



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

LEFT: Dorota Haber-Lehigh is surrounded by native plants in her garden in the Sunset Cove. Haber-Lehigh teaches English as a second language and botanical illustration at Seaside High School. RIGHT: A distant chair invites a moment of serenity near a creek in Dorota's Haber-Lehigh's garden filled with native plants.

Botanical artist Dorota Haber-Lehigh's garden celebrates Northwest beauty

By NANCY MCCARTHY
FOR EO MEDIA GROUP

At first, Dorota Haber-Lehigh and her husband, David Lehigh, tried growing grass in their shady, wetland front yard just below Tillamook Head. But after several years, they realized it was a losing battle.

The grass didn't get enough sun, and they had to reseed it every year. Water flooded it in the winter, and it would be ruined when deer walked over it.

So Dorota, a botanical illustrator who is devoted to preserving local native plants, decided to recreate a native forest surrounding their home in the Seaside Cove area.

Now, the half-acre yard is a happy home

to salal, skunk cabbage, deer and sword ferns, huckleberries — both red and blue — vine maple, and other native species.

"We stopped fighting the grass and started allowing whatever wanted to grow there," Dorota said.

Some of the plants are "rescues" she collected, with permission from Superintendent Sheila Roley, from the hillside east of Seaside Heights Elementary School, where the new Seaside School District campus will be built. Logging on some of the site is about to begin.

"We made trips and trips and took buckets and shovels and brought back a little of everything," even though the task was exhausting, she said. But so many native plants had to be left behind.

"That's sad, because we see all of this native vegetation disappearing," she added.

The new plants have taken to her yard well, noted Dorota, who teaches English as a second language and botanical illustration at Seaside High School. She also mentors students who work in the school's culinary garden.

"Everything I planted this year looks like it has been there forever, but it hasn't," she said.

Skunk cabbage, salmonberries and ferns grow along the creek that runs through the yard. A graceful hemlock tree provides shade.

A bridge built over the creek offers a seating area for Dorota and David to relax and enjoy the natural setting.

Trails, outlined in barkdust, meander through the area for the deer. Dorota has taken into account that the deer are bound to nibble on some of the plants, which grow in abundance.

"I want it to go wild; I'm OK with that," said Dorota, who also wants to add more mushrooms — a particular interest for her — to the yard.

When she plants the native plants like rattlesnake plantain (a native orchid) or native currant, she considers what creatures will come to her garden.

"We're trying to create a habitat that attracts hummingbirds, bees and birds," she said. "The birds like the elderberries."

Continued on Page 7