

Garden Kalendar: Spring 2019

This Garden Kalendar is composed of edited excerpts from my garden journal entries composed in April-June 2018—accompanied by occasional bracketed updates. I find it hard to believe any readers will find these 2018 journal musings either profound or interesting, but they do convey the tasks and issues that consume my daily life as I try to find my way as a gardener, caring for four quite different gardens: the English-style perennial flower garden at Coe, my vegetable garden near Wickiup Hill Learning Center, the landscape and a small vegetable/herb garden at Buffalo United Methodist Church, and my private garden at home. Since this blog is associated with the Coe garden, I have selected journal entries primarily concerned with that garden, but I have included commentary on the other gardens—particularly the vegetable garden—because they play such a significant role in my life as a gardener. As for the italicized quotations sprinkled through the Kalendar, they are from Helen Perényi's *Green Thoughts: A Writer in the Garden* (Vintage Books, 1981), a collection of essays that provided me many hours of pleasurable reading throughout the year. Because of the excessive length of this spring-time Kalendar, the complete text can be read as a pdf document by clicking on this link to Spring 2019 Garden Kalendar. ~Bob

A garden entirely stocked with the newest, showiest hybrids is as depressing as a woman with a face-lift: the past is erased at the expense of character. (Perényi, Green Thoughts, p. 54)

1 April 2018. Sunday, Easter. We've had unseasonably cold weather; the ground was covered with snow last weekend, though only a few patches remain in the shade. This weekend my primary project has been building a new compost bin at the Coe garden, a waiting room until the material is chopped up by the chipper/shredder. Bought 33 cedar boards from Menards for the sides and used six treated lumber posts that have been in the shed at home for at least 10 years. Got the bin set up yesterday and finished it today: 6' long sides, 4' width, about 6' tall. A foot taller than I wanted but the posts were 6' tall and I didn't want to cut them. [Commentary one year later, I'm glad the new bin is 6' tall; as the cedar has weathered, it has blended into its surroundings, and I've had no problem filling the bin with material for the chipper/shredder.] While not a beautiful work of art, it fits the space and it will certainly look more attractive than just having an unrestrained pile of material stacked in that area. Even in the fanciest English gardens, the compost bins are often easy to locate. I'll try to think of the garden as Brechtian theatre with all the stage machinery part of the set.

Temp sank to 20F last night, but I didn't see evidence of damage to any emerging plants. Many daffs in the "I" bed have buds ready to open but the cold weather has convinced them to be patient. We have had a few (perhaps 15) scattered crocus blooming in the "B", "C", and "L" beds, mostly yellow, remnants of that first bulb planting in the fall of '14. One nice cluster of white crocus. The daylilies are just beginning to emerge, spurge are growing, many tulips breaking through, including the new tulips in the "E" and "J" beds.

12 April. Second consecutive day of real spring weather, perfect for working outside. Yesterday was an all Coe day. I hooked up the leaf vacuum and gulped up leaves in the M1 & M2 beds, cleaning up the area around the honeysuckle, which functions like a net, capturing any leaf that tries to sneak through the fence. The honeysuckle vines running along the ground are frequently sending down roots and creating new plants. Perhaps later this spring I can dig

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some up and give them away. Most of my leaf vacuuming focused on the rock and crevice gardens. After removing the leaves, I cut back the moss phlox, some of which looked dead. Also pulled up patches of the Angelina sedum—which is quite aggressive—and some of the creeping veronica, which also had a lot of dead matter. Those beds now look more civilized—at least for the moment.

This morning I drove out to Ever-Green and picked up my 4th load of hard wood chips to spread around the greenhouse, but I never did any unloading. Instead I focused on cleaning up the back of the “G” and “H” beds. Trimmed dead branches and dug up several unwanted trees growing in the viburnum, including one hackberry.

Received an email from Todd that the sign board is done and will be delivered tomorrow afternoon. Perhaps the Physical Plant crew can install it next week. I turned in to the Copy Center the second edition of the *Garden Quarto*. It should be ready to distribute early next week. Now my next project is to produce a map of the garden with information on the important plants that visitors can find in each perennial bed.

14 April. Saturday morning. Arrived at Coe early, unloaded wood chips from pickup, dumping most around greenhouse and shed. Then out to Ever-Green to obtain a load of mulch. After lunch back to Coe, but it had turned cold and raining, serious rain, no more outdoor work. Spent the afternoon in the garden shed, finishing draft of this week’s Monday garden report. A week of extremes. Last Monday the garden was a snowfield, but Tuesday and Wednesday were lovely spring days. Then weather went north again and yesterday I was planting potatoes and peas in the cold wind. Today, add the rain. Interesting contrast with spring of 2017, when we may not have had a freeze after April 1.

21 April. Good day for gardening. Temp into 50s, overcast but dry; some breeze but comfortable. Began morning with trip to Ever-Green for load of mulch for the “I” bed. Before mulching I moved two of the Route 66 coreopsis to the front of the bed (last year they were over-run by the taller potentillas). Also moved a lone peony so it’s now with other peonies at west end of bed. I dug up the big allium that comes up each year under the yews and moved it to the “C” bed, placing it with two other alliums I relocated there when I installed the sundial in the “H” bed. At the end of the day I had unloaded 14 wheelbarrow loads of mulch. I’ve calculated that one pick-up load of mulch equals one yard of mulch equals seven wheelbarrow loads. I covered with mulch the “E” and “J” tulip beds and most of the “I,” “D,” & “F” beds. I would prefer applying mulch later in the spring when the soil is warmer, but I’m not sure this is a spring that will follow any normal warming patterns.

