



# TREES, SHRUBS, GRASS, OH MY

EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Ross "Rocky" Paratore grew up in the nursery business. He has owned and operated Rocky Mountain Nursery since the mid-'90s, container planting since 2000.

## Rocky Mountain Nursery one-stop shop for professional, novice landscapers



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Rocky Mountain Nursery has plenty of bee friendly plants.

**By Emily Mentzer**  
The Itemizer-Observer

**INDEPENDENCE** — Right off Highway 51 is Rocky Mountain Nursery, a gardener's paradise. With more than five acres of potted plants, bring a good pair of walking shoes and some imagination.

It also helps to do a little research first.

"We don't have one-on-one service," said Orlene Perkins, office manager.

They try to answer as many questions as possible, she said, and plant placement at the nursery can help people know where to plant them at home.

"Anything in this open area tolerates full sun," she said. "Anything in the hoop houses with the shade cloth on it grows in shade."

The nursery has offered container plants on both a wholesale and retail basis since 2000. Owner Ross "Rocky" Paratore grew up in the nursery business.

"My dad had a retail nursery for years," Paratore said. "I've been doing this all my life."

The nursery supplies plants for landscapers throughout the Pacific Northwest,

Perkins said. But that doesn't mean they're not open for the novice.

Saturdays are the busiest days for retail, she said.

It would be common to see five or six trucks being loaded up.

With a milder winter, Rocky's business has been steady — and busy — Perkins said.

"Typically, January and February would be kind of quiet," she said. "But that didn't happen this time. We haven't slowed down."

Near the entrance of the nursery, smaller shrubs and flowers can be found, all in a line and easy to peruse. A trail toward the Willamette River leads to more lots filled with trees, fruit trees and bamboo.

Visitors may walk around, or take their car to the lower lots. While on their quest to find the perfect plants for their landscape, they can take a break on a bench overlooking the river.

Paratore grows fruit trees on the property.

"When you come out and walk around, you can pick fruit off the trees and eat them," Perkins said.

People may pull whatever plants they



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Shannon Maroney and Malinda Bermudez pick up a load of plants.

### Ready to plant?

**What:** Rocky Mountain Nursery.

**Where:** 6920 Corvallis Road, Independence.

**When:** Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed major holidays and the week of Christmas.

**Of note:** The nursery sells wholesale and retail, perennials, grasses, shrubs, trees, vines, some berries and fruit trees. No annuals, hanging baskets, herbs, bare root or vegetable starts. Most of the plants offered are proven to do well in the Polk County area and climate.

**For more information:** rkymtnnsy.com.

want to take home and haul them in a wagon, or leave them in the aisles and an employee will come and gather them up, she said.

The nursery has a wide variety of cultivars, so it helps to have specific details on what type best suits your landscaping needs, Perkins said.

"People will come

in and say, 'I want a maple,'" she said. "There's 120 to 200 maple trees. So we say to them, 'What kind?' Sometimes I think they think we're being a smarty pants to them, but we're not. It's just there's pages and pages of different kinds of maples."

Paratore used to raise turkeys, but gave that up and now rais-

es honey bees. With everything in bloom in early April, the nursery is a haven for bees.

In fact, Malinda Bermudez of Bermudez Family Farms picked up some plants for that purpose on Monday morning.

"As if I don't have enough plants, right?" Bermudez said, smiling.

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Your guide to things to do, places to go and people to see.  
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