can be found throughout the Pacific Northwest, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Nevada and Canada.

Bob’s wife, Rochelle, sells their watermelons and other produce at 10 farmers markets each week during the summer.

Although the area is most noted for its wheat and alfalfa production, watermelons have taken seed in Hermiston and added a rich identity to the Eastern Oregon city.

It is hard to miss the town’s welcome sign featuring a watermelon, the water tower along Highway 395 that has a slice of watermelon painted on its side or the “Hermiston you can grow here” logo.

“Watermelons bring tremendous value into the area,” says horticulturalist George Clough, who retired from the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center but still works there as a volunteer.

The crop creates jobs, instills pride in the city and is a perfect fruit for the area’s growing conditions, George says.

“The soil manages the moisture really well,” he notes.

George says watermelons respire, or lose their sugar content, at night. Hermiston has high heat during the day, which increases the sugar content through photosynthesis, and is cool at night, which helps slow the respiration process so the fruit loses less sugar, making it an ideal place to grow watermelons.

But watermelons are more than a fruit in Hermiston. They put the town on the map.

A milepost sign at Pioneer Courthouse Square in downtown Portland points east to “Hermiston 186 mi.”
In the 1980s, during his 40-year service on the city council, former Hermiston Mayor Frank Harkenrider wanted to promote Hermiston to the western side of the state.

He contacted Portland Mayor Bud Clark and offered to deliver a truckload of Hermiston watermelons to Portland. That inspired a watermelon seed-spitting contest that was an annual event until 2007—when Hermiston was added to the milepost sign.

“It was a big deal in Portland,” says Frank. “The place was packed.”

Frank’s initiative to spread watermelons to the greater Oregon community was one of the ways Hermiston became a renowned producer of the crop. Today, the proof is in the numbers.

“Most of the growers are getting a minimum of 40 tons to the acre,” says George.

Four Hermiston-area commercial growers harvest more than 400 acres of watermelons, and private growers account for another 100 acres, George says.

Walchli Farms produces eight types of watermelons ranging from yellow to dark pink, seeded to seedless. It also grows honeydew, cantaloupe and 40 varieties of other fruits and vegetables, along with hay.

From mid-July to mid-October, Walchli Farms employs 75 to 80 people—fewer later in the season, when there are not as many melons.

“If we have to use more people it’s a good sign,” Bob says.

Bob tries to offer market niche melons. An example is the fascination watermelons he grows that are blackish on the outside and have higher sugar content.

“Nothing makes me happier than knowing someone opens up a Walchli watermelon and is happy with it,” says Bob.

By Christopher Gaylord

Jon and Dena Morford of Tacoma, Washington, own a trucking company called Two Crazy Vikings. The quirky name is a nod to what they do in their spare time: explore how Scandinavians and other European cultures lived hundreds of years ago.

Dressed in authentic garb from the period—attire most members fashion themselves—SCA members attend tournaments to display social structure, etiquette, weaponry and combat.

Jon says the fighting is often what piques people’s interest in the group, but it tends to be the camaraderie and kinship that make them longtime members.
Don’t let the summer heat keep you from adding plants to your garden. Here are tips to make it work.

**By Kris Wetherbee**

A misconception about gardening is you never should plant during summer when it is hot. Conventional wisdom says planting is best done in spring and fall, when the weather is cooler.

But this only applies when transplanting or dividing, which is digging up and moving all or part of a plant that already is established.

It is nearly impossible to dig up an established plant without destroying some of the roots. If you try to move the plant during the summer heat, when the plant is top-heavy with growth, the shock can be fatal.

As daily temperatures rise, you still can fill the empty spaces in your garden with potted perennials, annuals and shrubs. Any shock from transplanting is essentially eliminated because you did not dig up the plant.

Below are some planting tips for reducing heat stress.

**Find the Right Spot**

One of the great things about planting in summer is most plants are in their full flush of growth. This allows you to better visualize the total effect because you can see a plant’s form and the color of its foliage or flowers.

The added dimensional aspect aids landscaping choices.

Yet there are more than a plant’s good looks and your personal preference to consider when placing your plant.

Anytime a plant goes into the ground, you should match the plant’s growth habits to the garden site.

This is true in any season but especially in summer, when temperatures are more extreme.

A plant that prefers part shade, but tolerates full sun, has a better chance of surviving in full sun if it is planted in spring rather than summer. This gives the roots enough time to establish themselves before the summer heat.