In the afternoon I picked up another load of mulch from Ever-Green and then continued out to the Wickiup garden. Planted 21 hills of Kennebec potatoes and two beds of sugar snap and dwarf snap peas. Also hoed weeds, cleaning out the blueberry bed—though not convinced one of the miniature blueberries has survived the winter—and removed grass from the iris bed.

23 April. My first 12-hour work day this spring. Beautiful weather, temp into the 60s, mostly sunshine, perfect for gardening. Here are some tasks tackled today, crudely chronological:

- Unloaded pickup load of mulch and spread in several beds at Coe (M1, M2, L, & C).

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- Got another load of mulch from Ever-Green.
- Talked to Dale at Ever-Green about purchasing a Japanese maple for rain garden's peninsula. He has a lacy leaf dwarf, but I'm not convinced it's sufficiently winter hardy and although it's listed as a dwarf it might end up bigger than I want. I need to do more research. [I eventually purchased a cheap variegated willow for that location, but I soon discovered the willow needs more direct sun, and so this spring I ordered a two-year old Z5 lacy leaf Japanese maple on grafted root stock from Sooner Farms, and it was planted on the 20th of April, 2019.]
- Sowed fescue grass seed in northeast lawn section. Preparation involved digging out dandelions and other weeds (took far more time than I expected), raking the area and removing dead thatch, mowing the area, fertilizing with Milorganite, casting the grass seed, covering seed with a mixture of peat and blood meal, and watering with compost tea. [Although this did produce some attractive fescue patches, the whole lawn was overrun in June by crabgrass—which led me to cover the entire lawn area for two months, try to eradicate everything, and start fresh with a new grass seed mixture planted in the fall and early winter.]

25 April. Another lovely, near perfect day. Sunny, temp to about 70. Today was Reading Day—and I actually saw one student in the garden, sitting by the fountain, reading. This morning Russ finished installing the new communication center by the NW gate. It looks great. Within minutes, I had placed in the document box copies of the first two *Garden Quarto* issues and put up two information sheets on garden policies. . . .

You can't buy compost. Neither can a healthy, well-conducted garden do without it. . . . for the very life of the soil itself depends on it. Without the microorganisms at work in compost, soil will literally be dead. Nature supplies the model in field and forest, whose base is in a perpetual cycle of decay and renewal—a program of soil building that a compost heap merely imitates. (Perényi, *Green Thoughts*, 39)

26 April. At Coe this morning, Wickiup garden this afternoon. At Coe, I put a dry erase board into the new communication center, listing 10 garden plants now in bloom, including one spring snowflake (located behind the NW bench). I put back the newly painted benches in front of the patio. I then hoed weeds in the gravel walkways along the "F" and "E" beds. Finished the morning by digging up dandelions from the lawn. The size and density of the roots demonstrated they had managed to thrive despite the recurrent applications of glyphosate—or whatever Culver's had been dumping on the lawn in recent years.

This afternoon to Wickiup. The wind was very gusty, but at least the temperature was moderate—in the 60s—and I never got cold. Did a lot of different jobs:

- Emptied two compost bins. One bin was full of unshredded foliage and it had not yet produced much usable compost; the other bin with shredded material had a lot of good, functional humus. Dramatic confirmation of how important it is for this material to be shredded into small bits if you are not constantly turning over the material.
- Dumped 4-5 wheelbarrow loads of compost in the new raised beds, then tilled the beds, producing an excellent soil mix.
- Dug up about 20 small strawberry plants growing outside the strawberry bed. Planted them in the new raised strawberry bed; most had well-developed roots and should do well.

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- Transplanted about 20 cabbage and broccoli plants into the new 4' wide raised bed; watered everything thoroughly with water I carried up from the creek.
- Tilled several more raised beds, including the ones for the potatoes and tomatoes.

1 May. To Wickiup in the afternoon. Mowed grass where weed control fabric will be used to cover soil under the fence. Did some tilling: one round bed and several long ones where I will soon be planting beans, peas, and tomatoes. Before returning home, harvested spring's first crop of asparagus, which we had for supper.

3 May. Spent a lot of time digging up dandelions: discovered about 40 new blooms this morning when I arrived this morning, down from 55 yesterday, so maybe we are making progress. But there are still a lot of small dandelions in the NW lawn area—plus many are coming back in the holes created by the dandelion tool I was initially using. Now I'm relying on my 14" Red Pig trowel with the 6" prong. I like how it lifts up the dandelion and in some cases I'm able to get the whole root. :) I did notice today, however, that a lot of horsetail is popping up in the "G" bed, in areas I worked so hard to clear out last fall.

One big piece of news: we had a real rain last night. Just what the doctor ordered. Alas, I had not yet put out the rain gages—either at home or at Coe—so I have no amounts. But the soil at Coe was soaked, obviously a solid rain, much needed.

This evening I cleaned up the "L" and "M" gravel walkways. A lot of small weeds coming up, and it all looked rather trashy. But I soon got side-tracked by the walkway light under the yews. The light was leaning backward, having become disconnected from its base. So I dug out the soil around the base and eventually was able to re-tighten the single small screw holding the lamp in place. I don't know much about the design of lighting systems, but it's obvious even to me that these outdoor lamps are not intelligently designed.

On the topic of lighting, this morning the light in the garden had a lovely diffused glow, so I got out the Canon and took 40-50 photos of the flowers and perennial beds. I have not yet put them through the image editor to see how well they turned out.

