

## Garden Kalendar Spring 2017

This Spring Kalendar interweaves excerpts from my 2016 Garden Journal with passages (in italics) from “Slow Gardening,” an essay by Anna Pavord published in her book *The Curious Gardener: A Year in the Garden*. My first draft was over 30 pages, so I’ve spent a few hours cutting, trimming, pruning, and condensing to get this Kalendar to a more manageable size. My garden journal is mostly nuts and bolts—“I did this and saw that”—but the Pavord passages offer some wonderful reflections on the practices and ideals of enlightened gardening. ~Bob

### 1 April 2016

Temperature is 40F, foggy and overcast. . . . I brought to the Garden a tray of plants started from seed in Feb.: 14 columbine pots, 3 coreopsis tinctora, and a lone house fern. I plugged in the two heat pads and the gro-light, set the timer, and all seem to be working. Since the columbine in the garden are already 2-3” tall, the home-grown columbine should do okay with the assistance of the heating pads and the protection of the shed. My guess is the coreopsis are more tender.

In the afternoon, we had a few minutes of hail—though the hail balls were quite small—perhaps more accurate to describe them as sheet pellets. Twenty minutes later the sun was out, but still chilly and windy. While working in the shed, I attached a brace to the leg of one of the two new garden benches. Set the bench on the gravel walkway in front of the patio, next to a Home Depot pedestal I bought on sale last fall. Combination looks okay—not great. I drilled the holes for the brace for the second garden bench, but my remaining screws are too small to hold the brace.

I brought from home another tray of new seedlings: mostly coreopsis, plus four goatsbeard, one powwow echinacea, and one rock cress. Downloaded photos from a garden walk two days ago. Deleted half because of poor focus. Reshot chives and a sedum when the sun was behind a cloud. Should have enough photos for the spring’s first “garden walk” posting to the website. Last night encountered this quote: “As is the Gardener, so is the Garden.” Thomas Fuller, 1732. #701 in a book titled *Gnomologia: Adages and Proverbs*. . .

### 3 April

Temp in the upper 20s early in the morning, but reached 81F by mid-afternoon, setting a record high temp in C.R. for this date. Again very windy. The chipper/shredder got jammed, and I couldn’t find the right size wrench for removing the feeder bolts, so I drove to Menards and purchased a new wrench set. Also bought a small garbage can for the NW gate, replacing the big one with no lid provided by physical plant. I’m still looking for a garbage receptacle, preferably wooden, similar to what I saw at Mt. Vernon in Virginia, something reasonably attractive and site-appropriate. Also purchased gray braces for the new benches. The white

braces I originally purchased are too noticeable, too much contrast with the brown benches. . . . As for the faux clay end tables, they did not look right next to the benches so I moved them to the east end of the garden, under the viburnum. Tomorrow is the first day of Open Garden days. Supposed to be much chillier tomorrow (perhaps highs in the low 40s) so not likely we will have many visitors. Overall, the garden looks good; gravel walk ways relatively free of weeds and grass.

*I usually see Stonehenge when I'm storming home down the A303 with Eric Clapton pounding in my ears and a half-eaten Mars bar in my hand. It seems disrespectful to flash by it like this. Suddenly, there they are, the stones, and equally suddenly gone. They don't have a chance to speak of their consequence, their gravity, their implications.*

*You should have to walk a considerable distance to find Stonehenge, to take it in as it slowly rises, naked, from the plain, to watch the rectangles of sky between the monoliths change as you approach. If it is pouring with rain, so much the better. No effort we make to visit this place can rival the effort made by its builders. We demean that by glancing at it idly as we pass by at 70mph. A.P.*

#### 4 April

Arrived this morning at 8:15. This was our first Open Garden day, so I unlocked the NW gate and set the new Rubbermaid garbage can inside the gate. . . . Came back this afternoon at 1:30. Today was Flunk Day, so many students walking around, shouting at each other, determined to have a good time. No evidence anyone had been in the garden. Flunk Day is an intriguing event on a day like today because everyone is running around in minimal clothing—T-shirts and shorts—despite the chill in the air. This afternoon the sun came out and it warmed to upper 40s, but still a bracing breeze. I wore my coat while working.

I attached the gray braces to the two brown benches; the gray look better than the white. One of the benches is warped, one leg about an inch from the ground. For a temporary fix I placed a small limestone rock under that leg, but we will need a more permanent solution.

With the leaf vacuum I harvested three loads of leaves from the "M" bed [the Garden's beds are all labeled with letters and corresponding names; the website's garden map indicates the location for each bed]. The oak leaves are still blowing in and get trapped in various nooks and crannies, including the branches of the large thyme. Ran the leaves and other plant fodder through the chipper/shredder. Worked great. We had one compost bin completely empty; it's now 2/3 full. Added a compost starter—though not likely the stuff makes any difference.

I brought out the dahlia bulbs from the basement, set them in four plastic bins containing Johnny's seed starter mixed with vermiculite. Brought the bins to the Garden and put them in the greenhouse. Most of the dahlia bulbs survived their winter storage, throwing away a few that had dried up. I split several larger bulbs, though I wasn't sure how to divide

them. Their “eyes” are not immediately apparent to my eye—not like potatoes. Perhaps half of the dahlias are labeled, but I’m not confident about the accuracy of last fall’s labeling. It was all done very fast. My plan now is to keep them moist, give them light, and plant them in pots once they show signs of growth. There were two that had already sprouted, but I cut back the sprouts because they were thin and lanky, evidence of their futile search for light in an unlit basement.

