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# Brewers HOP TO IT

**The grow-your-own movement now extends to hops, as a worldwide shortage has prompted home brewers to add a new crop to their gardens.**

By BILL WARD • bill.ward@startribune.com

The Willamette vine made it; the other two croaked. His fiancée ran over the Nugget with the lawn mower, and “the Centennial, I found out, had been planted on top of an ant mound,” said David Toews of Minneapolis. Such are the pitfalls of a new gardening project.

So, are we talking heirloom tomatoes? Exotic melons? Actually, this is another type of vine providing something that won’t be found at any farmers’ market.

Hops.

Home brewers throughout the Twin Cities have been busily planting the rhizomes (root stock) that produce the vines (ants and other critters permitting) that spawn the cone-like flowers that make beer, well... beer. Sales are hopping because a worldwide shortage has caused prices of the dried flowers or pellets to soar.

“It was amazing. This spring, we sold a ton of rhizomes, probably six or seven times as many as we sold in other years,” said Pete Mack of Midwest Homebrewing Supplies in



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Dan Peters and some of his home-brewing gear: an old beer keg heated by a deep-fryer propane burner.

St. Louis Park. “We ordered a lot more, and we still had trouble keeping up [with demand].”

Mega-breweries such as Anheuser-Busch were protected from the shortage and price hikes because they have futures contracts with hops farmers. But for the increasingly popular “craft breweries” such as Summit and Surly, prices have risen from \$3 per pound to as much as \$20. That’s part of the reason consumers have been paying more lately for craft beers.

**Hops continues:** Shortage came to a head last July. **E8 ▶**

# Only the beautiful need apply

● Producers looking for “The Great American Beauty” stopped in the Twin Cities, where they met about 130 hopefuls—pretty ones, of course.

By PATRICK LEE • plee@startribune.com

Anyone who has relaxed by one of Minnesota’s 10,000 lakes has most likely noticed the constant stream of muscular, athletic or downright sexy bikers and runners that pass by, along with the occasional you-really-should-have-your-shirt-on jogger.

But how do the Twin Cities stack up against other places in the United States when it comes to the number of Tyra Banks or Johnny Depp types?

America will soon find out. ABC is casting “The Great American Beauty,” a new prime-time reality TV show that will put contestants in a house together in Los Angeles to compete for “a



Angel Xiong, 19, of Chicago, was interviewed by casting producers Melanie Hodges and Stacey Roeder (in hat) during a call for contestants for “The Great American Beauty.”

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big cash prize” — and presumably, the title. Producers are combing rural or hidden pockets of beauty across the country, and Minneapolis-St. Paul made the cut, at least by ABC’s standards.

Casting director Sheila Conlin runs the Conlin Co., which manages casting for several major networks’ reality shows, including “Hell’s Kitchen.”

“It’s going to be one of the biggest shows they’ve ever done, because they are in search of the Great American Beauty,” she said. “That’s why we love Minneapolis, St.

Paul: It’s the girl on the farm, the guy on the tractor... It’s the undiscovered.”

A pair of producers stopped in St. Paul last week for two days of open auditions that drew about 130 hopefuls. Other targeted cities ranged from Jackson Hole, Wyo., to Savannah, Ga. Aspiring reality TV stars from Minnesota will find out by the end of this week whether they have landed a final call-back in L.A.

**Beauty continues:** Show to shoot in the fall. **E8 ▶**

# Molly Ringwald is back in fashion

● Still an influence on style, the popular star of “The Breakfast Club” and other 1980s teen flicks has returned in a new TV show.

By MONICA CORCORAN • Los Angeles Times



**Molly Ringwald**

It’s been 23 years, and Molly Ringwald still has a regret about her “Breakfast Club” days. Her off-screen romance with Anthony Michael Hall? Hardly. The fact that she originally wanted to play Ally Sheedy’s quirky role? Over it. She bites her lower lip ruefully and shakes her rusty auburn curls.

“Now, I wish that I’d kept those boots,” she said. “I loved those boots.”

Who didn’t? The lace-up Ralph Lauren equestrian boots that grazed her freckled knees in the film became every teen girl’s tantrum-inducing must-have in 1985. As did her other unique looks: the fedoras and chunky bangles in “Sixteen Candles” or the flapper dresses and crimson pout of “Pretty in Pink.”

Ringwald’s style goosed fashion circles and high school social cliques alike. She was an antidote to ‘80s “power dressing” and empowered the eccentric social underdog.

**Ringwald continues:** Fashion is back, and so is she. **E8 ▶**



Photos by JIM GEHRZ • jgehrz@startribune.com

Michael Young, 25, Minneapolis, was called for a second interview by casting producers Melanie Hodges, left, and Stacey Roeder and will learn this week if he will be part of the L.A. call-back. ABC expects to begin shooting 'Beauty' this fall.

## Only the beautiful need apply

### ◀ BEAUTY FROM E1

Conlin said ABC hopes to shoot the show in September or October, and the eligibility requirements state that contestants must reside "at one or more undisclosed locations ... for up to six consecutive weeks."

Melanie Hodges, one of the producers scouring the Midwest, refrained from making an outright judgment about Minnesotans' looks and beauty.

"Omaha is more like a south Midwest, kind of a different look. Iowa, we got really beautiful farm, small town ... people," she said. "Here we got, of course, the typical blond-haired, blue-eyed Scandinavian girls. But there's really diverse people here."