7 May. Of course it works out that when there's not much gardening to do, there's plenty of time for writing in the journal, but when there's a lot of gardening to be done, there's not much time for the journal. The last four days have been ideal gardening days: sunny, highs into the upper 70s, perfect soil working conditions, moderate humidity, occasional breeze, no bugs—though today a large bumble bee flew into my arm, bounced off, and continued on his journey.

Graduation was Sunday so Friday and Saturday was focused on the Coe Garden. Spent many hours digging up dandelions and other weeds from the lawn. Perhaps made some progress. Last Tuesday I thought I had cleaned out most of the dandelions large enough to flower, but Wednesday morning, once the sun was up, there were over 50 blooms in the grass. Since then, the numbers have been declining: Sunday morning there were only about 15 new blooms and this morning fewer than a dozen.

8 May. Hurrah! Hurrah! For the 8th of May; outdoor intercourse begins today. On this day at

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WSU, the campus was covered with spray-painted stencils showing two pairs of feet, facing in opposite directions, and messages reminding everyone that spring had returned. My outdoor intercourse on this day was focused on creating a new raspberry bed at the Wickiup garden. At home I dug up most of the volunteer raspberries growing outside the raised bed and re-planted them at Wickiup, total of about 30 plants, many linked together by their underground root system. In the transplanting, I tried to stretch out the root systems, but there were many instances where they ended up a bit jumbled.

9 May. Another lovely day in paradise. This morning MVM and I went out to Wickup and put up plastic fence around the east and west borders of the garden. The fence is a few inches above 5' tall. I'm hoping the fence combined with "obstacles" inside the fence (such as tomato cages and the supports/wires for raspberries, peas, beans, etc.) will make the border crossing a challenge for the deer. The north side is still open, and I've not yet decided how to construct the north side garden entrance.

This afternoon I returned to Wickiup and planted three kinds of cucumbers (Tasty Jade, SV4719CS F1 from Johnny's Seeds, and Wisconsin SMR 58). Also planted 8-9 cabbages that had been started in peat pots. I intended to begin planting tomatoes, but ran out of time. This morning we harvested rhubarb (first time for harvesting this rhubarb variety—strong, red stalks), spinach (planted in early March—great results), and asparagus (which we had for supper; our 4th asparagus meal this spring).

11 May. Except for a brief stint at Coe, most of the day was at Wickiup. Yesterday, I planted a third row of tomatoes, experimenting with the red plastic to cover soil around the plants. The red plastic supposedly reflects light wave frequencies that the plants crave—while also suppressing weeds and protecting plants from soil pathogens. Bought this plastic last year but never used it. I thought I had the plastic reasonably secured to the ground with staples, but when I arrived this morning the plastic was partially dislodged and flapping in the wind. Several plants were a bit worn down, but in a few minutes I had the plastic re-secured and covered the outer edges of the tarp with straw. Now the issue is tomato production.

Other tasks:

- Hoed a row of potatoes, covering many of the plants just emerging.
- With MVM's help, finished planting the western rows of peas.
- Sowed seeds for two green and one yellow zucchini.
- With MVM's help, finished putting up fence so the garden is now enclosed with a 5' tall fence.

I still have a lot of sowing and planting. Have not yet brought any eggplants or peppers to the garden. Have not sown any melons or winter squash. No lima beans, no bush beans—with the exception of the French velour.

16 May. Fifteen minutes after midnight, relaxing in the sun room upstairs. As I sat down to record these garden notes, I heard a barred owl, series of syncopated hoots, very close to the house, perhaps in the sugar maple in the back yard. If he spies a mouse, I hope he gets it.

Beautiful day. This morning was at Coe, following teeth cleaning at the dentist. Main task

was planting the two Knock Out red rose bushes I bought at Frontier, placing them on either side of the new communication center. They convey a dramatic welcome at the entrance to the garden.

The hippo arrived—again. The first hippo arrived in April, but his back was broken and had to be returned. His replacement is darker and with an intact back. I “planted” him in the “G” bed on the peninsula looking toward the rain garden. I’m usually not a fan of fake animal figures, but this hippo caught my fancy, and he’s not alone: the rabbit statue by Anonymous and Sylvia Shaw Judson’s Little Gardener also hang out in the same area.

At Wickiup, I planted the last of the tomatoes and the tomatillos. At the moment, the garden looks in good shape, and I might have all the seed sowing done by Friday afternoon: winter squash, melons, bush beans, a few odds and ends. And I still have zinnia and cosmos seeds to plant at Coe. I did get the Bishop dahlias planted.

18 May. Except for a quick trip to Ever-Green this morning to get a load of mulch, all my gardening today was at Coe, from 8:30 til 6:00 pm. In the morning I planted more dahlias, which were already emerging from their plastic bin. I had stored them two rows deep, and the tubers stored in the bottom were too damp—many had rotted—but the remainder had begun growing, creating a dense network of roots, making it difficult to separate everyone. Another problem is that many had long white stems growing up through the peat. Despite the rotten tubers and the early-growth complications, the majority appeared in good shape and I now have many more dahlias than I had at the beginning of last spring. One exception was that I only have two Kelvin Floodlights, one of my favorites. They both had tiny plant tissue just beginning to emerge. [As it turned out, both Kelvin Floodlights died during the summer, and I had to order replacements for the 2019 garden.] I also planted a lot of single “bulbs”—though I was occasionally uncertain which end would produce a new plant—so I planted them sideways, letting each dahlia decide which end was up.