*Traveling at the speed we do, it is difficult for us to capture now those ‘peculiar emotions’ which the young Joseph Hooker described on seeing new countries for the first time. During his lifetime (1817-1911), there were still opportunities for real discovery.*

*Hooker, who went on to become an influential Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, made his first expedition into the unknown when he was only twenty-two. Sailing on the Erebus, he left England on 30 September 1839 as official naturalist on a voyage to determine the exact position of the South Magnetic Pole. The Admiralty supplied him with two tin boxes for collecting plants, twenty-five reams of blotting paper to dry and press them and two Wardian cases, like miniature greenhouses, in which to bring live plants back to Kew. Everything else, he had to provide himself.*

*On New Year’s Day, 1841, more than fifteen months after its departure from England, the Erebus finally crossed into the Antarctic Circle. In his journal, Hooker described the overwhelming vista of ‘snowy precipices covered with an immense bank of broken clouds, each tinged of a golden colour by the never-setting sun; above these rose the immensely high peaks of land, towering up against a beautifully blue clear sky, above which was another canopy of dark, lowering clouds, their lower edges of a bright golden red colour. It was one of the most gorgeous sights I ever witnessed.’*

*Hooker’s best-known expedition took him to India, where, close to the great mountain, Kangchenjunga, he found vast bushes of *Rhododendron falconeri*, growing at 10,000 feet with leaves 19 inches long. In Bhutan he collected sweet-smelling *R. griffithianum*, like a ‘fine lily,’ said Hooker, each pale flower in a truss measuring as much as 7 inches across.*

*Painstakingly collecting seeds of these beauties, Hooker packed them in tins and dispatched them to his father at Kew. Given the long, slow, arduous process by which these new plants were introduced into cultivation, did gardeners then appreciate them more, value them more? I think they did. The garden centre, the micro-propagation unit has reduced plants to commodities, to so many tins ranged on the shelf. It has, of course, also made them cheaper. A.P.*

### 6 April

I went to Home Depot and purchased four pots: a large “urn” similar to the one I bought last fall and three fake cedar barrels (Chinese plastic). After drilling holes in two of the plastic tubs, we dug up the *Phalaris arundinacea* (Dwarf Gardener’s Garters) around the sun dial in the “G” bed and buried the tubs, leaving a 1” rim above ground. Filled the barrels with a dirt/compost mix and replanted half of the phalaris (plenty left over). The tubs should control the dwarf garters—an aggressive spreader.

It just started raining again. We had 1/3” last night; supposed to be showers off and on for the next couple of days. Current temp (2:29 pm) is 49F. Forecast predicts subzero temps on Friday night so may need to move the dahlias from the greenhouse to the shed. The electric heater is now set on low and the temp is a comfortable 60F.

### 8 April

Arrived at the garden at 7:45; NW gate was open (my guess Security did not lock it last night). My new garbage can lid had blown off so I rearranged the plastic bag inside, repositioned the bungee cord holding the Rubbermaid bin to the fence, and placed a brick on the lid. We’ll see how that works. Ran the chipper/shredder for an hour, producing three loads for the compost bin. Still a long way to go with the remaining unshredded fodder, but we’re making progress. I spent some time looking at the remaining forsythia blossoms (just a few remaining on each bush). I read last night about several varieties of forsythia; would be nice to know what family ours belong to. It’s now 12:06 pm; outdoor temp of 40F; overcast and windy, with a few snow flakes in the air.

*It is only now, too, that through makeover programmes on television, we have been introduced to the concept of gardening against the clock. Surely, though, most of us garden to escape the clock. At the very heart of the business is the feeling that, when we garden, we abandon a timetable constructed around dentist’s appointments, car services and the possible arrival of trains, to plunge headlong into a completely different timetable, an immense and inexorable one entirely outside our control, defined by weather, and above all the seasons. A.P.*

### 11 April

Worked in the garden for three hours this afternoon. Sunny, temp 48F, windy. Bit chilly but overall a nice April afternoon. Ran one load thru chipper/shredder, than ran out of gasoline. After cleaning out the greenhouse, placed on greenhouse selves the dahlias in their plastic tubs and four trays of grasses and wild flowers I planted in January. Watered everything. The experiment with planting the wild flowers in the middle of winter was disappointing because the sand I mixed in with the seeds has clumped together and became quite hard when it dried.

## 12 April

Chilly last night, low around 30, but it quickly warmed up. It's now 2:00 pm, temp of 60F, 29% humidity, cloudless sky, a slight breeze. Beautiful spring day. Brought from home six pots with about 15 delphinium planted in January in a plastic bag. Put them in the greenhouse and watered them and the dahlias. Raked and cleaned up behind NW quad bench. Used trimmer on yews in "I" & "K" beds, the "K" yews finally beginning to acquire a distinctive structure. They look much better than two years ago. Filled the chipper/shredder with gas and ran two more loads. Went to Ever-Green for a load of wood chips, primarily for the path in "H" bed—which was never finished last year. Spent some time studying the bed, trying to determine the path's final route. Will require taking out some grass, asters, daisies, goose-neck, etc.

*The Slow Food movement has had some success in increasing respect for the ingredients with which we cook: good beef, properly reared and hung, decent tomatoes allowed to develop flavour and ripen without the aid of a man in a white coat. So I'm nominating this year for Slow Gardening. Chill out. Relax. Observe. Take time to admire the way a seedling pushes through the earth, its back humped into a croquet hoop with the effort. Even if it's a seedling of a weed like groundsel, it's still a miracle of tenacity and endurance. Grow something from seed yourself. If it's something useful—basil, coriander, rocket—so much the better. Plant a tree. Train a clematis. A.P.*

## 13 April

Monday: observed spring's first butterfly, one of those small white butterflies with a slightly green tint that dip and dart, constantly on the move, frequently seen in pairs. But this one was flying solo, looking for sustenance in the "C" bed. On Tuesday watched a second butterfly species, small orange and brown, again a loner, also in the "C" bed.

Mystery trees identified: they are flowering crabs. Last year I spotted several small trees in the "H" bed. Their burgundy foliage was attractive, but I still cut them back. Today, while clearing out the area around a drainage pipe, I looked at the new shoots and immediately realized these are flowering crab, the foliage identical to the espalier crab near the NW gate. After removing several, I decided to keep three of them, thinking perhaps I could turn them into small standards. Two of them are really too close to the new path, but for the next year or two, that won't be a problem. If they prove successful as standards, I will amend the path. I'm not thrilled with the path's current design—though it's much better than how it was left last fall.

*The point of gardening is the doing of it, not having got it done. It's the process that matters, though it is of course directed towards an end result. It's rare now for people to stay in the same place for generation after generation. But continuity produces a tangible effect in a garden:*

*hedges bulge, trees cast ever-longer shadows over a lawn, wisterias send out tendrils to close up the windows.* A.P.