When planted in full sun on a hot summer day, the plant might wilt before it has a chance to situate its roots. To plant in summer, give the plant what it prefers: a partly shady location.

When planting in a sunny location, another way to protect the plant is to provide temporary shade for the first week or two using a light-colored umbrella, shade cloth or other structure that serves the purpose.

**Planting Particulars**

A little preparation goes a long way to determining whether a plant thrives or fails.

When you plant can be just as important as how you plant. For best results, always plant on a cloudy day or in the cooler temperatures of the early evening. This minimizes weather-related plant stress.

Cloudy days or cooler evening temperatures mean less transpiration loss from the plant’s leaves.

Basic planting steps apply, regardless of the season you plant:

- Dig a hole a little deeper and about twice as wide as the plant’s root ball.
- After digging the hole, fill it with water and let it drain before putting in the plant. This helps ensure an easier transition for the plant.
- Gently work the root ball loose with your hands or a garden fork.
- Put the plant into position and backfill with good soil mixed with a little compost.
- Tamp the soil to stabilize the plant and remove any air pockets, then water thoroughly.

**After the Fact**

Immediately after planting, give your plants an advantage over the summer heat by applying a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch, such as compost, shredded leaves, cocoa bean hulls or bark dust.
This helps conserve soil moisture and keep down weeds, which compete for water and nutrients, whether your soil is loamy, sandy or clay.

Water new plantings once or twice with a diluted solution of fish emulsion or liquid seaweed to help them settle quickly into their new environment.

During the first week or two, you might need to water daily or every other day, depending on the weather, soil type and the plant's growing requirements. After that, it is important to keep the soil slightly moist until the plant becomes established in the garden. For most perennials and shrubs, that usually occurs after the first growing season.

The key is to water deeply and thoroughly to encourage a deeper root system.

It only takes a little extra attention and a few simple techniques to help new summer plantings thrive.

So go ahead and take advantage of summer plant sales and fill in those empty spaces in your yard. The result cannot be anything less than beautiful.

**What to Plant**

Just about anything growing in a container can be planted in summer, though some plants stand up to the summer heat better than others. Here are several tough contenders for summer planting.

- **Standout shrubs:** Barberry, boxwood, bluebeard, chaste tree, clethra, cotoneaster, holly, honeysuckle, hydrangea, Japanese plum yew, juniper, rose, santolina and spiraea.

- **Persistent perennials:** Japanese anemone, artemisia, aster, catmint, chrysanthemum, coreopsis, daylily, echinacea, geranium, goldenrod, helenium, liatris, ornamental grasses, phlox, plumbago, Russian sage, salvia, sedum, verbena, veronica and yarrow.

- **Late-color annuals:** Celosia, chrysanthemums, coleus, cosmos, creeping zinnia, dusty miller, dwarf sunflowers, globe amaranth, impatiens, marigolds, nasturtiums, salvia, scaevola and zinnia.

**Conquer and Divide**

An easy way to find new plants for the empty spaces in your yard is to divide perennials that already exist in your garden.

September is a great time to dig in and divide plants such as asters, chrysanthemums, daylilies, iris, liatris, rudbeckias and ornamental grasses.

Divide and replant perennials with vigorous clumps, barren or dead centers, and those whose flowers have become smaller or less abundant.

The steps are basically the same, whether the plant grows from rhizomes, such as iris; has tuberous roots, such as daylilies; or are more fibrous, such as rudbeckia.

Dig up the plant on a cloudy day, keeping as much of the roots intact as possible. Remove any loose soil so you can see the crown and roots, then divide the plant into smaller clumps using a sharp spade or sturdy knife, discarding any dead centers to the compost pile.

Each division should have at least two to five vigorous shoots with ample roots attached. Cut back remaining foliage to half the plant’s height, then immediately replant the divided pieces into their new location.

Any extras can be planted in potting soil in large pots and later given as gifts to friends and family.
Water-Thrifty Plants for Your Garden

A colorful summer garden does not need a lot of water. Keep your garden looking lush with these water-wise plants and gardening tips.

By Kris Wetherbee

Rain might be ample in winter, but once the summer heat descends, rain often is nowhere in sight when plants need water most.

When plants do not get the water they need, they dry up and die.

Water is so essential to a plant’s health that many people devote up to 70 percent of residential water use to home landscapes.