The other big task today was cleaning up a large part of the “H” bed. I’ve decided my only hope for wiping out the horsetail and gooseneck and bindweed in this area surrounding the dwarf lilac was to dig everything up and then cover with weed control fabric. So I attacked the entire area—using my Red Pig trowel. After digging up clumps of Siberian iris, phlox, and asters, I started laying out the fabric—which I will use to cover all the “wild” area inside the wood chip pathway, plus putting the fabric under all the pathways. This will be a slow process because it means raking up a lot of the wood chips. But in the long run this should save time and frustration.

A few observations on flowers:

- Red peony blooms in M1 have just opened.
- Wendy’s flag iris by SW gate look stunning; also lovely iris blooms by the shed and along the rain garden.
- Dwarf lilac blooms have opened; great fragrance.
- Ox-eye daisies have opened under the pergola, creating a space of great joy.
- Salvias are blooming; prairie smoke and dianthus are just beginning to bloom.
- Many of the native columbines are in bloom; also the blue and white columbine in the raised “J” beds.

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- Snow-in-summer is in full force, stunning white blossoms framed by the greenish-gray foliage; also lupin blooms are just beginning.

*One looks forward to the peony season as to the yearly visit of friends one loves,
and the impulse to go whoring after novelties is, in me, quickly stilled.
I could no more dig up these old friends and replace them with new ones
than I could tell a human being that after thirty or forty years
I was tired of his company. (Perényi, Green Thoughts, 161)*

19 May. Temp into the low 80s, then cooled off with afternoon cloud cover. This morning I worked at Coe, most of the time in the “H” bed. I laid out more weed control fabric to cover walkways. While messing with the walkways I devised a new design for creating a barrier between new sundial and the garden area east and south. I carted over 3 large limestone blocks that have been lying outside the garden shed, supplemented by pavers being used for garden bed borders. Set a flower pot between the two largest blocks. Not a great design, but at least it creates a substantive border between the wood chip walking path and the area covered by mulch. Makes the area look more orderly, intentional. This leaves a small triangle in the SE corner of the bed that still has the wilderness look. Perhaps I’ll attack that area next year. One other advance: I created a row of Siberian iris to provide an inner boundary along the wood chip path. They should eventually make an attractive border.

In the afternoon to Wickiup and tackled the following projects:

- Watered young vegetables transplanted the past week, including all the eggplants. When filling my water can in the creek, encountered a frog that did not want to move from the rock that I needed to step on. Eventually, when my foot almost reached the rock, he jumped into the water, but he was now looking directly at me, his unblinking wide-open eyes sticking out of the water, waiting for my departure.
- Planted red pole beans [these proved to be very productive, heavy yields until the end of September].
- Planted Sarah’s Choice cantaloupes (my favorite cantaloupe, from Johnny’s Seeds).
- Planted two varieties of watermelon [2018 was a record watermelon year, a non-stop 3-month supply].
- Planted onion seed, scattering the tiny black seeds over then bed, then raking them into soil. [This technique was a total failure; zero germination.]
- Planted a dozen hills of male Jersey Giant asparagus.
- Planted three raspberry bushes purchased at Frontier; I thought they were all black raspberries, but discovered today that one is an everbearing red.
- Planted several hills of Jenny’s Gold cantaloupe [produced a lot of melons, but they were very small, and I don’t think I’ll plant them again].
- Harvested 5 early scarlet radishes, the first radishes this spring and a generous bag of spinach, which is just beginning to reach maturity.

Overall the garden looks in good shape. All the pepper, eggplant, and tomato transplants look good—with the exception of one Lillian’s Yellow tomato that had all its leaves eaten. On the other hand, the four blackberry bushes I planted last summer did not survive the winter; no

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sign of any growth on any of them. [At least, I thought the blackberry bushes had not survived. I never did anything with this small patch in the corner of the garden for the rest of the year, and it was soon transformed into a patch of grass and weeds. In April of 2019, I finally got around to tilling this patch, preparing to plant it with potatoes, when I discovered that the four blackberry bushes were indeed still alive and had new spring growth. So I dug them up and moved them into a new bed dedicated to berry crops.]

21 May. Rained last night: 0.5" at home and Coe; 0.6" at Wickiup, just what the doctor ordered—a slow, soaking rain, followed by a soft mist this morning. I had no problem working outside: classic English gardening weather, though I did stop periodically to wipe the mist from my glasses. Most of the morning was concentrated on sowing seeds: 36 peat pots with three varieties of cucumbers, skin of toad melon (which needs soil temperature above 70 to germinate), Xanthos Cosmos seeds (which are always fun to plant), more basil (a red/purple variety), and Black Knight scabiosa. These should all have been planted a month ago, but one can't always get everything done right on time. I remind myself that if I were in northern Minnesota, the middle of May would be like our middle of April—and thus I'm not really late. :)

I also managed to type a couple paragraphs for this week's MMGR, ordered peat pots and wooden garden labels (6" yellow treated wood), prepared table scraps in food blender for my red wigglers, and started new compost tea. The four gallons of tea I had just prepared was used to water plants transplanted this afternoon in the "E" herb bed. There I planted a second apple mint container (moving it from the "A2" bed, where it has been completely dominated by the lemon balm—which loves that space. I also planted the large pot of tarragon, a second rosemary (recently purchased at Home Depot), four basil plants (including two of the tiny piccolo basil), an Arctic Rose tomato plant (a dwarf cultivar, appropriate for patios), and two Sweet Surprise pepper plants. So we now have peppers, tomato, basil, and chives growing together: an attractive combination on paper but we'll see how they all play out. I also moved two small chives from the west bed to the east bed—so we now have blooming chives at the front of both beds—and I moved an English thyme from the west to east bed (about half of this thyme died this past winter). The rue, sage, creeping thyme, big chives, Jerusalem cross, and Little Bluestem all look good and will remain in their current locations. I had thought the oregano was sprouting new growth, but now I'm not sure it survived, and one of the two lavenders shows no signs of life. [As it turns out the oregano and lavender were all fine, just slow to restart their engines.]