### 18 April

1:00 pm; temp is 83F, 29% humidity—though showers are probably on the way. Another beautiful spring day. This morning I did some weeding, digging up daffodils in the “G” bed. Cut back and dug up roots of swamp milkweed. Need to create a barrier so the roots don’t escape where I want them contained. A lot of horsetail growing in the drainage channel leading into the rain garden. Will need to rake up the rocks, lay down a weed suppressant barrier, and recover with the rocks. Not a fun job.

The new, 3-legged ladder arrived, so I tried it out, trimming tops of yews in “I” and “K” beds. The ladder was expensive but makes it so much easier to reach those high points. The yews are now engaged in an impressive growth spurt.

Solid row of red tulips in “M” under the espalier, the blooms just opening the last two days. Not sure how I like the pink apple blossoms contrasting with the red tulips, but it does create drama. The white apple blossoms will be opening later this week. Also white blooms—and fragrance—with the early blossoming viburnum in “H”. Two wonderful blossoms in “K” bed: the tiny forget-me-not blue flowers on the ‘Jack Frost’ and ‘Silver Heart’ brunnera, and the barren strawberry with lovely yellow blooms. The Garden is pulsating with dynamic color combinations.

### 19 April

A few minutes after 12:00 noon. Temp of 62F, no wind, overcast. Forecast of rain but no rain so far. Spent most of my morning raking and vacuuming up leaves and filled three bags using the chipper/shredder. We’re getting close to the end. John from Physical Plant turned on the water and started the fountain, its rippling chords a wonderful accompaniment to this Edenic landscape. Not sure equisetum was in the Garden of Eden, but it several loves this garden in Iowa. Dug up several in the rain garden. The soil/compost/sand mix is still very loose, and I was able to pull up all the plants, including the roots. But that won’t be the end of the equisetum. The horsetail is coming up all over the rock channel that leads into the rain garden. . . . Also thousands of Queen Anne’s Lace coming up in the rock channel on the south side. Fortunately the QAL is easier to kill. Also a lot of horsetail in “G” around the rugosa rose. I wish I could find a time machine enabling me to go back two decades and convince the gardener who first planted the equisetum to reconsider that decision.

The white flowering crab are just beginning to come into bloom. They are perhaps two weeks ahead of two years ago—when they were still in bloom for graduation. The blooms will be gone well before graduation. The fragrant viburnum is now in its peak fragrance phase, a wonderful sweetness permeating the east end of the garden.

Another job completed this morning was putting down the weed barrier immediately outside the garden shed and covering it with wood chips. Looks much better. Also dumped a wheelbarrow load of chips on the path in “H” — which will partially cover the area where we have been running the chipper/shredder. All four compost bins are now full. I added some nitrogen-rich fertilizer to three of the bins this morning and discovered all three piles generating real heat. Exactly what we want.

*We live in an impatient age, used to quick results. Because people move around more than they used to, they don't plant things that won't immediately benefit them. This is a danger in gardens. It leads to layouts that, like instant takeaway food, are ultimately unsatisfying. The ingredients are limited and, after the initial gratification, there is no lingering sense of longer pleasures. But a holly tree, though slow, can give you that in spades. A.P.*

### 22 April

1:40 pm; temp 63F; humidity 62%. Overcast, slight breeze. This morning Kendra and I assembled the Eiffel tower trellis. I planned to place it toward the back of the “D” bed where last summer I planted a ‘Sutherland Gold’ *Sambucus canadensis*, an elderberry I thought had died. But when we carried the trellis to the spot where there is a break in the yews, we discovered the elderberry with new growth. The miraculous news, however, necessitated finding a new location. After several false experiments, we settled on a spot toward the back of the “G” bed. In fact, the trellis will look and function much better in this location than in the “D” bed. Took some time to get the trellis level and setting it at a slight angle with the walkways (so it need not appear parallel with the walkway lines). It looks okay. Under the trellis I planted a Serotina Late Dutch Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). It's supposed to produce purple-red flowers with creamy white interiors during the summer and red fruit in the fall. Described as potentially becoming 20' long; I'm hoping it proves to be more modest.

This morning a back order arrived from Santa Rosa Gardens—a flower ordered in Feb '15: a *Lewisia x longipetala* ‘Little Peach’ Bitterroot. Found a nice vacant area in the crevice garden. There's a different bitterroot cultivar in the rock garden—which barely survived the winter [and did not survive the following winter; however, the ‘Little Peach’ did well and in April of 2017 displayed its first set of peach-colored blooms].

### 28 April

3:45 pm; 56F; overcast; 80% humidity. Rain gauge recorded 0.9" rain in last 24 hours—and we needed it. Brief shower a few minutes ago with possibility of showers later this evening. Six days since last entry. Here are a few developments:

- Flowering crab peaked about two days ago; this last rain stripped away majority of petals.