Keeping a garden irrigated can take a lot of work—and water. That is why a mix of water-thrifty plants and a few water-wise gardening tips is a great way to keep your garden thriving, without spending precious time and money on watering.

Sizing up Plants

A plant’s drought tolerance varies depending on your soil, climate and location. Plants suited to your personal growing conditions always give a better show with less care.

For example, hollyhocks do fine without any supplemental water when grown in areas that receive summer rain. However, in drier climates, these statuesque blooms are left with a powerful thirst without water.

Growing conditions also can vary within a single garden. Southern and western exposures tend to dry out more quickly than areas facing north or east.

Position plants in areas where they can survive the occasional drought. Grouping plants according to their water needs makes for more efficient watering.

Choose plants with a stronger tolerance to drought for southern and western exposure. Artemisia, cotoneaster, echinacea, rudbeckia, sedum and salvia are good selections. A few shade-tolerant plants that can handle the occasional drought include hostas, bear’s breech (Acanthus spp.), hardy geraniums, heavenly bamboo (Nandina domestica) and bearberry (Arctostaphylos uva-ursi).

Maximize Moisture

Healthy plants can get by on less water than plants that are stressed.

Timely weeding and feeding keep plants healthy. Adding organic mulch enhances the drought-tolerance of most plants.

Start by mixing a 3- to 6-inch layer of organic matter, such as compost, into the soil before you plant. This increases the water-retaining capacity of the soil and creates an environment that encourages roots to grow deeper, which makes it easier for plants to find and absorb moisture during times of drought.

Adding organic mulch—such as shredded leaves, herbicide-free grass clippings or aged sawdust—to the surface is a good idea. This will conserve water by preventing weeds—which steal water and nutrients—and keeping soil temperatures cooler and moisture levels more consistent, while reducing surface evaporation.

Water Wisely

No plant can survive without water. Even water-thrifty plants need consistent water the first year or two before they become established.

After that, the key is to water deeply and infrequently, which promotes a more extensive root system.

The best time to water is early morning or evening, when more water seeps into the soil and less is lost through evaporation.

The right type of irrigation system can do wonders to minimize moisture loss and excess runoff by distributing lower volumes of water over longer periods of time.

Drip irrigation is best for spot watering around perennials, shrubs and other
permanent plantings. Low-volume sprayers or bubblers are ideal for trees and groundcovers. Weave soaker hoses through annual and perennial beds and borders.

Hand watering can be highly efficient.

**Ten Drought-Busters**

Below are 10 drought-resistant plant suggestions that are a great addition to an easy-care garden. Using less water to produce a downpour of color will give you more time to sit back and soak it all in.

- **Agastache.** This is known as a hummingbird plant, licorice mint, Mexican hyssop or anise hyssop, depending on the species. The showy group of perennial herbs has summer to fall trumpet-shaped flowers that attract hummingbirds, sphinx moths and many butterfly species with nectar. Zones 5-11.

- **Artemisia.** This textural group includes several species of perennials and evergreen shrubs noted for their aromatic and interesting silvery gray or white foliage. Common wormwood (A. absinthium), southernwood (A. abrotanum) and Powis Castle (A. “Powis Castle”) are especially carefree and attractive. Zones 4-11, depending on the species.

- **Germander.** An evergreen shrubby perennial used as edging, a low-clipped hedge or small-scale groundcover. Whorls of nectar-rich, pink to purple flowers spike in summer rise on upright, woody-based stems that grow 1 to 2 feet tall. Zones 5-10.

- **Goldenrod.** Nearly 100 perennial species of perennials grow 2 to 6 feet tall with branching clusters of elongated flower heads bearing tiny golden yellow blooms from midsummer into fall. These are tough plants that thrive in less-than-ideal soil. Zones 3-10.

- **Lady Banks’ Rose.** An evergreen climber (deciduous where winters are cold) that grows to 20 feet or more. Small yellow or white flowers bloom in early to late spring. This tough contender is nearly thornless and nearly immune to pests and disease. Known to thrive and bloom without any supplemental water. Zones 7-10.

- **Lavender.** Highly aromatic shrubs and subshrubs with fragrant spikes of lavender to purple flowers grow from 1 to 5 feet tall. Use in flower beds, the border or herb garden. Great as an informal hedge or edging. Zones 5-11.