Gabe, my student assistant, arrived at 3:00. He deadheaded tulips and daffs for about 45 minutes and he helped me lay more weed control fabric to go under the wood chip path. In the process it became evident that the ox-eye daisies had over-run the daylilies in the "H" bed. So while Gabe was folding, cutting, repositioning, and stapling down the fabric, I was digging up the daisies and setting them to one side. We've got more than we need, so I may try to give them away.

At 5:00 pm MVM and I drove out to Wickiup to check on "things" and to do some harvesting—plus I had unintentionally left my Japanese hoe on the ground somewhere in the garden. Amazes me how often I forget my favorite gardening tool. Fortunately, it was where I had left it. Overall, the garden looked in good shape. One tomato was broken off and needs

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replacing, but I have plenty of spares. We harvested 8-10 Early Scarlet radishes and a bag of greens—mostly spinach (which looks great), but also a head of winter density lettuce, a couple black-seeded simpson, and a lot of baby amaranth—which will give a dynamic burgundy zip to whatever salad is created, probably by K since most of this produce will go to her place tomorrow morning.

28 May. Monday, Memorial Day. Back from a 3-day trip to Kansas: 55th HS reunion, saw several classmates I had not seen since June of 1963, including Betty H., my senior prom date. Unfortunately, her husband has died within the past year, but she was at the reunion with a grandchild, and it was great to renew that old friendship. After the reunion we spent a night in Hutchinson with sister-in-law/husband and then Sunday morning church service at Fancy Creek UMC. Total of seven church members at the service: they will certainly have to close in another year or two. When we were married there over 50 years ago, it was a thriving, dynamic congregation. Heart-breaking to see its slow decline.

Today was the first day in gardens since last Thursday. At Coe, I did a quick walkabout and took notes for this week's MMGR. I drilled holes in the bottom of the whiskey barrel that I'm putting in the "G" bed. Also started new bucket of compost tea. I have a lot of comfrey at home, so I'll start using comfrey leaves in the next batch. As for the Coe garden, the east end looks great because so many key plants are in bloom: daisies, clematis, shrub rose, flag iris, Siberian iris. But it was also very hot today—probably setting new heat records. I thought it would be cooler at Wickiup—where indeed there was a breeze—but the temp was to mid 90s and heat index close to 100. I had to take it easy.

It had rained, probably Friday or Saturday, perhaps 0.15" at both Coe and Wickiup, so recent plantings were doing okay despite the heat. I spent couple hours this morning and over four hours this afternoon mostly weeding. Many of the raised beds have been over-run, and it's mostly hand weeding. A lot of grass and weeds where carrots and beets have been planted. Also weeded cukes and around the snow peas—which will soon be producing their first harvest. I weeded some of the tomatoes and installed the tomato cages for three rows of tomatoes. I've got plenty of straw mulch—plus Dale is leaving me some miscanthus mulch to experiment with.

A deer went through the garden—probably two nights ago, probably after the rain. Ate leaves of a few strawberry plants and tops of a few peas—but no evidence he lingered. Minimal damage. Dale recommended putting on the fence rags drenched in urine. I need to start saving my evening piss and add some urinated rags to the fence. [Over the next five months, I poured urine, vinegar, and deer repellent on the rags, but no evidence any of those options made much difference.]

3 June (Sunday). A little work at Coe this morning: mowed grass and hoed walkways. A big wedding this Saturday (President's daughter), and I'll be in Des Moines on Friday and Saturday at a church conference, so a lot of cleaning up to do before I leave.

MVM wanted to give her friend Joan some fresh flowers, so I walked around the garden, looking for cut flower options. At the moment, the garden is in early summer doldrums, but here are the flowers I could find, usually two of each: goatsbeard, Husker Red (many lovely

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white blossom stalks, at their peak right now), sunflowers, rose campion, feverfew, Siberian Iris, Jerusalem Cross (their red blooms just opened yesterday), white columbine, pincushions, and a few fern leaves.

This afternoon at Wickiup, from 2:30 til 7:45. Hoed and cleaned up a bed of bush beans and strawberry bed #3. Spread newspapers around SW round bed and covered with straw. Also weeded most of the garlic. Cleaned up a north-side bed and planted skin of the toad melons and 5 English long sweet cukes. It was lovely working late into the evening: temp was perfect, golden light streaming across fields, softened by the cottonwoods along the creek. This was as good as it gets, a taste of paradise.

“By planting flowers one invites butterflies. . . by planting pines one invites the wind . . . and by planting willow trees one invites cicadas.”
~Chao Ch-ang (quoted by Perényi, *Green Thoughts*)

5 June. Nice day, though warmer and more humid than yesterday. High temp probably in low 90s. I was at Coe all morning, usual jobs: hoeing gravel walkways, digging up dandelions and *Carex vulgaris* in the lawn. But I also spent two hours moving plants from 3rd floor Peterson to Coe garden. Moved everyone except the Big Ficus and the ponytail palm. In the garden, I removed more limbs from crab apples, pruned the espalier, and trimmed about 1/3 of the yews—though never used the ladder so the tops of the yews in the “K” bed still have an unkempt demeanor. I also spent a lot of time on hands and knees, removing grass and weeds from crevices between red bricks around gravel walkways. Very slow.

