

Gardener's wish list: Pots, peat moss, and a front-loading clothes washer

Rob Anunsen has a green thumb and his prolific South Salem garden shows the results.



The Parrish Middle School teacher finds working in the soil with rudbeckia, purple banana trees and New Zealand flax is a relaxing contrast to teaching pre-algebra to 35 eighth graders.

"When you live in the Willamette Valley — the Number 1 plant growing area in the world — you can experiment, be creative and have lots of success with a garden," said Anunsen. "It's a great stress reducer."

Teaching a life science course whetted his interest in gardening eight years ago. When Rob and his wife, Pam, bought their new house four years ago, Rob's gardening avocation really took off. Their new home had no landscaping. He could design a garden from scratch.

Each year, the garden has had a little different look. This year, Anunsen is enjoying what he calls his "tropical" or tender perennial garden. Many of his cannases and phormiums and other tropical plants are in pots that he will winter over in his garage.

The only downside to his hobby is the ground-in dirt and red clay soil that stain his clothes. The Anunsens figured it is the price they pay for their beautiful garden. That is, until they bought their new front-loading clothes washer.

"We weren't really looking for washer," Pam admitted. "We went looking for a new dryer."

But the display on front-loading clothes washers got their attention. Both Pam and Rob were impressed with the energy and water savings.

"Working in a garden makes you very aware of preserving our environment," said Rob. He uses a push mower and leaves his grass clippings on the lawn to return nutrients to the soil, save energy and reduce pollution. Conservation is a core lesson he teaches his students. And, using less energy and water for clothes washing made a lot sense, too.

Front-loaders, also called horizontal axis washers, have been standard in Europe for many years. They use an estimated 60 percent less energy and about 40 percent less water than a normal washer. The machines can use less energy and water because they clean with a tumble action instead of having an agitator to lift clothes in and out of a pool of water.

Because they use less water, they need less detergent. In addition, the load gets rinsed three times — not just once as in a standard washer. That means cleaner clothes with less soap residue. And, because the new machines have no agitator, there is less wear and tear on clothes.

"From what I've seen so far, the machine cleans our clothes better," Pam said. "Rob had an ink stain on a pair of pants. It was gone in one wash. In my old machine, I would have had to wash it several times before it came out completely."



The high-speed spin of the front loader removes more water from clothes, reducing dryer time.

"I can't believe how dry the clothes are when they come out of the washer," said Pam. "Even the towels come out nearly dry."

While the Anunsens were evaluating their options in purchasing the new front-loader or keeping their 10 plus-year-old washer, Rob noticed a sign about the appliance tax credit incentive.

"Once we realized we could get \$160 tax credit, on top of our monthly energy and water savings, we decided to buy the washer," said Rob. "The tax credit made the decision easy."

The Oregon Office of Energy offers the tax credit as an incentive to Oregonians who purchase premium efficiency clothes washers, refrigerators and dishwashers and many other systems including furnaces. The Anunsens' Kenmore 4214 qualified for \$160 tax credit that they will take next April 15 when they file their 2002 state income taxes. The Sears store where they bought their washer gave them the correct form and helped them complete it.

The Anunsens can't say enough about their new washer. It's quiet and efficient. Best of all, it does a great job in getting the dirt out of Rob's clothing. He's now the cleanest gardener in town!

Energy Tax Credit for Clothes Washers

The energy tax credit incentive for premium efficiency appliances is based on the amount of energy saved above standard models. The tax credit is the amount noted on the list of qualifying appliances or 25 percent of the net purchase price of the qualifying appliance, whichever is less.

A qualifying clothes washer must have a maximum water factor (WF) in gallons per cubic foot-cycle of 10.5 and a minimum Modified Energy Factor (MEF) in cubic feet per kilowatt-hour-cycle of 1.40. A list of qualifying clothes washers and the tax credit application form are available on the Web site: www.energy.state.or.us or by calling 1-800-221-8035.

It is important to note that Energy Star® appliances do not necessarily qualify for an Oregon tax credit. Energy Star® is a federal program. Oregon requires that appliances exceed federal standards by specific levels to qualify for an Oregon tax credit.