

Life After the Derecho: The First Two Weeks

Writing in my garden journal by candlelight, August 10, 2020. The back yard is buried in tree trunks and branches, a broad swath of devastation surrounding the 150-year old sugar maple, the King of our homestead, now deposed. The big wind has also killed the King's household, several redbuds, a pin oak, a silver maple, a younger sugar maple probably planted when the house was built in the 1930s. Although most of the trunks are still standing, they have been stripped to bare bones. Stretching across the back yard is also a marvelous white oak, a gift from a neighbor's backyard. We have no electricity, no radio, no TV, no cell phone service. Amidst all this desolation, we remain thankful. No one injured. The house and the garage, the garden storage shed and the garden studio--they are all wounded, with broken vinyl siding and mutilated gutters and missing shingles, but the damage is manageable: no broken windows, no leaking roofs. Change the angle of the wind by five degrees, the damage could have been much worse.

The day began hot and muggy. I spent the morning working in our vegetable garden--what we call the "Wickiup Garden"-- on a small farm northwest of Cedar Rapids. The morning was unusually hot, no breeze, no clouds. My tasks were typical August garden chores:

- Removing dead/dying foliage from cucumbers, which led me to find tiny green aphids on the underside of the cucumber leaves, a variety of aphid new to me.
- Picking a pint of blackberries (the end of the season) and a few raspberries (the beginning of the fall crop).
- Cleaning up a raspberry bed, pulling up weeds, cutting out dead canes, clearing a path around the north end of the bed, stretching a new green wire support around the east end of the bed.
- Watering a raised bed where last week I sowed radish and beet seeds for a fall garden.
- Watering sweet peppers and eggplants.
- Filling a two-gallon trug with pole beans: Kentucky Blue, Monte Gusto yellow wax, an Italian purple, some romanos.
- Harvesting two egg plants (both picked a few days past their prime), two Leysa sweet peppers (seeds from Croatia), five cucumbers, a few tomatoes.

As I was harvesting beans, the storm-warning sirens began wailing. Although I saw dark clouds to the north, the clouds to the south and west looked less threatening, and I wasn't too concerned: no lightning, no thunder, the sky reasonably benign. But the sirens did not relent, so I abandoned the pole beans, loaded everything into the old Chevy S-10 pickup, and started the 15-minute drive back home. It was only when I reached I-380, less than five minutes from our driveway, that I realized this was a serious storm. The dark clouds from the southwest were screaming across the sky, headed in our direction. I immediately accelerated, moving as quickly as the traffic would allow. As I was turning on to Oakland Road (three blocks from home), it started to rain and within seconds it was blowing hard. When I reached Elmhurst Drive (two blocks from home), trees were thrashing violently and I had to swerve around several large branches that had just fallen onto the road. Fortunately there was no oncoming traffic. As I

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drove onto our driveway, there was a loud crack and a flash of light. Within seconds the security light above the garage door went out. Frightened by the torrential rain and wind, I retrieved my house key, ran from the pickup to the house, unlocked the side door, and quickly got into our family room.

During the storm, I retreated to the basement, briefly venturing up twice to see how bad things were. The first time when I looked into the backyard, the big sugar maple was still standing, but it had lost most of its branches in the hurricane-force winds. Suddenly I felt a distinct drop in air pressure. The wind sounded like a train rushing toward the house. I hurried back down stairs, my heart racing, my breathing labored, anxious for more oxygen. I suspect I was having a panic attack. Fortunately, I found a functional flashlight and lit a candle in a small brass lantern. The light helped calm my nerves, and I decided I might feel better if I had something to eat. So I climbed the stairs again, saw that the big maple was down, quickly grabbed lunch meat, cheese, and iced tea from the refrigerator, and with a loaf of bread and a bag of chips I ran back down the stairs. I could hear limbs and other objects hitting the side of the house and our second floor deck, but there was nothing I could do, so I just sat on my old Lazy Boy recliner, eating a crudely assembled sandwich, sipping the iced tea, listening to the assault on our 80-year-old wood frame house.