- Most of the daffodils are past their prime. The daffs planted in fall of '14 in east corner of A2 did not do well, very few blossoms. Several patches need dividing and replanting. Will move some daffs from "L" to back of beds "F", "I", & "K".
- Rock garden looks great. Several moss phlox at their peak; white rock cress is about done, but it had a stunning run, one of our April stars.
- Peonies and baptisia are booming, as is the tansy. Some of the Joe Pye have just started; others still asleep—at least above ground.
- Kendra cleared horsetail out of the rock channels leading into rain garden. Covered soil with weed control barrier before putting rocks back in. Still a lot of horsetail in "G".
- Most of the yews have been trimmed and look the best ever. Many small yew branches on the ground, but they will soon be covered with mulch
- Tilled all but one of the "E" and "J" beds. I left one "E" bed alone because it was already full of flowers that either self-seeded or came back from root stock.
- The greenhouse is full of dahlias and pots with plants/flowers started from seed this winter. As for the two trays of flowers under gro-light in the shed, I just moved them to the greenhouse.
- Big astilbe order arrived from Easy-to-Grow Bulbs. I planted three astilbe in the rain garden and will plant the rest in a couple of days.
- On Monday afternoon, Kendra, Brendan, Katie, and I did an hour walk around the garden, discussing tasks for the summer and next year. One recurrent task is keeping the walkways raked and relatively weed free. Kendra has done a superb job with that responsibility.
- The three hellebore in the berm next to the Leopold Bench have new leaves and may yet bloom. I thought for sure they were gone. The four gayfeathers planted in the rain garden have emerged, ones for which I had little hope.
- The iris in front of the garden shed have bloom buds and should be opening shortly.
- All the cranesbill look good, but none of the red hot pokers survived.
- The ox-eye daisy buds are about to open. I'm hoping the red tulips in the "H" bed hold on long enough so we can have the red tulips surrounded by the white daisies.
- The *Hyacinthus orientalis* under the pergola are about done, but the grape hyacinths in "C" and "L" look great, much better than last year. I was thinking about dividing up those beds, but they have provided marvelous rugs of blue on each side. The grape hyacinths in "L" nicely complement the brunnera's lovely small blue blossoms. The brunnera continue to impress me.
- Kendra and I dug up two big hostas out of "A1"; split one and moved it behind NE bench. The other was split and moved to the hosta berm in "G". Also planted a new Sum & Substance hosta behind the Leopold Bench in "G".
- The ferns and lilies-of-the-valley that Lois donated are all up and look good.



- Decided to create a fern garden in “G” bed featuring Judson’s Little Gardener statue. Sank a large, oval planter into the ground and in it planted two Japanese painted ferns. Planted two ghost ferns and two ostrich ferns around the perimeter. Covered area with mulch and set a boundary with a “Rhino” border. Looks okay—certainly much better than before.
- Put the Bas Bleu book statue next to the SW bench under flowering crab. Looks okay. The intent was to provide a counterbalance to Pegasus next to the NE bench.
- Pale *Corydalis* from Field Station is blooming; brings with it wonderful associations of the Boundary Waters.

*In your garden, you can make a stand against the prevailing trashy mood of the time. The great eighteenth-century landscape gardens were made at a time when their busy agricultural owners were fencing and hedging and parcelling and enclosing land. Capability Brown’s idealized landscapes reminded them of a pastoral, dreamy past, before turnips, before corn.*

#### 4 May

5:00 pm; temp today in 60s; partly cloudy; bit cool. Main job today was digging up swamp milkweed east of rain garden. This was the one clump I had left from the huge patch that dominated this corner of the Garden in the spring of 2014. I purchased two plastic “whiskey barrels” from Menards; drilled holes in their bottoms, dug two pits for them, and sank them into the ground, with a two inch lip above ground. Same tactic I used with the phalaris in “H” —hoping the barrels will keep these aggressive plants corralled in these open air prisons. While digging up milkweed roots, also uncovered a lot of old apple tree roots, remnants of the flowering crab removed in 2014. I have one more barrel, which I may use in “A2” for the apple mint, another aggressive plant eager to expand beyond its initial planting area.

#### 9 May

4:45 pm; Temp: 60F; light rain. The weather has been dry and reasonably warm. Last five days I have focused on my Wickiup vegetable garden, but rain arrived this morning, bringing me back to Coe. Graduation was this past weekend but no idea how many people visited the garden.

Quick review of status of plants:

- The daffs are all done except for a few lingerers (the doubles and the whites with yellow centers in “G”). White tulips are finishing up—though some lingering petals.
- Bleeding heart are in bloom, but the big *Dicentra spirabilis* in “M1” is much smaller than the last two years—perhaps its diminished vigor a sign of age.
- The daisies along the pergola have opened up. Although borderline weeds, in full bloom they really brighten the garden.

- The NW wisteria has some new growth; the other three wisteria (including the oldest one) have not yet demonstrated any awareness of spring's arrival.
- Planted the new Thomas Edison dahlias and ten dahlias from last summer into the low "E" bed and sowed seeds for three different zinnias.
- On Friday I picked up the stepping stones from Cheryl Hetherington in Iowa City and installed the two paths in "C" and "L". This required moving some spurge, hostas, husker reds, and grape hyacinths in "C". The "L" path was simpler: moved one husker red, dug out some asters, and removed an unwanted rose bush.
- The large Bluestone order came on Friday: 4 Boltonia (2 Snowbank & 2 Pinks); 3 Campanula Joan Elliott; 4 *Chelone lyonii* Hot Lips (for rain garden); Clematis Fireworks, Jolly Good, and Red Start; a Delosperma Mesa Verde (to replace an ice plant that did not survive the winter); two Delphinium and two Digitalis (for the "F" bed); 3 Lady in Red Ferns; a Beyond Blue *Festuca glauca*; a Geranium Wlassovianum; a Gypsophila Bristol Fairy; a Helenium Dancing Flames; four Hellebores (to accompany three small hellebores planted last year in "G"); four *Polygonatum odoratum* Variegatum; three rudbeckia; a Sedum Angelina; a tall Nepeta Souv. D'Arde Chaudron; two hostas (one an Empress Wu); Panicum, Miscanthus, and Sorghastrum grasses; a Buddleia Blue Chip; several Platycodon; several sedum for the rock garden; several coreopsis, including a Route 66; and four toad lilies (to replace toad lilies that did not survive the winter).

## 12 May

Last two days, spent 15 hours in garden, mostly planting. Here are some of today's tasks and observations:

- Planted five compass plants started from seed in January. The pot had five plants; separated them (without too much difficulty) into 3 plants in one clump and two in the other; planted them north and east of the baptisia in "I" — where the Mexican Torch were planted last year. There should still be room to sneak in a few of those big Torch plants—which are now in the basement, having just germinated in the past two weeks.
- In "I", toward the east end, planted a single new goldenrod, 'Peter Pan'.
- The three May Night Salvia in "I" look great, particularly the one at the west end. They add substance and heft to front of the border—and they are already covered with lovely blue flower spikes. Can see why this was chosen a Perennial Plant of the Year.
- Planted a Cranesbill Wlassovlonum in "A1" under the flowering crab. To the west, in the same bed, among the King Alfred daffodils, planted a Walkers Low Nepeta.
- Moved the Avalanche Sandwort from raised A1 bed to west end of M1, in front of the delphinium. It has several small white blossoms. Had intended to plant it in either the rock or crevice garden, but both of those beds are getting full.

