

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (What's Up 7-02-03, Bremerton Patriot 7-05-03 or 7-12-03) ,
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Have you ever been thirsty or hungry or just plain peckish while shopping at our wonderful local nurseries? Here are some of the culinary offerings that await.

Valley Nursery has a beverage and hot dog cart on site. You'll find mouth-watering polish sausage sandwiches, hot dogs and other kid and adult friendly taste treats. While you're at Valley Nursery you'll want to sign up for one of their classes offered during July and August and remember to stop by on July 19 for "Art in the Garden" featuring food, music and plenty of artwork to choose from. Demonstrations and do-it-yourself art will abound all day long. If you have any questions about "Art in the Garden" contact Paula or Kathleen at 779-3806.

Bainbridge Gardens' New Rose Café is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Café is nestled among plants and features rustic bread sandwiches, fabulous salads and soups or a pizza baked in a wood-fire oven. The soups are incredible and you'll be extremely tempted by the cookies, espresso and even milkshakes. You'll want to linger at the nursery all day and at these hours you could stay there for breakfast, lunch and a very early dinner. What more could a gardener ask? Plants and food – well, maybe winning the lottery too, so one could buy even more plants and food.

Bainbridge Bakers at Bay Hay offers heartwarming and tasty soups, panini sandwiches, scrumptious breakfast sweets, cookies, awesome espresso offerings and a cozy deck where you can sit and drink in the beauty of the plants in the nursery while eating a snack or meal. You'll covet the window box plantings and the small vignettes that surround the deck beckoning you into the nursery to discover plants to take home and enjoy.

Clear Creek Nursery has just opened a café too. You'll find soup, sandwiches and beverages. Employee Shannon Robinson says everything is "delicious." The nursery abounds in water features and garden rooms where you can commune with tempting plants while eating your morning snack or afternoon lunch.

I called one of my favorite small nurseries, Berger's Garden and Gift on Adele in Bremerton (at the intersection of Kitsap Way and Adele) and Rebecca said, "Sadly we no longer have the coffee shop but we have an abundantly stocked candy jar on the counter." If you haven't checked out this nursery, even though they don't have a coffee shop or café, they have wonderful plants and very witty and helpful staff. They're known for their "Victoria-like" hanging baskets featured at the nursery each year. One of Berger's specialties is helping gardeners choose plants and garden designs for small city lots and containers. Owners John and Theresa Dreaney will design your garden for you and John's crew will install it.

While seeking out all the nurseries with food I just had to stop in at Country Nursery and Gardens on the Seabeck Highway. They didn't have any food, but that was all right because I was totally distracted by all the plants. I discovered a potting bench in the annual house where you can select a basket or container, plant it up yourself using the soil provided and then take your new container garden or hanging basket to the cashier to pay. You'll want to visit this nursery with a big pickup truck because that's what you'll need to carry home all the plants you'll find.

I haven't forgotten about Carter's Nursery on Chico Way, Roadhouse Nursery on Central Valley Road, Savage Plants in Kingston or Port Orchard Nursery on Mitchell Road but I'll tell you about them and a plethora of other great nurseries like Sundquists, Yamamoto's and Raven Nursery in future columns.

Remember Bainbridge in Bloom is July 12 and 13. All proceeds benefit the Island Arts and Humanities Council. I hope, too, that you marked your calendars for Saturday July 19. I'll be sharing my great plant picks at the nursery and offering tips on how to care for the plants in your gardens. Come join me and the staff at Savage Plants.

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