After the storm subsided, people in the neighborhood started coming out of their homes, assessing the damage. Our Honda CR-V, parked on the street, was crushed by a limb from our pin oak. The entire street was closed off by piles of tree trunks and limbs, including a large maple and an old black locust from across the street. For the rest of the afternoon we all worked on clearing the road. Our tools were a few hand saws, a limb trimmer, an axe, a small temperamental chain saw. It was a slow process, but by sundown we had carved a meandering single lane so small vehicles could get through.

Ibegan August 11 by spending three hours clearing limbs from the backyard and the patio, piling them on the street in front of our crushed CR-V. When I started attacking the branches, I was working under a huge limb lying across the peak of the garage. The fall of the limb was impeded by an iron railing on the deck that cushioned the impact and reduced the damage. But the garage still received a substantial blow, twisting the building so that the back door could no longer be closed. In our backyard the garden shed was struck by a huge oak tree that shoved the building a few inches to the east, but the building is intact and stable. The garden studio has a large limb on the roof and both skylights are shattered, but they didn't collapse and, again, no evidence of leakage. It was not easy finding a path to these buildings. I had to walk under the sugar maple and step over or around hundreds of limbs. With all these trees decimated, it will involve a total re-landscaping of the backyard. The compost bins and grape arbor have been destroyed. The gooseberries and raspberries and peonies and astilbe and rhubarb and grapes and herb beds are all buried under fallen tree parts. But I've been thinking of England's Great

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Blowdown in 1987 and how gardeners treated that destructive event as an opportunity for re-imagining new garden landscapes. It was as if a painter were given a fresh canvas and a new palette of paints. I will forever miss the Old Maple and the special world that surrounded it, but this is an invitation to start fresh and create something different, perhaps less primitive and rustic, perhaps more diverse and experimental.

It's now five minutes before noon. Just put on my third dry t-shirt of the day. The temp is not bad, probably about 80F, but the humidity is oppressive and I was soaking in sweat when I came into the house for lunch. Several chain saws going in the neighborhood and a lot of people working on their properties. A professional tree service crew is up the street, across from the house with the swimming pool. They have removed a large tree from a front yard. Meanwhile I'm just putzing along, trying to create paths so it's possible to walk through the backyard. I finally have it cleared so I can walk on both sides of the yard. The patio is cleared to the compost bin. In the backyard, I have a swath cleared about 3/4 of the way to where the Big Maple lies, which stretches all the way to our neighbor's patio. I discovered that our weather station was destroyed, but the wind chimes are undamaged. The wooden flower trellis for the clematis behind the garage was knocked over but remains intact. As for the metal sundial next to the patio, I found it crushed under a tree limb. While sitting in my chair, I'm looking out at the patio, several large limbs dangling from the sugar maple providing temporary shade. It's hard to accept that these last remnants of our shade trees will soon be gone. As I told my neighbor John earlier this morning, we are paying for the marvelous service these shade trees gave us the last 40 years. They were such dependable friends. They will be missed. The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Lordy, I'm tired, physically and mentally. Up at 6:00 am. Now that we have no electricity, the body has shifted to work/sleep patterns matching the daylight hours. This morning we drove out to the Wickiup Garden, once I had the S-10 cleaned up and the driveway cleared. The storm damage at the garden was severe. The wind tore up the cottonwoods along the creek. It would have been frightening with all those tree limbs sailing through the rain. The east and west side garden fences were ripped apart, but the fences on the north and south sides have only minor damage. The garden's rain gauge indicated 3" of rain. With all that wind, I wonder how accurate that might be, but the 3" strikes me as a reasonable estimate. Many of the tomato plants were lying on the ground, their fruit stripped from the vines, but with only one exception, the plants were still attached to their roots. The shorter peppers and eggplants fared better, though they were all leaning over in their cages. As for the pole beans, the Kentucky Blues on the east/west trellis were okay, but the beans growing on north/south trellises were badly beaten up, and several trellis panels were blown down. The west field—planted with pumpkins, cantaloupe, potatoes, watermelons, and winter squash—was covered with hundreds of cottonwood and walnut branches, some quite large, but all those vegetables are ground huggers. Most will do okay once the tree litter has been removed. The biggest surprise was that

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my garden spade, one of my favorite garden tools, was broken in two. I would have guessed that spade was darn near indestructible, but it appears a flying tree limb broke off the spade's handle.