I didn't get out to Wickiup until after 4:00—and worked there til 7:30. I pulled out weeds from zucchini row, killed a few potato beetle larvae eating potato leaves (so far damage is minimal), watered the June 3 melon and cuke transplants (they looked unhappy; a lot of scorched leaves on the English cukes and one melon is dead), weeded pepper plants (they look okay, though two had limp leaves). Harvested nice crop of snow peas and 1/3 gallon of strawberries. While gathering berries in the big bed, I spied a tiny rabbit. I got the hoe and chased him around the garden, periodically swinging the hoe at him, eventually landing a fatal blow. After dumping him along the road for the crows or turkey vultures, I discovered four more rabbits in the strawberry bed, managing to kill three of them, each one subsequently deposited along the side of the road. Although I hated to kill the bunnies, so soft and adorable, I can't afford to have them feeding on my garden vegetables. But one did manage to escape, and I never saw the mother. [Later in the summer they—or their cousins--managed to create some significant problems, particularly in their attack on my bush beans.]

8 June. Still no rain, though a lot of thunderstorms around us, but no rain in CR or Wickiup. If it doesn't rain tomorrow, I'll need to start serious watering at Coe. Most of today was spent in the Coe garden, cleaning up gavel walkways. Temp was bearable but humid; I had no problem generating a serious sweat. Right now the walkways are the best they've been since I started working in the garden in '14. I did a lot of cleaning between the bricks that border the walkways, a task performed mostly on hands and knees, close up, so I could see what was happening to the roots.

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After supper MVM and I went to Wickiup for about 90 minutes. She harvested snow peas and shelling peas while I crunched potato bug larvae—perhaps 150 of them: slow, tedious, unpleasant work. I took the insect cover off of the eggplants: they were mostly free of flea beetles—so the floating cover is working. I watered the eggplants and the melons. We harvested over a gallon of strawberries. I usually don't eat while picking, but this evening I ate three luscious strawberries right after I picked them: they were delicious, juicy, fragrant, a substantial size, darn near perfect. We also harvested black-seeded simpson and red sail lettuce, speckled romaine, and Hopi red amaranth. Should be a great salad mix. Unfortunately all the spinach has bolted—but it provided a lot of greens the past two months.

10 June. 4" of rain yesterday and last night. At home, the rain gauge recorded exactly 4"; at Coe it was 3.8" and at Wickiup 2.8". Our prayers have been answered. This should put all the gardens in good shape til the end of the month—though forecast is for more rain tonight or tomorrow. Today I made a short trip to the Coe garden. Poured compost tea on lawn and started new brew. Overall, garden looked good; because of the rain this weekend, I'm not sure they used the garden for any of the wedding events. As for Wickiup, everything looked good. No evidence of deer in the garden (they frequently visit the garden after a rain). I pulled up all the spinach in one raised bed—it had all bolted—and replanted with three varieties of eggplants. This morning before lunch I potted a bunch of plants to sell at the Buffalo rummage sale on Thursday. Will have about 30 tomato plants, plus a few peppers, eggplants, etc.

11 June. Pea comments. Today for lunch we fixed peas that MVM harvested earlier in the morning. They were Wonder Kelvedon (sown on April 16). Excellent flavor. Cooked them in boiling water for 3 minutes, drained, swirled around in melted butter, then topped with fresh chopped basil. Very good. This evening I harvested Dakota Shelling peas. Small vines, but many nice pods. Will have them for supper tomorrow night. Have also picked a lot of edible pod peas. The Iona White continue to impress me: even with this hot weather, they are still producing more blossoms. Also harvested a gallon of strawberries and black-seeded simpson, red sail, and Nevada Batavia lettuce (the batavia is past its prime but we can still use it in wilted lettuce).

As for Coe, I worked on a May photo slideshow for the webpage, but the computer was very slow, so I eventually shut everything down and will try again tomorrow. I did, finally, get out the peacock orchid corms. Some of them had rotted, but I had 20-30 with roots and fresh shoots already emerging. I planted in five locations in beds "C", "E", "F" & "J", and I've still got a lot more to plant, including many small ones. Perhaps I'll put some of the small ones in a large pot and place them in an inconspicuous corner since they won't bloom this year.

15 June. Hot and humid, heat index into the upper 90s, but fortunately there was a breeze from the south. Felt like a mid-summer day in Kansas. Worked for an hour at the Buffalo garden. Did some weeding and planted cucumber bed. Cleaned up new strawberry bed—most of the transplants had survived. I mulched them and the cukes with the miscanthus mulch from Ever-Green.

Then to Wickiup. I did some weeding of the new raspberry bed and discovered that some

carrots had finally germinated in the raised bed where I also planted onions and acorn squash. [This interplanting was a near total failure: the squash did great, but the onions did not detract any varmints from attacking the squash, and the carrots were buried by the squash, a failure compounded by my failure to keep the carrots weeded and watered.] Besides killing several dozen potato beetle larvae and the year's first Japanese beetle, residing on a tomatello leaf, one final task was setting up frames for the cukes to grow on.