- By mistake I had ordered another Angelina Sedum; already have several doing very well in the rock/crevice gardens. So I planted it outside the crevice garden, close to the NW gate. Perhaps I can fill in that area with this sedum, an aggressive spreader, allowing it to become a voice introducing visitors to the rock/crevice garden combo.
- Planted two Boltonia White by the coneflowers in A1, next to the ramp leading onto the patio. Had originally intended to plant the Boltonia Pinks there, but decided the white would look better with the coneflowers when both are in bloom. As for the Boltonia Pink, it is now in the small raised limestone bed in the “E” complex.
- Also in A1, planted three Campanula Joan Elliott; one has an attractive blue bloom. The three plants are all floppy, but that may be the result of having spent several days boxed up.
- Planted a lone Sedum T-Rex (or whatever its name is) in “L” close to the stepping stone path. At the same time, I cleaned out some spiderwort mixed in with a large clump of coreopsis and replanted them as a unit behind the coreopsis.
- The dwarf lilacs are both in full bloom. Can periodically smell them, their fragrance lingering in various corners of the garden.
- First red peony opened, one in the middle of the wood chip path in “H”; peonies in “M1” are within hours of popping open. Also the baptisia and Siberian iris will be exposing themselves within a day or two.
- Almost all the daffs are done. One lone daff in limestone raised bed in “E” — and a couple lingerers in the “G” peninsula.
- Finally, a little 5-spot in eastern raised bed in “E” complex is blooming. The first bloom had six spots, but the next two have the normal five. A charming flower, one of my favorites.

*If the mood now is instant, disposable, then our gardens can become places where the opposite things are going on. We should be planting slow, steady, sustaining things. In the garden at least, if in no other part of our lives, we can dream a future. A.P.*

### 16 May

1:15 pm; 73F; mix of sun and overcast; slight breeze; quite comfortable. Had low temps Friday and Saturday night. Some basil leaves froze, and several purple iris blooms appear frostbitten; but overall the garden handily survived temps in the low 30s. I covered the dahlias in the “J” bed; otherwise, everyone was on their own. This morning was all planting in the rain garden. Most of these plants were purchased at the garden/landscape shop in Iowa City. So far today I have planted the following:

- Five more astilbe, all along the north border of the rain garden: 1 ‘Purple Lance’, 2 ‘Visions’, 1 ‘Bridal Veil’, and 1 ‘August Lights’.

- Three 'Lady in Red' ferns in front of three astilbe: the ferns are small now; I'm hoping they don't grow any larger than the astilbe behind them.
- One thalactrum—a meadow rue that I placed in the center of the garden, not far from the Culver's Root (now very small: hard to imagine how it will look when mature).
- Three giant lobelia (all from Iowa City): one is a red cardinal flower; the other two are blues.
- One clump of northern sea oats; I love the yellow/green foliage and the seedheads in the fall and winter.
- Three ligularia: a small 'Little Rocket', a hybrid mid-size 'Bottle Rocket', and a full size *L. dentate*, 'Midnight Lady' [alas, the 'Little Rocket' and 'Midnight Lady' did not survive the summer heat].
- Planted two "Jolly Good" clematis. One clematis went in "G" in front of the first pergola support pole, where a clematis was planted two years ago. While preparing the hole, I uncovered the old clematis. No growth, but roots and stem seemed alive, so I replanted it along with the new clematis. The other clematis I planted under the rose bush in "H", thinking it might use the rose as its trellis.

A few observations:

- In Iowa City I bought a *Wisteria macrostachya* 'Betty Mathews' (rated Z4) for \$60--the most I've ever paid for a single plant. Only one of the four wisteria planted in 2014 have leafed out. One is definitely dead, and I will plant the new wisteria in that space—but first I'll clear out the existing soil and give it a fresh mix.
- In "D" bed, the lupine seeds have germinated and tiny lupines are emerging in an area where I had tried to start poppies—though there are only a couple of poppies coming up this year. The three recently planted Johnson's Blue cranesbill have all started growing.
- In an "E" bed, several zinnias have germinated and are breaking through the soil.

### 18 May

12:30 pm; 71F; sunny; lovely day. No rain. Realized this morning I need to change my practice when arriving at the Garden. Because we have so many recently planted flowers, I need to begin by pulling out the hose and watering all the new plantings. Too many plants with modest roots, and the ground is dry. I did pick up another "yard" of mulch this morning, and tomorrow will start serious mulching. This morning worked for four hours, focused on planting and staking. I brought some tree branches from home to serve as braces for the three potted ficus. The oldest (the one MVM and I brought from Texas in 1978) is very top-heavy, blew onto the hostas with just a modest breeze. Another job was removing three limestone blocks from a small raised bed in "E" and transporting to the retaining wall in the "G" bed next to the large Siberian iris. I dug up about 25 bricks in A1 to create a new façade for the small raised bed in "E." Not a great solution, but it's okay.

A few plantings this morning:

- Two Russian sage died over the winter; planted a new one in the “I” bed, close to the two that survived.
- In “I” bed planted three stonecrop sedum, in a triangle formation, in front of the baptisia.
- Dug up one of the big variegated hostas in A1; the biggest chunk was moved to the east end of A2, in front of the new pedestal. It should help fill a big “hole” in that area. Planted a small chunk at the east end of the “F” bed, at the edge of the hostas behind the bench. Its white margins should brighten that shady corner.
- Planted a fountain grass in the middle of the “K” border, in about the same location where I planted an ornamental grass last year—one I later moved because it was not getting enough light. I need to keep that immediate area cleared so this new grass (which should grow to about 3 feet tall) will have a better chance of surviving.

Talked briefly with Mike White. He gave the go-ahead for building the gazebo in the northeast corner.