A lot happened today—and yet at the end of the day, we are where the day started. But a few accomplishments. We began the morning by driving to the State Farm Office—which was operating under a tent outside the agent's office—and filed damage reports on our demolished Honda CR-V and our four buildings: home, garage, garden studio, garden shed. When we got home, we arranged for a towing service to take away the Honda. Shortly after the call, two guys arrived. The spokesman was grossly overweight and wore a disgusting t-shirt suggesting he had F****ed my Mother and also displayed a large red tattoo on his neck that also included the word F****. But at this stage of the game, my only concern was having the car towed away, so we signed the papers and they started extricating the car from the large tree limbs surrounding it. The rest of the morning focused on clearing a path to the garden studio. I made it about half way, though the path still includes several large limbs that must climbed over. It was not terribly hot this morning—temp in low 80s—but full sun, no breeze, high humidity. I was again drenched in sweat by lunch time and had some difficulties cooling down. Thank goodness for our cool tile floor in the kitchen. I'm writing this journal entry while sitting in the library's wooden rocking chair, which I have moved in front of an open door, hoping to catch the faintest breeze. My forehead is covered with perspiration, but it still feels cooler than in my normal chair. Since the sun has set, I'm using a camping headlight. The headlight's switch is broken but I discovered it still works, once I had installed new batteries after applying a little baking soda and water to remove some corrosion. This trick reminds me of when I was in Tennessee in the 1970s. Shortly before I was due to leave the motel and conduct a reading workshop for high school teachers, my ever-reliable 1967 Dodge Dart would not start. So I walked across the street to a small grocery store, purchased a box of baking soda, sprinkled baking soda over the battery connections, gently sprinkled water on the baking soda, watched it sizzle for a few seconds, and the old slant-six fired up without further hesitation.

This afternoon I went to Lowe's and purchased a new Kotula spade, similar in design to the one whose handle was broken in the storm. And today I learned that the name for our hurricane-like storm is a DERECHO—though I'm unsure about the pronunciation. MVM found a pronunciation guide on her phone which proclaimed that the accent should be on the "cho", but on the car radio I heard the announcer put the accent on the second syllable. Regardless, it was one hell of a wind storm. After Lowe's, I continued on to the Wickiup garden. Spent three hours picking up cottonwood limbs and branches from the trees that got shredded along the creek. A few squash, melon, and pumpkin vines suffered significant damage, but overall the vines and the fruit came through in good shape. I harvested four cantaloupe and honeydew melons no longer attached to a vine. We ate two of them for supper. As I expected, the honeydew was not fully ripe, but the cantaloupe was quite good. I also walked through the

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main garden. Discovered the pole beans are more beaten up than I had initially thought. The cucumbers were not in great shape before the storm—suffering from the relentless cucumber bugs—and it's likely most of them are finished for the year. I did gather a bunch of ripe tomatoes. For supper we had two fresh Berkeley Tie-Dye tomatoes. We had to trim the bruised areas, but they both tasted first-rate. And let it be recorded that at this moment in my journal entry, a cool breeze came through the screen door, evidence this evening may be a good night for sleeping.

Today I described for MVM my current thinking on redoing the layout of the backyard's garden—or perhaps more accurately a sequence of gardens. I don't think she was impressed. With the big maple gone and the introduction of all this sunshine, she was assuming we would return to having a vegetable garden in the backyard, and I would give up the Wickiup garden. Truth be told, creating a significant vegetable garden in the backyard had never crossed my mind. The day will come when Wickiup will not be a part of my gardening life, but I confessed that I would hate to end that relationship so abruptly. MVM does not believe I have the time to do justice to the gardens at Coe, Wickiup, the church, and our front and back yards. Although she's right, that's not yet a sacrifice I'm willing to make. I would like to think the Coe garden is nearing a point when it will require less intense care, but we're not there yet.

Sitting in the dark in the sun room—but no sun. Fortunately I have my small reading light that has been sitting on the headboard for several years, fully charged, patiently waiting to be called upon. It's moment in the dark has arrived. Although we don't yet have Iowa Electric service, our neighbors loaned us a small, gas-powered generator, and we have used it to run a fan (praise the Lord!), cook two darn-good meals with an electric skillet, and run the old laptop computer in the Library so we could watch a DVD of the first episode of the first season of *Line of Duty*. The good life has returned.