- **Rudbeckia.** Showy garden perennials known as coneflower or black-eyed Susan grow 3 to 7 feet tall, depending on the species. Daisylike flowers appear from late summer until frost. Zones 3-10.

- **Salvia.** Extensive group of annuals, biennials and tender-to-hardy perennials grow 1 to 5 feet tall. Tubular flowers, with colors in shades from salmon to red, pink to dark purple, and pale lavender to blue, as well as yellow and white. Low-maintenance plants with high appeal. Zones 4-11, depending on the species.

- **Sedum.** A diverse group of succulents in a range of shapes, sizes and colors, with spring to autumn flowers followed by late autumn to winter seed heads. Sedum “Autumn Joy” and other taller cultivars are especially showy whether mixed in beds and borders or in container plantings. Zones 4-11, depending on the species.

- **Yarrow.** Daisy family member with about 100 species of clumping or mat-forming perennials grows 1 to 4 feet tall. Flattened clusters of tiny flowers in white and pastel shades, bright colors and warm tones from gold to bronze appear in summer and early fall, and puts on a show of color even in dry summers. Zones 3-10. ||

**JULY 2015**
Nutrient-Rich Summertime Sips

Summer is all about long days and outdoor fun. Whether you are at the beach, a backyard barbecue or soaking in the sun at a music festival, you need to stay hydrated.

A daily dose of proper liquid nutrition will have you feeling your best no matter where your summer adventures take you.

**Red-Hot Blood Cleanser**

2 cups watermelon chunks  
1 small to medium beet, washed  
1 apple, seeded and cut into cubes  
1 tablespoon apple juice concentrate  
¼ to ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper  
¼ teaspoon turmeric

Place all the ingredients in a blender, with the watermelon on the bottom. Turn the blender on slow until the watermelon has liquefied. Increase speed and blend 1 minute or until all ingredients are liquefied.

Serves 2  
Courtesy of National Watermelon Promotion Board

**Tart Cherry and Mango Smoothie**

1½ cups tart cherry juice  
1½ cups frozen mango chunks  
¼ cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt  
1 teaspoon agave nectar or honey

Place all ingredients in a heavy-duty blender. Puree until smooth.

Serves 2  
Courtesy of ChooseCherries.com

**Summer Sipper**

¼ heaping cup arugula  
¼ heaping cup romaine  
2 leaves basil

Blend all ingredients until smooth. Serve immediately.

Serves 1  
Courtesy of NutriBullet

**Vitamin Melon Blast**

½ cup cantaloupe  
½ cup blueberries  
1 cup cherries, pitted  
1 tablespoon chia seeds  
Coconut water to cover all ingredients

Blend all ingredients until smooth. Serve immediately.

Serves 1  
Courtesy of NutriBullet

**Raspberry Strawberry Yogurt Smoothie**

1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt  
1 cup frozen or fresh raspberries, unsweetened
Get your dose of raspberries and strawberries in a yogurt smoothie. For a different twist, add honey, cinnamon and chopped walnuts.

**Protein-Packed Berry Burst Smoothie**

1 packet plain instant oatmeal
½ cup fat-free or low-fat milk
½ cup strawberries, hulled and chopped
1 tablespoon honey
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 tablespoon walnuts, chopped

Blend all ingredients until smooth. Serve immediately.

*Serves 1*

*Courtesy of Milk-PEP*

**Watermelon Zapper**

2 cups watermelon cubes
½ large lemon, peeled

**Ginger Pineapple Limeade Blast**

2 handfuls spinach
½ cup pineapple
1 chunk ginger
¾ cup lime juice
6 cilantro leaves
1 tablespoon raw honey
Water to cover all ingredients
1 cup ice (about 12 cubes)

Blend all ingredients until smooth. Serve immediately.

*Serves 1*

*Courtesy of NutriBullet*

**Veggie De-Bloat Cocktail**

½ medium cucumber, peeled
3 medium carrots
2 celery stalks
½ red pepper, seeded
¼ cup fresh parsley
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro
2 cups watermelon
Dash of horseradish

Using a juicer, extract juice from all ingredients. Serve plain or over ice.

*Serves 2*

*Courtesy of National Watermelon Promotion Board*

**Banana PB & J Smoothie**

1 cup chocolate milk
1 ripe banana, peeled and cut into chunks
2 tablespoons low-fat peanut butter
2 tablespoons strawberry or grape jelly

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.

For a colder smoothie, freeze banana chunks one day ahead.