*A satisfying garden is a resonant one. That is easier to recognise than to pin down. A resonant garden has things going on in it that are not of the here and now. Built into it there may be messages from previous owners of the garden and previous uses of the land. A.P.*

### 19 May

1:30 pm; 78F; slight breeze; sun; beautiful afternoon in May. Started working at the garden about 9:00. Primary task was planting the west raised bed in the “J” complex. I began by removing several swamp milkweed. Because nothing else was planted in the bed, I could dig deep, hoping to extricate most of the roots. We’ll see. Except for the tuberose bulbs (from Easy-to-Grow), everything else came from seeds planted earlier this spring: three batches of Russell lupine (all germinated in water and put into pots about 10 days ago so not much time for roots to develop); several *Cerastium tomentosum* (snow in summer; first time I’ve planted these); several delphinium and larkspur, and five blue lobelia in front of bed. Not sure of the colors or size of the delphinium/larkspur but that’s what experiments are for.

Planted three balloon flowers behind NW bench in “L” bed and a fountain grass in “L” to replace the ornamental grass that died. Attached a third hose to the hose cart so I can now reach any plant anywhere in the garden. Spent over an hour watering new plants: it’s time-consuming moving the hose, keeping the hose off of plants. Watered all the new plants in the rain garden; even though the soil remains moist, some of the new plants (e.g., rudbeckia, ligularia) were wilted. Felt good to get everything watered.

At 11:00 met with Wayne and we talked about the gazebo project. I gave him a photo of my dream structure, and we discussed modifications so it would fit into the available space. It

will be about 10' tall. We decided not to pour a cement slab. Upper structure will be cedar but we'll use treated wood for the flooring and any part of the structure that comes in contact with wet soil. Cedar can quickly rot quickly when water collects on it or around it.

### 22 May

No work in garden the past two days. I woke up Saturday very dizzy; better today, but little strength. Probably a virus. Two beautiful days for gardening but got nothing done—other than MVM and I did some watering because it's so dry.

### 23 May

12:30 pm; temp in upper 70s; slight breeze; sunny. Arrived at 7:30 and have been planting for the past five hours. Dug up two large variegated hostas in A1. In their place, planted two buddleia butterfly bushes and 15 Lucifer crocosmia. Both the buddleia and crocosmia are borderline Z5 plants—so these plantings may be a mistake—but they are both iconic English garden plants. A gamble worth taking.

Did a lot of planting in the rain garden, all plants started from seed in January. Planted two kinds of goldenrod (one an Ohio goldenrod), a couple of meadow rue, a wild quinine, some sea oats, some ironweed, several Bradbury's monarda. None are very large, but some should make it.

In the rain garden, two swamp milkweed popped up in front of astilbe, so I dug them out. I think I got most of the roots. I've decided to let the milkweed take over the SE corner next to the storm sewer where I planted three hostas last fall. This spring a big crop of milkweed has emerged in that space. I hope we can keep it cornered with the garden wall on one side and the covered wood chip path on the other.

A few miscellaneous observations:

- The first daylilies—all stella d'oro—emerged this weekend. The large alliums mixed among the daylilies continue to look great. Most of the peonies are now in full bloom; the large reds in "M1" were the first. Siberian iris are now in peak bloom.
- Wendy's iris facing the garden shed are finished, but the light blue iris next to the shed are now in bloom and look great.
- Several more five-spot have emerged in the "E" bed; that bed is full of miscellaneous, mischievous flowers that self-seeded or proved to be perennials. A lot of coreopsis and Maltese Cross (London Pride). It looks a bit wild, but it will be fun to see what happens.
- The three small white bleeding hearts in "F" have all bloomed. One needs to be moved forward; it's now lost behind a bunch of sunflowers.
- The two achillea ballerina yarrow in "C" and "L" (each next to the central walkway) are now in bloom. The large yarrow in "C" is just beginning to turn yellow. Most of the cranesbill are in bloom, as are all of the weigela.

- The husker red are in fine shape, the burgundy foliage providing such a strong structural presence at this time of the year.
- A lovely congregation of blooms on the buttercup from the field station; the pale corydalis is still in bloom.
- In A1 many baby cleomes, near where the white cleome was planted last year. I'll move some to "M2."
- Moved a large green hosta from M1 — where its leaves were already sunburned — and divided it into three clumps: one clump under yews along the walkway and other two clumps in A1 raised bed, protected from the sun by the branches of the flowering crab.
- German thyme in A2 looks great; full of small blossoms. The plant from home with pink blossoms — the name escapes me at the moment — also looks good.
- Goatsbeard in "D" are doing well; today I planted in "C" two small goatsbeard started from seed. The goatsbeard along the new stepping stone path have really grown since last year and will soon be blooming.
- Bevan's cranesbill in "D" and "K" are both blooming; the "D" is bigger and stronger; lovely light pink blossoms.
- Great joy. The blue-eyed grass in "D" are blooming; marvelous little forget-me-not blooms, similar to the brunnera.
- In "F" the Riding Hood Penstemon is now covered with pink blooms; very attractive.
- Biokova cranesbill in "F" are blooming; white blooms with a pink shade to them. Next to them is the Swan Lake Salvia with white blossoms. Pink Mist Pincushions planted last year have now begun to bloom.
- "G" bed looks great at the moment: wonderful clump of pink peonies have just opened. Siberian Iris are at their peak; rugosa rose is covered with blooms (individual blooms are not impressive but overall effect is appealing); ox-eye daisies still in full bloom.
- Two of the wisteria have new growth coming from the base of the plant; none of the existing buds show any signs of life.
- Planted 6 El Desperado daylilies and 3 double classic daylilies under pergola.
- In "H" the 'Pink Beauty' potentilla is now producing lovely light pink blooms.
- A huge dock has emerged where the new gazebo is going. It's now about 5' tall, and gives no sign of slowing down; huge leaves.
- Planted Francee hosta behind NE bench in "H"; also planted two in "F" on each side of the wood chip path.
- At east end of "I", purple dalmation bell flowers in bloom. These two plants are very small and look overwhelmed in current location; should be moved to rock garden.
- Wonderful white peonies with yellow center in "I".