Truth be told, the last few days are bleeding together: hard to distinguish what I did today from what I did yesterday. The cleaning up of the backyard trudges on and on and on. But today we did make demonstrable progress. In the morning several people from across the street came over to help us and our neighbors trim limbs and drag stuff to the street. This afternoon a group of six folks connected with First Lutheran helped us for three hours. One fellow had a good chainsaw (which he knew how to use) and an ATV four-wheeler with a wagon for hauling tree parts to the street. The backyard is still a museum of huge trunks, limbs, and debris, but it's now possible to walk all the way to the back of the property, 300 feet from the street. While huge areas remain completely covered, the existence of this simple trail makes everything begin to feel manageable. In the midst of a pile of branches we removed today, I discovered the garden's rain gauge, recording 2.1" of rain. I also discovered my green wheelbarrow, smashed by the oak tree that came down on a corner of the shed. As for the

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return of fully functional electricity, a crew started clearing debris from around the electrical line down the street, and they cut and piled up the line leading into our house. The *Gazette* reported this morning that it would be another 3-4 days before “most” people in C.R. will have power. We are hoping to be included in the “most.”

Continuation of the same routine, though this morning I went to Coe for a couple of hours and confirmed that email was functioning. I deleted several hundred messages, read 5-6, and responded to a Coe alum whose wife had recently died. He was submitting one of her poems for inclusion in a future issue of *The Garden Quarto*. Her husband had seen my webinar earlier this summer, which inspired this submission. It’s an interesting poem, certainly good enough for publication, so I wrote back, thanking him for the submission, and indicating I would publish it either this fall or next spring. I only spent a few minutes in the garden. I tried to straighten up the fence that was leaning over a flower bed, but it was impossible to budge. I did trim some viburnums that had been shoved over the walkway and took a few photos of the fence damage, but the light wasn’t right and I decided to try tomorrow to obtain a fuller record of the garden’s condition.

After lunch I drove to Menards, only to discover they were not open because of storm damage, so I stopped at Home Depot, where I purchased a new wheelbarrow, a dozen steel posts for the Wickiup garden, and two kinds of wire and nylon rope for the garden. Back at home, the rest of the afternoon was in the backyard, cleaning up the grape arbor area. I discovered that three of the 10 foot 4x4” posts were still okay, but the rest of the arbor was unsalvageable. The arbor was poorly designed, was too narrow, and was never intended to be a permanent support for the grapes, but it lasted for over 15 years. Its demise is no great loss.

The derecho’s one-week anniversary. The same routine continues: cleanup, cleanup, cleanup. It’s exhausting, but we keep chugging along. After breakfast, MVM and I drove to Wickiup and worked for 3 hours. She harvested pole beans while I added new posts and rope to corral the raspberries in the east bed. My next job was reattaching the deer fence to the fence posts on the south side of the garden. Fortunately the fence was intact, it had simply been torn away from the staples holding it to the fence posts. It was relatively easy reattaching the fence. We still have several gaps the rabbits can use for entering and exiting, but that’s a battle for another day. In the afternoon, we worked at home, aided by two groups. A crew sponsored by a local Methodist Church came into our backyard and volunteered to remove the large tree limbs lying on the garage roof. After trimming some limbs, they said a different crew would appear tomorrow and deal with the largest limbs. The Methodists were followed by a group organized by a Coe College faculty member. They worked for a couple of hours sawing up and carrying down to the street branches from the large oak stretching across 1/3 of our lot. They made some significant progress—though the tree’s enormous trunk remains intact. While that

group was working with their chainsaws, I continued clearing debris from the grape arbor area. I found dozens of grape roots with new growth, determined to make a comeback.

This evening after supper a friend and I went to the Wickiup garden. He had volunteered to help, and I was glad to accept his offer. We concentrated on reinstalling the west-side deer fence, which was badly tangled. After it was straightened out, we discovered it was in reasonably good shape. Once it was reinstalled, we repaired a break in the south-side fence. All the outer fences are now restored and functional. Unfortunately, the garden has become very weedy, and most of the vegetables look bedraggled and unloved, but we're still harvesting buckets of produce, and the radishes, lettuce, and beets sown before the storm have germinated. Somehow, amidst all this devastation, evidence of new life. Before leaving I picked two enormous Kellogg Breakfast tomatoes, each weighing over two pounds. Even after cutting away the bruised areas, these tomatoes will provide ample servings for at least two meals.