After lunch I intended to drive back to Wickiup, but the pickup's clutch—for the second time in the last month—went bad. Fortunately I managed to get it to Keenan Auto, but it means several days without the Chevy S-10. So the Fit becomes the garden car. Back at Wickiup, I focused on planting watermelon: 12-15 hills of Ali Baba (seeds from Baker Creek) in the big SW round bed. Also planted white Lebanese zucchini, wax beans, and okra. The last time I sowed okra seeds was 55 years ago when I planted several rows for Judd Alexander in the spring of 1963.

*Study a book on wild flowers . . . or walk out into the woods and fields,
and you wonder why you go to the trouble of sowing seed, ordering plants,
when the countryside is alive with flowers that are identical with
or sometimes superior to their domesticated cousins. (Perényi, Green Thoughts, 256)*

17 June. Another day of oppressive heat and humidity. I was at Coe by 7 am, knowing that I needed to mow the lawn—which is now presenting some serious challenges. The two northern sections have a lot of sedge and the two western sections are being overrun by crabgrass. I'm not sure how to control or restrain either invader. The sedge does pull up easily, but there's a lot of it, and the crab grass is virtually impossible to remove without disturbing the fescue. I'm thinking my best option is to cover all the lawn with weed control fabric for two months, smother everything, make sure nothing can go to seed, and re-seed the lawn early in the fall. [This is eventually the option I chose, but it took a couple of weeks to decide on how to cover the lawn so it remained reasonably attractive and not just an ugly eyesore in the middle of the garden. Eventually I covered all the weed control fabric with wood chips and mulch, materials that were recycled onto the perennial flower beds in the fall.] Other morning tasks:

- I did mow the lawn; it looks okay, though more variegated than the monoculture elsewhere on campus.
- Swept and cleaned the gazebo.
- Dug up horsetail, Queen Anne's lace, and miscellaneous weeds growing in the "G" bed peninsula.
- Potted six coneflowers in peat pots and set up in the greenhouse.
- Planted a mix of seven flowers in the "G" bed whiskey barrel.
- Hoed and removed weeds from several of the gravel walkways.
- In a yogurt container I mixed water with handwashing soap from McCabe Hall dispenser and then initiated the summer's first Japanese beetle harvest. Most of them were on the roses, but I also found several in the grass, perhaps ones that had just emerged.

In the afternoon to Wickiup. Brutally hot and humid. I could only work for ten minutes, and then took a break, sitting in the CRV with the air conditioner. I returned to the garden after

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supper—and after a front had passed through, making it much more comfortable. Rain was close by but just a few sprinkles on the garden. Big bonus: a complete rainbow stretching across the eastern sky. I planted 3 hills of pole beans, plus a row of garbanzo beans and three new types of bush beans. I've now planted eleven different kinds of beans this spring.

20 June. Checked two rain gauges today, at home and Coe, both recording 1.75" rain. Since then we had a long, heavy downpour this afternoon, and it's still raining as I'm writing these journal notes (11:55 pm). My guess is that we've received over 4" of rain in the last 48 hours. Any worries about a drought are now gone.

At Wickiup this afternoon for an hour. Despite rain—with several puddles of water in raised beds—I had no trouble walking around the garden on the pathways covered with newspaper and straw. That grass/straw mulch has worked beautifully in so many ways. Only major drawback is that the straw provides a convenient hiding area for mice and voles. I crushed a few potato beetle larvae. So far I've only seen about 10 adult beetles this spring. Also killed 4 Japanese beetles discovered on the potatoes. I did some trimming of tomato plants, cutting off low-lying horizontally-growing branches. A few plants have withered lower leaves, but overall everyone looks good and healthy. I harvested over ½ gallon of snap peas—plus a few snow peas. I tried retraining a few cucumber vines so they would climb on the netting. I was pleased to see the white Lebanese zucchini have germinated; also one new watermelon, some bush beans, and a good percentage of the okra sown in a raised bed. We have a lot of baby zucchini, ready to pick in a few days. I should have harvested a few remaining strawberries, but it began to rain—a real rain.

Men were always half in a terror of women's complicity with nature, and the power it had given them. . . . For that is how I have come to interpret the two-thousand-odd years of women's incarceration in the flower garden. The superstitious fear that women were in league with nature in some way that men were not was thus simultaneously catered to and kept in check. Flowers are of all plants the least menacing and the most useless. Their sole purpose is to be beautiful and to give pleasure—which is what one half of man wants from women. . . . flowers are emblems of feminine submission.

(Perényi, *Green Thoughts*, 261)

21 June. Summer solstice, but it was cloudy and I could not record the accuracy of the seasonal sun dial. We did have more rain this morning—about 0.3"—so the total rain in last three days is now around 5". . . . During the rain I worked on June Garden Shed essay—planning to write a piece contrasting vegetable and flower gardening, but the piece got bogged down with history of Elizabeth's garden and our garden/lawn at home. I need to start fresh, find a new approach. Here are some chores I did today at Coe (there all day; never did go to Wickiup or Buffalo gardens):

- Trimmed viburnum and the Wine and Roses Weigela in the "A2" bed.
- Dug up bits of oregano in "A2" (some of which had died over winter); transplanted the survivors to the herb garden "E" bed.
- Planted rosemary I bought at Earl May.
- Weeded herb garden beds; cut back the chives in both beds.