- In lower “J” bed, most of the Bishop Llandaff dahlias have emerged, all in purple foliage. I’m reminded of wonderful Bishop dahlias we saw in England last year.
- In “K” the Robinson’s Red Painted Daisy has just opened up its first blooms; didn’t bloom last year. Dramatic flower, complementing the supernova Fire Primula on the other side of the artemisia’s silver/gray foliage.
- Lancaster Cramesbill with lovely pink blooms; I think there are two more Lancasters in the rock/crevice gardens. The brunnera behind the bench are still blooming—though the end is near—and the blue false indigo are now at their peak.
- The Forest Hill moss phlox with light pink blooms remain very attractive, but the darker Drummon Pink moss phlox are fading.
- Planted my lone agapanthus in A1; when I took it out of the pot, all the soil fell away, not much root, and they are shallow-rooted. This is a tender Z5 plant; may not survive the winter.
- Planted about 45 peacock orchids today: clumps in “C” (close to where they were last year), “D” (just east of the astilbe group), the middle of “F”, and two bunches in “L”.

*Even after the mammoth building boom of the late twentieth century, fewer people are the first-time occupiers of a house than live in places that others have lived in before. Even if the house itself is new, the space around it may carry hints of what happened there previously. Huge pear trees in suburban gardens . . . remind us of the orchards that used to feed the tenement dwellers of the city. Big old bay trees planted close to houses recall the time when gardeners believed quite literally that ‘neither witch nor devil, thunder nor lightning will hurt a man in the place where a bay tree is,’ as the seventeenth-century herbalist, Nicholas Culpeper, put it. A.P.*

### 26 May

6:00 pm; 81 F; sunny this morning but overcast this afternoon. We had 1.3” of rain last night, exactly what the gardener ordered. A large chunk of the day was focused on pruning dead branches from the flowering crab in the NW corner of the quad. The new, three-legged Stokes ladder worked beautifully.

I took a lot of photos this morning and this afternoon. Unfortunately, because of the heavy rain, many peony blooms were badly beaten up. The M1 peonies never equaled last year’s spectacular show. Found another peony (under a flowering crab I was trimming) that needs to be moved so it can get some sun. Amazing how peony orphans keep appearing in the most unlikely spots.

### 31 May

11:30 am on a Tuesday morning; 84F; sunny; humidity 47%; bit of a breeze; reasonably comfortable, even in the sun. In April and May every trip to the garden takes my breath away,



everything moving so quickly. So many flowers have already come and gone—and we have not even reached the first of June. Most noticeable today was the wilting of the oxeye daisies. Still many blooms, but well past their heyday. Within a week, they will all need to be cut back. I have already cut back the tall white phlox in “D”, next to the bench. The peony blooms are gone—though their solid foliage remains. Most of the roses are on the downward slope—one exception, the small yellow rose in M1. Although the large white rose bush in M2 is covered with blooms, many look ghastly, beginning to turn brown as soon as they open. But while the Lord taketh away, He also giveth:

- The blue spiderwort have exploded in the last two days. The berm of spiderwort in “G” looks great in the morning shade: so cool and inviting.
- In the wild raised “E” bed a bunch of blanket flowers have opened up: quite dramatic with their brown/orange colors. Also the red maltese cross (London Pride) are now blooming, as well as a bunch of wild feverfew with their tiny white blossoms.
- Several crystal palace lobelia in the “J” raised beds have single blooms. The plants are still tiny but already blooming. I initially thought the tube roses planted in one of those raised beds had emerged, but instead it proved to be the damn swamp milkweed.
- The dahlias have all emerged in their “J” bed, and one of the old dahlias already has a couple of buds—so it may not be long before our first dahlia bloom, probably a yellow.
- The raised A1 bed also has some blanket flowers and there is this stunning yellow bloom—like an enormous buttercup—from a plant I’ve never managed to identify (even though I must have been the fool who planted it). The buttercup and corydalis in the WFS bed are still blooming. Unfortunately the sweet fern and the harebells that I transplanted did not survive.
- The honeysuckle in M1 is really growing, but it needed serious weeding, overrun by grass rhizomes. Someone from Culver’s had applied grass killer (probably Roundup) along the fence, killing part of the honeysuckle, but most of the plant appears to be thriving.

Wayne came by with the proposal for constructing the gazebo. Far more expensive than I had imagined. He’s massaging the proposal so the cost can be covered by next year’s budget combined with donations. I still have the money donated in May of ‘14 at my retirement party. Construction of the gazebo would be a good way to honor those donations.

### 3 June

12:05 pm; 89F; 37% humidity; bright sunshine. Been working in garden since 8:15. I planted two ruby basil in the herb garden to replace ones that died. The lone survivor does not look good. I need to rethink the location of the herb garden. The A2 location receives no morning sun and the soil does not drain well. We may need to turn the two raised “E” beds into the herb garden.

## 7 June

11:30 pm; 72F; sunny; light breeze; lovely June morning. During my three hours in the garden, focused on cleaning up “H” bed and cutting back ox-eye daisies. Dug up a lot of bindweed (much worse infestation than last year) and horsetail (about the same as last year). In walking around garden this morning, noted the following:

- Elderberry buds are emerging; still a few days away from blooming.
- One of the asclepias I planted in the raised A1 bed turns out not to be an asclepias (fortunately one of the others is and is about to bloom). The identity of the imposter remains a mystery.
- The buddleia in A1 has three large bloom heads, one so large it is prostrate on the ground. A delightful fragrance—though one must get close to the bloom to smell it. Although no match for the huge buddleia I’ve seen in Cumbria, this is still a wonderful treasure.
- Both lavender in A2 are beginning to bloom as is the rue with its yellow blossoms. The small cranesbill under the apple tree in A1 now has light purple blooms, and the rudbeckia started from seed in February have begun to bloom.
- The Husker reds are now in full bloom. I’ve never been impressed with these penstemon flowers, but now the plants have become big enough that the larger colonies really make a statement.
- The yellow and red yarrow near the patio are in bloom, celebrating Coe’s colors. The white ‘ballerina’ yarrow at the other end of the beds need to be cut back.
- The big coreopsis in “B” & “L” are just beginning to bloom; based on my interpretation of my AHS encyclopedia, I’m inclined to think these are both Zagreb coreopsis.
- The peony blooms are all gone and need deadheading. The creeping phlox in the rock and garden are also done for the year. One exception is the large thyme at the back of the crevice garden, still covered with small white flowers. Also the sedum ground cover in M1 is in full glory with many yellow blooms.
- Three of the four new digitalis in M1 now have large blooms. The flower stems are relatively short, strong, and steady so no problem with them leaning over.
- Many blue love-in-a-mist are blooming in “L”; I don’t recall they bloomed this early in the past.
- The gayfeathers all have buds emerging, including the ones started from seed two years ago that did not bloom last year. Some should be white.
- The peacock orchids are coming up—though I should have planted them closer together to form tighter groups.
- The buds of the Astilbe Montgomery in “D” are just beginning to open with dark red petals. The goatsbeard behind the astilbe are also opening up.