About 9:15 this evening, while watching a DVD on my old laptop computer (powered by the neighbor's gas generator), I looked down at the floor, saw a red light on an extension cord, and thought to myself, "How can that light be on?" This question led to the discovery that the light next to the Library's office desk was working and thus to the discovery our electricity had been restored. So we stopped watching Season 2 of *Line of Duty*, turned on some lights, and began cleaning the freezer and moving food from the ice chests back into the refrigerator and freezer. By 10:30, we were almost "back to normal." I trust those days and nights without electrical power will soon become a faint memory.

Today, I never escaped the backyard. Actually I began the morning with a heated debate with our insurance agent concerning the reimbursement for our demolished CR-V. Despite my best argument, it appears our payment will be \$1,500 under what we should be paid. Now, I'm trying to set that fiasco behind me and move on. As for the backyard, I spent the day cleaning up the area where the grapes, herbs, raspberries, and rhubarb beds were located. I was amazed at the durability of the old Osage orange fence posts used in the construction of the herb beds 40 years ago. Despite minor rotting, all of them are still ready for service. I could not accomplish much with the black raspberry bed because most of it is still buried under the trunk of the oak tree, requiring the attention of a professional tree removal crew. While working in the rhubarb bed (also buried in the oak tree), it occurred to me that perhaps we could redesign the garden shed so it would be attached to a small greenhouse. In the past this was a very shady area and I never thought a greenhouse would make sense, but now we will have all this sunshine. Since we will be receiving several thousand dollars for repair of the shed, perhaps we can use that money to replace the shed's vinyl siding with cedar siding and shingles that will match with the nearby garden studio.

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It's ten minutes before midnight and I'm exhausted. This morning I arrived at Coe at 8:00 a.m. and took a comprehensive set of garden photos. It's been three months since I posted a photo slideshow on the garden website and two months since the last Monday Morning Garden Report. I was already behind schedule and this windstorm has not helped. My whole life is driven by cleaning up wreckage. After I finished the photo shoot, a couple friends came by the Coe garden and we spent three hours cleaning up the gravel walkways—which involved raking up leaves and twigs that had blown in and removing weeds from several gravel sections. I mowed the central lawn area, and the inner core of the garden now looks much better. Next task will be restoring the perennial flower beds.

It's 11:20 pm, sitting in the sun room, using my small reading lamp for my daily journal entry. We again have no electricity, so we have returned to keeping food in the small refrigerator powered by the gas generator. We covered the freezer with rugs and blankets, hoping it would remain below freezing until the electricity is restored. This morning at Coe, after cleaning up a couple of gravel walkways, I tried to re-install two light posts that had been blown over in the storm. I was able to re-install the light in the NE corner, but I could not get the screws to tighten properly for the other light. Eventually I grabbed an ornamental rock from another flower bed and positioned it over the lamp's base. Not a perfect solution and not super stable, but it's okay for the short term.

After lunch I took an hour nap before driving to Wickiup. Hated to lose that hour of daylight, but I was really dragging, having only had five hours sleep last night. At Wickiup I spruced up several raised beds on the south side of the garden. Collected multiple loads of tree branches (mostly cottonwood) and threw them over the fence. I straightened up overturned tomato cages and secured them either to a nearby livestock panel or a newly installed steel post. I weeded the Lebanese zucchini, the rhubarb, and a cucumber bed—though I'm not sure those vines will ever produce any cucumbers. The combination of wind storm and cucumber bugs has left them in bad shape. A few plants are still alive but none thriving. I did prune several grape vines and the blackberries and installed a new support wire to keep the blackberries separated from the grapes. I finished up the trip by harvesting two hills of Kennebec potatoes, producing a great yield of large white potatoes. One hill had 15 good-sized potatoes.