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- Continued with my Sisyphean task: weeding gravel walkways.
 - Trimmed back a lot of New England asters, particularly in the “K” and “L” beds; also pulled up and removed asters in various beds.
 - Planted a row of sweet peas in “A2”; they won’t get enough sun, but I had to do something with them; they were definitely not thriving in the greenhouse.
 - Planted several annuals from the greenhouse in the “H” sundial.
 - Drowned several dozen Japanese beetles.
 - Trimmed the standard tree with thorns in the “H” bed.
 - Continued another Sisyphean task: pulled up bindweed in the Siberian Iris in the “H” bed. Many of the iris did not bloom this year; they need to be replanted and refreshed.
 - Cut back the catmint in “A1” and “L” beds.
 - Cleared path so it’s possible to use the stepping stones across the back of the “L” bed.
- One notable gardening event at home: first day to harvest black raspberries; gathered enough for tomorrow’s yogurt breakfast.

22 June. At 3:30 this afternoon picked up the Chevy S-10, which had been at Keenan Auto since last Friday—one week. They finally determined the problem was a faulty cap for the clutch fluid. Total cost came to \$40. Painful to go a week without the pickup, but now the clutch actually works. Drove to Home Depot and bought plants for the garden: lilyturf, switch grass, variegated miscanthus, two lavenders, two delphiniums. Everything was on sale at substantial reductions.

Drove out to Wickiup for an hour. Killed more potato beetle larvae—and one adult. Also squished a lot of flea beetles on the eggplants—which had been relatively free from these flying black dots the past week. Eggplants are showing real growth, but I need to stay vigilant. Harvested two nice heads of broccoli, which have done well this spring; also three zucchini, the first of the year, and close to a gallon of peas, mostly snap peas. It was a beautiful evening for working at Wickiup. Rain gauge showed 3" of rain the last two days, a bit less than here at home.

23 June. After lunch to Coe. In the “G” bed planted sweet peas that have been in the greenhouse for two months and planted two Home Depot delphiniums to replace miscanthus at the back of a raised “J” bed. In the same bed I planted more peacock orchids and a second colony in the “C” bed along the gravel walkways. Although they are tall for a front-of-border flower, it’s desirable to have the blooms close to the path so people can smell them. And they are a good “see-through” flower—easy to observe whatever is planted behind them. Finally, I planted eight peat pots of cosmos seedlings I had started in the greenhouse. Positioned them so they will have the dahlias as their background.

At 4:30 to Wickiup. I walked the potato line—only in the western row did I find 4-5 plants infiltrated with a fresh batch of larvae. Found only one mature beetle, but he escaped as I was preparing to give him my finger squeeze. Unusual for them to move so quickly. Most of my time in the garden was weeding westernmost row of peas and the ditch east of that row. The watermelon and cantaloupe planted in the pea rows are looking good—as do the pole beans. Only significant downer was that last night a deer had gone through the garden, though

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mostly minor damage: ate ½ of a small head of broccoli and some pole bean leaves. But the primary focus of the deer foraging was the pigweed scattered throughout the garden, our native amaranth. The deer ate the tops of a lot of pigweed, which does better in the garden's disturbed soil than in the restored native prairies south and west of the garden. I did harvest some snap peas and a few scrawny strawberries—the last for this year.

24 June. After church services I worked at home in the morning, hoeing and pulling weeds from the pathways in the back yard. Cut off tops of asters, phlox, and goldenrod—encouraging them to bush out before going into their bloom cycles. Filled two garbage cans for the compost bins, but still a lot of stuff to clean up. The astilbes are now in bloom, just a day or two past their prime. Spent my last hour in the backyard gathering gooseberries. Filled half of an ice cream gallon container, perhaps harvesting 1/4 of the crop. The English gooseberries produced no fruit and do not look very healthy. I'm going to dig up the two best-looking survivors and move them to Wickiup. I'm guessing they need more sunshine than they get in the backyard. The native, small-fruit gooseberries have thrived under our maple shade tree, producing far more berries than we need, but I wish the green fruit was not quite so tart.

In the afternoon went to Wickiup for four hours. Found two places where the fence was broken through by the deer, plus an old break in the fence from last fall. I closed two of the separations and placed several tomato cages directly in front of the gaps—a stopgap measure until I can install new, unbroken fence.

Harvested a nice mess of royal burgundy bush beans—the first beans of the year. Harvested two more broccoli heads, thinking it wise to harvest them before the deer returns. As I was preparing to leave, I looked up and saw two fawns just outside the garden, near the open gate. I chased them away. Beautiful to watch how they leap through the tall grass, headed up the hill toward Dale's farmstead. At the opposite end of the road, near the intersection, I could see the mother watching us.

29 June. Brutally hot today and humid. This morning at Coe, performing miscellaneous tasks—such as watering plants in and out of the greenhouse. I then drowned an armada of Japanese beetles in my soap mixture. It's interesting that so far this year the beetles have been focused almost exclusively on the rose bushes, frequently large clumps of them gathered around a cluster of small rose blossoms. In several instances I have killed 15-20 beetles at one time. It didn't take long to fill the yogurt container.

After the beetles, I started cleaning up the "I" bed, trying to clear space for desirable perennials. Primary focus was on removing asters and hyssop surrounding two daylilies I planted last spring. In the midst of this project, Emily C., a CWC Alum, showed up, and we spent the next hour in Brewed Awakenings chatting about her NYU film documentary on the anti-abortion law just passed by the Iowa Republicans. We also covered fragmented bits of CWC history and an account of my involvement in the Coe garden. Emily is a delightful person, and it was fun talking with her—plus it was much more pleasant spending an hour in the air conditioned coffee shop than working outside.