But even for a show with such a superficial premise — at the local call-back auditions, producers took photos of each candidate in a swimsuit or bikini — the strategy behind auditions and the logistics of advertising them are fairly complex.

Debbie DeLisi, who works out of New York City and the Twin Cities to recruit for film and TV, had less than two weeks from the time she got a phone call from ABC to the first day of open-call auditions in St. Paul. DeLisi and six colleagues hit the streets for days, scouting potential American beauties at bars, tanning salons, gyms, restaurants and the Mall of America. Abercrombie & Fitch stores proved to be a crucial location for recruiting, DeLisi said.



Hodges and Roeder did short initial interviews with candidates. After the call-back on-camera interviews, the scouts will convene in L.A. for final deliberations.

"But to me, it's more than just a pretty face," she said. "What I try to find for my casting producers is interesting people: I like the girl from northern Wisconsin who hunts and fishes."

The first round of open auditions consists of a short, one-on-one interview with a team of producers, usually no longer than two minutes. If they like a candidate's look and personality enough, the producers offer a call-back audition, which involves an on-camera interview and a 16-page questionnaire and release form. The scouting teams then convene in L.A., where each fights for the standouts from their local call-backs in final deliberations.

"We care about our people, we invest time and energy in them, we get their story, and then we have to sell them," Hodges said. "We become really big fans of theirs, and we want to represent the Midwest."

One wannabe American Beauty

said you must have a gimmick to stand out among the throng. The secret is to immediately present yourself as a character who will stick in producers' minds, said Donovan, 25, of St. Paul, who has been cast for an MTV reality show before (and goes by just a single name).

"They always think of me as ... the loud mouth with the strong personality," she said. "It's just natural for me to fill that role, and I'm really not acting for them. ... I got to take my personality and turn the dial up to 10."

Her strategy worked: At the end of her 20-minute call-back interview, producers told her she'd be perfect for the show. But the final call is up to the bigwigs in L.A., and whether or not they think America will want to watch Donovan fight it out for the title of the Great American Beauty.

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# Brewers HOT TO IT

### ◀ HOPS FROM E1

For some brewers, hops prices ballooned from \$1 to \$2 per ounce a year ago to \$3 to \$8, said Curt Stock, who works at Northern Brewer supply company and grows his own hops at his home in St. Paul's Como neighborhood.

"I just made a double IPA [India Pale Ale], a 10-gallon batch," Stock said, "and put about \$60 worth of hops in there. It's tough, but it's still better than going out and paying \$9 for a 22-ounce double IPA."

In that context, a rhizome that costs about \$3, and that within a few years can provide up to 4 pounds of hops per vine clump, is an idea well worth tapping into. Especially for those who find no substitute for a homemade brew.

India Pale Ales have two to three times as much hops as a stout or porter, while wheat beers require virtually no hops. In making his IPA, Stock was able to use some of his homegrown Cascade — one of dozens of sub-species of hops — but newer growers will have to be patient, as it takes at least two years for the vines to produce a decent hop crop.

"I'm not counting on anything this year, and actually, I'll be lucky if I can get any next year," said Dan Peters of Minneapolis, who planted three rhizomes in his Prospect Park yard this spring. "I'm hopeful, but not counting on it for my brewing program next year."

Peters decided to commit to growing hops after buying 5 pounds last December at inflated prices, "but before they went up astronomically. I don't expect I'll be able to buy 5 pounds this year."

Peters and Toews are far from alone among first-year growers, who are almost invariably home brewers (a fast-growing coterie that is approaching 1 million nationally, according to the Home Wine & Beer Trade Association). Even Dan Justesen, who as owner of Vine Park Brewing Company in St. Paul has access to hops at wholesale prices, just put in some plants.

The shortage came to a head last July, but actually was spawned by an imperfect storm of events in 2006. Heavy rains decimated the European crop, a severe drought had a similar effect in Australia,



TOM SWEENEY • Star Tribune

Junio Choi, manager at Northern Brewer, displayed a handful of hops.

and a fire in a Yakima, Wash., warehouse destroyed 2 million pounds of hops. At least 75 percent of hops are grown in Washington.

With supplies way down and demand steadily rising, even small breweries scurried to find a source for the essential ingredient. "This year, local breweries were buying hops from us for the first time, said Junio Choi, retail manager at Northern Brewer. "Prices had been flat before that for years."

Now the price increases have prompted not only home brewers but commercial growers to plant vines. According to the International Hop Growers Bureau, hops acreage increased by 11,456 acres this year worldwide and by 8,500 acres in the United States.

And that doesn't include the home brewers' back yards, where the low-maintenance vines are climbing walls, trellises and fences. "I'll prune throughout the summer," said Stock, "although you can come away with some pretty bloody arms pruning them."

The vines require more vertical space than ground coverage. They're susceptible to hail, the occasional animal ("something has been nipping the shoots off my vines," Peters reported), nearby street lamps providing too much light and the occasional wayward mower.

When they're harvested in the fall, there is only one concern: It's impossible to gauge the home-grown hops' alpha acid percentage, which determines a beer's bitterness.

"You can send it to a lab," Peters said, "but that's outside the realm of what I want to do. I mean, you're making beer, how bad can it be?"

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