After breakfast, spent four hours in the Coe garden's "C" bed: pruning spent daylily clumps, cutting back spurge (which should have been done two months ago), trimming Husker Red penstemon (also long overdue), digging out unwanted cranesbill and goldenrod. The bed could use fresh compost and mulch, but I don't have the time for those extras. I did, however, sweep the patio and pulled up a few weeds so it looks less unkempt. When I arrived this morning, a group of four staff people were meeting in the shade in the SE corner. It was a lovely morning, and I was pleased to see someone using the garden.

Only one lightning bolt, but it got my full attention. I was looking for ripe melons and squash at Wickiup. I had seen the blue/gray clouds to the northwest, evidence of a small thunderstorm, but the cloud movements suggested the storm would slip by north of the garden. I had heard a few distant rumblings, but I didn't suspect the imminent arrival of any storm. Suddenly a streak of lightning flashed directly overhead, followed two seconds later by the thunder. I immediately picked up my small harvest and hightailed it to the pickup, placed the melons and squash on the mulch in the pickup's bed, grabbed my tool bag (plus the beans and tomatoes previously harvested), threw everything into the cab, and waited a few minutes before the storm coming over the western hills convinced me it was time to head back to C.R.

I ended up returning to the Coe garden, where I had worked this morning. I decided it was time to create a path from the parking lot to the garden shed, which had been blocked by piles of fallen maple and hawthorn limbs. It took over an hour, but I finally managed to forge a direct path. Once I was inside the garden walls, I turned my attention to a perennial flower bed on the south side of the garden: weeding, pulling up unwanted asters and goldenrod, trimming the tansy and Joe-Pye weed, and cutting back broken perennials. My assault created several large gaps in the bed, but at least the area is relatively clean and free of broken shingles and other debris.

Spent most of this hot August Sunday inside, enjoying the air conditioning. This morning after church, MVM and I spent two hours shredding and bagging zucchini for the freezer, filling 20 quart bags to replace the ones we threw out when we lost our electricity. Thank goodness for the Cuisinart, saving us untold hours shredding by hand. After lunch I read a couple chapters in a Brooks book on garden design, took a short nap, and spent three hours editing my July Kalendar blog posting. I've reached the final editing stage so it should be done in another day or two. After supper—which consisted of an egg dish with shredded zucchini—I went to Coe, watered my basil seedlings, and then drove to the church. Walked around the building, taking dozens of photos for the church website. The church garden is very weedy, but considering the widespread damage in this area, there are surprisingly few pieces of debris to be picked up.

Brutal heat today, in the upper 90s this afternoon, with oppressive humidity. Working at Coe this morning, I was sweating profusely, needing to take a break every hour. Thank goodness for the air conditioning in the garden shed. In the garden, most of my efforts were in the "F" bed, removing vegetation beaten up by the derecho: Joe-Pye weed, Baptisia, tansy, sunflowers, miscellaneous small stuff. I also cleaned up portions of the "L" bed, cutting back daylilies and removing debris from the stepping stones path.

Hard to believe that after that big rain two weeks ago, I am watering the Coe garden, but the rain came so hard and fast that the moisture did not reach very deep. Yesterday I

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started running the sprinklers and I began this morning by a quick trip to Coe to move the sprinklers. I will probably run them nonstop until tomorrow. After the Coe trip, I met with the contractor to discuss repairs on my garden studio. He built this little office studio eight years ago, and I think he will do the repairs, but he's semi-retired and working alone so no promises it will be done anytime soon. A small tree removal crew from Coralville has removed most of the limbs off the studio's roof, but there is still one heavy limb resting on the studio roof and the roof of a neighbor's shed. It's not clear how they can remove this heavy limb without damaging the shed, the studio, or the cedar fence separating the two buildings.

In the afternoon I worked at Wickiup for three hours. Temp was in the 90s, but a periodic breeze made it bearable. Dug two hills of potatoes—one white, one red—with good production from both varieties. This should be a banner potato harvest. Also harvested several melons, a pumpkin, two winter squash, and an Ali-Baba watermelon. The leaf and stem next to the fruit stem had shriveled, a sign the melon was ready so I rolled the dice and removed it from its mother plant. As luck would have it, the gamble paid off: a delicious melon, the ripeness just perfect, giving us a consummate dessert for this evening's supper. For the meal we also had spaghetti squash, which I baked yesterday with a roasted potato/carrot dish. The spaghetti squash came out very good, energized by some basil pesto that MVM fixed earlier. At Wickiup I also harvested scallions, onions, four cukes, and about 25 large, ripe tomatoes. Also discovered several over-sized Magda zucchini that should have been harvested last week. Sneaky devils, hiding under those big leaves. It's supposed to be another hot day tomorrow so the afternoon may be a good cooking-in-the-air-conditioned-kitchen day.