- Yesterday I moved some obedient plants from the east to the west end of “D”, in a space in front of some daffodils. The *Physotegia* don’t like to be moved, and they immediately began to droop as I was moving them. But they were only in transit for 3-4 minutes and I watered them thoroughly. Today they were upright and looked satisfied with their new location, but I gave them a fresh drink to help them through the afternoon heat. Fortunately, they are now in partial shade. Their transplanting gave some breathing room for the *Pennisetum* fountain grass which was getting crowded.
- The burgundy-leaved cranesbill in “D” looks good—and even has a few small pink flowers—though I must say the color of the flowers doesn’t quite fit with the color of the foliage. I’m curious to see if it will die back after it’s done flowering. The *Geranium endressi* (Patricia cranesbill) planted in “L” has died; it had not looked well for several weeks.
- The lupines in “D” continue to look good but only one poppy in that area—the same poppy as last year. Apparently none of last year’s poppies successfully reseeded.
- The Eveline speedwell at the east end of “D” is beginning to bloom—lovely small purplish flowers on thin, erect stalks. The Tinkled Pink speedwell in “F” is also beginning to bloom.
- The east raised bed in “E” is now the dramatic high point of the garden. A couple dozen London Pride in full bloom; also some lovely blanket flowers accompanied by a feverfew. The little bluestem grass in the background is an attractive bluish brown.
- The *Ageratum* white bouquet are in full display, a flower ball similar to the pincushion scabiosa at the other end of “F”.
- The Dark Tower penstemon is blooming in “G”, a dramatic contrast with the long row of spiderwort, now in full bloom, behind it; they all look great in the shade.
- One of the Bressingham astilbe in the rain garden has a light pink colored flower. The great blue lobelia also has its first flower buds, though they have not yet opened up.
- In “H” the first Asian lilies have announced their arrival with their large yellow blooms.
- In “I” I transplanted the last of the Mexican Torches; two of them together in a large pot; they had a full set of roots, filling in a space where one of the four I had planted earlier did not survive.
- In “I” the Golden Marguerite (an artemis) is about to bloom; also a lovely pink penstemon is now in bloom (at least I think it’s a penstemon). One purple coneflower—the first of the year—has bloomed, although it’s missing half of its petals.
- In “K” I was thrilled to see the gardenia has some new leaves. Shortly after it was planted a squirrel (or some other rascal) pulled it out of the ground, leaving it with bare roots and only one leaf. I didn’t have much faith that it would survive but I replanted it and watered it regularly for a couple of weeks. Wonderful to see this new growth

emerge. [Alas this victory was short-lived; later in the summer the gardenia was again pulled up, its roots exposed, and it never recovered.]

*A holly at the bottom of the garden may be the last remnant of the natural landscape that existed before urbanisation spread over your patch. That is quite a comforting thought—a thread that connects the before with the after. It need not stop your gardening round it, planting cyclamen close to its trunk and ferns to unfold after the holly's berries have gone. Tame yourself into the holly's pace of life. Think slow. A.P.*

### 13 June

11:20 pm; 87F; 47% humidity; sunny; slight breeze. There was 0.4" in the rain gauge, representing rain for the past four days. Also had 0.4" in gauge at home. I have been gone for the past four days in Minnesota so a lot of changes since the 8<sup>th</sup>. Biggest change is the emergence of the daylilies. Many stella d'oro are now in full revelation, being located in most of the beds around the Quad (exception is "K" where the few daylilies will be more active later in the season). Appearance of lovely dark purple blooms on the iris in the rain garden. The other notable development was the emergence of weeds and grass in the gravel walkways. I vacuumed up dead apple leaves under the four benches, and then hoed weeds and grass from under NW bench and walkway in front of "K" bed. Fortunately, the middle walkways leading to the fountain are relatively weed-free, but the walkways around middle benches and in front of "F" and "I" look awful. Also many weeds have emerged along walkways leading to NW gate—the one that most people would use for coming into the garden. Other jobs I did this morning:

- Dug up 7-8 swamp milkweed around rain garden area and several in a raised "J" bed
- Weeded the rock and crevice gardens and trimmed back several sedum.
- Cut back most of the dying daffodil and tulip leaves in "C" and "L".
- Trimmed the weigela and viburnum in A2; the weigela had been a prolific bloomer, but they are now all gone. Trimmed the large-leaf basil—as well as the St. John's Wort and Apple mint so the small leaf basil would get more light.
- Weeded the north dahlia bed. All the dahlias look good so far, including our first yellow dahlia.

My 13 June entry was my last journal entry until the second week of July. On the 15<sup>th</sup> I accompanied my wife, daughter, and son-in-law on a three-week trip to England. My spring journal will thus conclude with a slideshow that includes a sample of photos from English gardens we visited: Regents Park, Green Park, and Hyde Park in London; private gardens in Wiltshire and Cumbria; the Barbara Hepworth Sculpture Garden in St. Ives, Cornwall; the Sculpture Park in Surrey; Wilton Hall (the home of the Earl of Pemberton) in Wiltshire; the great

Stourhead estate (an 18<sup>th</sup>-century landscape garden designed by Capability Brown); and two gardens in Cumbria: the wonderful complex of diverse gardens at Sizergh Castle and the Holehird Gardens near Windemere (the main garden at Holehird similar in size and design to Coe's Alumni House Garden).