



# Pet Tips 'n' Tales

by Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe"

## Child + Pet = LOVE

Something caught my eye! Ten-year-old child, Helia, was out walking with her parents and her seven month old Minchin (Miniature Pinscher/Chihuahua) puppy, Valen. There was something extra special about the child's and the dog's heart-bond.

Helia held little Valen lightly and naturally as if he were part of her body, a treasure to care for, so gentle and loving. But the look on the puppy's face told the rest of the tale. He was totally trusting, devoted, and so comfortable that he melted into her body as she held him. They fit purr-fectly together like a bookmark to a book.

Her father, Dr. Fattahi said, "She loves him. He loves her." Simply the truth to all eyes.

As the Puppy-rozzi it is my job to get "the rest of the story," so here it is!

"Valen is not my first dog!" said Helia, "I was born in Iran, and had a dog, Honey, who died before we moved to Canada. When my parents said I could have a dog again, I looked for dogs on the Internet. I think the Minchin breed is beautiful, so when I saw Valen I got him. I named him Valen because I love him and Valen means Valentine. We speak Farsi at home, so Valen understands English and Farsi. He is such a smart puppy!"

My mom does not like Valen to sleep with me, but he does not listen to mom, so he sleeps next to me. He loves pillows, so he sleeps on my pillow. He does not put all of his body on my pillow, just his head like a human. He looks so cute.

I love it when he tries kissing me on the lips, and if he can't kiss me, then he starts making an adorable baby sound.

It is my responsibility to feed and walk Valen for one hour of exercise so he will be healthy.



Photo by Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe"

**Mrs. and Dr. Fattahi support their daughter, Helia, in her love of dogs and her adoption of Valen. Helia's deep bond with Valen will be one of her best lifelong memories.**

When it is raining, Valen wears little blue rain shoes, and he walks funny in them.

He loves playing hide-and-seek! I do too! Valen goes and hides. When I find him, he starts running. I chase him until I get him. Then it is my turn to hide and Valen has to find me. After he finds me, I run away, so he can chase me. He is my best friend and I am his.

His CRAZY habit is that he won't chase any balls; big ones, little ones, or ones with holes in them.

I chose a dog for my pet because I'm a dog person. I love dogs. I will always love dogs and will never have a pet that is not a dog!"

### Tips

Last year, one pet shelter alone found homes for 412 cats! It took 211 volunteers and 49,997 hours of fostering and socializing the cats purr-paring them for their fur-ever homes. Important financial donations made it paws-ible to cover the

medical expenses for the homeless and injured cats.

All animal rescue groups welcome donations of time, finances, food, and towels etc. Check your pet shelter's website for their "most wanted items".

Petfinder is referenced at the end of each 'Tips 'n' Tales' to facilitate your search for your next-best furry friend. www.PetFinder.com

Type in the pet's breed and your city to locate adoptable pets in shelters/rescue groups close to you. Animals in shelters are litter-ly dying to find a home! When you rescue pets from shelters, you are also not purr-petuating the existence of torturous puppy/kitten mills.

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# This is the year to grow big, beautiful tomatoes

BY KYM POKORNY  
OSU Extension Service

Nothing drives Oregon vegetable gardeners to distraction like the elusive quest for a ripe crop of tomatoes. There's the fickle weather to consider, diseases to battle and insects to thwart.

"Everyone wants to grow tomatoes," said Amy Jo Detweiler, a horticulturist with Oregon State University's Extension Service. "It's a universal food people tend to like."

Wanting to grow them and actually doing it are two different things, though. Short growing seasons on both sides of the Cascade Range and faint sun at the coast often mean tomatoes take their sweet time to ripen, if they do at all. This year could be different, Detweiler said. A warmer-than-usual spring has heated the soil earlier, giving tomatoes the conditions they need to get a good jump on the season.

If you haven't already planted your crop, it's time. When shopping for tomatoes for shorter growing seasons, Detweiler recommends buying those with 60 to 70 days to maturity rather than 70 to 100.

"Some of those are 'Legend,' 'Early Girl' and 'Siletz,' all developed by OSU," she said.

Cherry tomatoes like 'Sun Gold,' 'Gold Nugget' and 'Sweet Million' ripen early and are a good bet for beginners. Big, beefsteak types can be challenging, though this year would be the year to try them.

Tomatoes are either indeterminate or determinate, Detweiler explained. The former ripen throughout the season, while determinate can be harvested all at once for making sauces, salsas and the like. For detailed information and recipes for canning, refer to OSU Extension's guide to Canning Tomatoes and Tomato Products in English or Spanish.

In colder climates east of the Cascades, growing tomatoes with protection is a necessity because of the possibility of frost at any

time of year, according to Detweiler. If you don't have a greenhouse, use a cloche or row cover. When plants are young, use water rings. They have channels of water that collect heat during the day and reflect it to plants at night and are readily available at garden centers. Covering the soil around plants with plastic sheeting will also help.

Detweiler's tips for growing tomatoes:  
Select sturdy plants.

Put in a plot that gets a good six hours of sun.

Plant in well-drained soil that's been amended with organic material such as compost or well-rotted manure.

Pluck off leaves at the bottom of the stem and bury in soil five to 10 inches deeper than it came in the pot. Additional roots will form along the stem. As the plant grows remove branches and leaves close to the ground to help prevent soil-borne diseases.

Give plants plenty of room so that air can circulate and sun can penetrate. This will result in more vigorous plants that can more easily fight off diseases or pests.

Use a strong tomato cage or trellis for support.

Start fertilizing about two weeks after planting with a 5-10-10 or 5-10-mixture. Feed according to package directions about every three weeks until fruit ripens.

Don't wait for soil to completely dry out between waterings. Irrigate deeply every two to three days, more often in particularly hot days.

On side stems with no blossoms, pinch them off at the V where they meet a main stem. This will force energy to develop the fruit rather than plant foliage.

Get more information on all aspects of growing tomatoes in OSU Extension's publication Grow Your Own Tomatoes and Tomatillos or call a Master Gardener in your area.



photo by Lynn Ketchum

Follow a few tips and grow a crop of enviable tomatoes like 'Legend,' a variety developed by Oregon State University

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