The third day of the Republican National Convention with VP Pence speaking tonight, celebrating Donald's remarkable leadership. Fortunately we have no internet or TV so we have an excuse for ignoring this depressing rhetoric. When I left for Wickiup this morning, it was already above 80 and reaching the upper 90s this afternoon, but this morning there was a steady breeze out of the west. I began by cleaning up some of the melon and cucumber beds, mostly weeding and removing more cottonwood branches. The plants look small and undeveloped, but to my surprise I found no squash bugs and just a few cucumber bugs. Very few dead or yellow leaves, so that's a good sign. They probably could use some watering, but the forecast calls for a 50-50 chance of rain the day after tomorrow so I'll wait and see what happens. Other garden tasks this morning included re-stapling the nylon netting that supports the climbing lima beans. To reach the netting I had to cut down several tall Red Hopi Amaranth that had been blown over but not broken by the derecho. I also picked clean all the Italian purple pole beans, plants unfazed by the wind storm. I also added two more iron posts to support the grapevine wires. Before next spring I need to reconstruct those grape supports because the current design has failed.

I spent the afternoon in the kitchen preparing a big pot of gluten-free vegetable soup. From the garden I used the following ingredients:

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- Purple Italian pole beans and dragon tongue beans
- About ten tomatoes, diverse varieties
- Dozen okra
- An onion, a couple scallions, and a bulb of fresh Majestic garlic
- Five carrots
- Six red potatoes
- Spinach leaves
- Seven peas from three pods! (alas, my total pea harvest for the month)
- Shredded zucchini
- Several sweet peppers: Croatian Leysa and one Felicity
- One shredded cabbage harvested this morning.

The mixture simmered for about four hours, just in time for supper. The soup was followed by two cantaloupe harvested yesterday. They were both small and a bit bruised but they tasted great. For lunch we had some of the cold Ali Baba watermelon: definitely one of the best watermelons I've ever raised.

Postscript. My journal with periodic reflections on the impact of the August 10 derecho continues through the rest of the year, but these excerpts should suggest how the wind storm affected my gardening life. In the first week, my thoughts were overwhelmed by the need to restore a semblance of "control" onto the two "yards" in front and in back of our home. Gardening is often a story of an uneasy, unresolved tension between nature's wild energy and the gardener's effort to impose boundaries on that energy. The derecho wiped out the constraints, reminding us that we are always servants to forces far beyond our ken. But within hours after the windstorm had departed, I was busy trying to regain tokens of order, initially expressed in my determination to create a path so I could walk from the street to the back of the lot. Even if the path was full of impediments and surrounded by debris too large for me to move, there was the path. And once the path was there, civilization could not be far behind.

I'm also struck by how quickly I came to accept the destruction and view it as an opportunity. During the 42 years we have lived on this property, I had often reflected on how much I loved the enormous sugar maple in the center of our backyard, and I had assumed my departure would precede the maple's demise. But once the maple was lying on the ground, I was ready to move on. I would never have chosen to cut down the maple, but once it was down, I quickly embraced the opportunity to treat our backyard as a fresh canvas to which could be applied all kinds of new plants with fresh textures and forms. It was an opportunity to transfer a shade garden into a garden drenched in sunshine, and I was excited to see what might be possible.

I love working in the Coe garden, but it is a pre-ordained landscape in which most of the trees and flowers were installed long ago. My primary task as a gardener is to refine the boundaries, to massage the gaps and crevices. Although this work within established parameters presents wonderful challenges, I'm always constrained by the past, decisions made

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long ago by people I'll never know. But in my own front and back yards, now that all the big trees are gone, we can start fresh. It is terrifying to have so many options, to see so many ways to fail, and yet it is exhilarating to have this rare opportunity to start all over again. While I still have the rich memories of those shade gardens, I feel like we have just moved to a new homestead, rejuvenated by the challenge of a new frontier.