*Serves 1*

*Courtesy of TruMooMilk*
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Books
I am trying to locate “Tatjana” and “Nadia” by Susan May Warren. I will pay reasonable price and shipping.
Billie Harris
P.O. Box 90695
Portland, OR 97290

Crafts
I make caps and hats to donate to chemotherapy patients. If you have a stash of non-wool yarn left from previous projects that you would like to contribute, I would be glad to make it into these caps. I donate through the Rose City Mad Hatters, an excellent group.
Raven Okeefe
39562 Highway 226
Scio, OR 97374

Would like to have birth announcement, high school graduation or wedding counted cross stitch patterns you are no longer using. Thank you very much.
Jackie Frei
P.O. Box 86
Ferdinand, ID 83526

I am looking for any size and quantity of buttons. Will gladly reimburse postage. Thank you.
Jeannie Leeson
2366 Peninsula Road
Priest River, ID 83856

Odds
Would like 4”x6” U.S. post cards from all 50 states to complete albums created by volunteer group sending to deployed military and veterans. Cards may have comments or be blank. This is a continuing effort by the volunteers.
Earline Wasser
Soldiers’ Angel
3432 E. Powell Place
Chandler, AZ 85249-5143

I am in search of instructions, books or magazines on paper piecing. Thank you.
Samuel Sanders
2410 E. Kellogg Road
Pahrump, NV 89046

In the 1970s, I had a crochet pattern for a little girl’s purse that opened into a bassinet for a 5” doll. It also included many patterns for clothes. I’ve lost the pattern but want to make it for my granddaughter. Happy to pay.
Christine Shields
P.O. Box 538
Nenana, AK 99760

Looking for clip-on or screw-on earrings that dangle, no button ones. Will pay reasonable price and shipping. Thank you.
Lois Jackson
58 S. High Road
Wamic, OR 97063

Requesting any flower bulbs to plant at nearby retirement homes. Please include type of flower, if known. Many will benefit from your help. Thank you.
Mel Johnson
P.O. Box 1233
Graham, WA 98338

Searching for photos or historical material regarding Parkland’s Hand-Out Drive Thru restaurant in Pierce County, Washington. First drive-thru on the Mountain Highway.
Pam Larkin
12901 Pacific Ave. S.
Tacoma, WA 98444

Looking for photos or historical information about Alaska pioneer Dan T. Kennedy, Klondike gold rush veteran. Retired to Washington state in the 1950s.
Tom Walker
P.O. Box 146
Denali Park, AK 99755
twalker@mtaonline.net

I have a 1950s Pyrex glass coffee pot and desperately need the metal star-shaped piece that goes between the glass pot and electric stove burner. Anyone out there have one? Thank you.
Shirley J. Brady
P.O. Box 185
Veneta, OR 97487

Need Netscape CD so I can get service on my computer. Will pay postage.
Mrs. R. Ruark
52687 Cayuse Road
Adams, OR 97810

Recipes
When I was a kid, my grandmother made a cold salad that had peas, I think walnuts, pickle pieces and maybe mayo. Had it one other time on a hunting trip to Bottineau, North Dakota, where Mrs. Dave Clark made it. I no longer have the Clarks’ contact information. Anyone familiar with this recipe?
Terry Lane
501 Fish Hatchery Road
Grangeville, ID 83530

Looking for stone-ground or yellow mustard recipes.
Dollie Howell
456 Winterton Road
Sandpoint, ID 83864

Thanks
Wow, what a response. Thanks to everyone that sent wolf items. You helped a child with special needs who loves wolves.
Georgina McVay
Bay City, Oregon

Thank you so much to all who took the time to respond to my request for Justin Wilson’s tartar sauce. Chef J.C. Mitchell personally brought Justin’s first cookbook. It was so nice to meet and speak with him.
Shirlee Shelley
Lebanon, Oregon

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Please send your request to At Home, 5605 NE Elam Young Parkway, Hillsboro, OR 97124, or email it (no attachments) to ahome@ruralite.org. Please fill in the subject line. Acceptance, scheduling and editing are at the editor's discretion. Single requests only, please. No duplicates. Submissions are handled on a first-come basis. Phone numbers will not be published. Email addresses will be published if part of the ad, but the request must include a postal address. Request must include name, address and name of the electric utility that provides your magazine.
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-Jon, Restaurant Lighting & Fixtures