

## Garden Kalendar: April 2020

This Garden Kalendar blog post is composed of edited excerpts from my daily garden journal written in April-June 2019, accompanied in brackets by my occasional commentaries on those passages. This text represents about 50% of the total journal, focusing on entries discussing either the Coe Alumni House Garden or my vegetable garden near Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center. The italicized quotations inserted into the Kalendar are from *A Celebration of Gardens* (Timber Press, 1991), a remarkable anthology of writings on gardens assembled by Sir Roy Strong, the long-time director of the Victoria and Albert Museum and eminent authority on garden history. ~Bob

*Consider the word 'garden.' It develops by evolution from the Anglo-Saxon 'geard' and the Middle English 'garth'. It means 'a yard'. It has rather less than nothing to do with wild nature, or any other sort of nature. It is a highly artificial contrivance within hard and fast boundaries. We speak of a zoological garden, a garden of pleasure, a garden of vegetables. To talk of a 'natural' or a 'wild' garden, is a contradiction in terms. You might as well talk of a natural 'zoo,' and do away with the bars, and arrange bamboo brakes for the tigers, mountain-tops for the eagles and an iceberg for the polar bears.*

~Eden Phillpotts, *My Garden* (1906)

**12 April 2019** (5:50 pm). Sitting in the sun room, weighed down by my congested sinus cavities and sore throat and cough and a fluid-filled ear, taking cold medicine three times a day; not curing anything but the meds do relieve the symptoms so I can keep going. My main accomplishment today was that I finished editing the Spring '19 *Garden Quarto*. As usual I had trouble with the masthead spacing and margins: took four trips between the garden shed and the printer in the Chemistry Library before I produced a clean copy free of the last editing errors (e.g., an author's name in 13 point font instead of 12 point, an italicized web address that was also underlined). For the remainder of the evening, I am pretending all the errors have been caught and sent packing.

In the afternoon working in the Coe garden, I cleaned up gravel walkways and removed various boards, bricks, and pots that had been holding down the straw matting on the garden's lawn. It was very windy this afternoon—plus gray and overcast—but I felt reasonably comfortable, even with my cold. Two of the lightweight benches had blown over, so I tried anchoring them with ornamental steel spikes I purchased at an estate sale last fall. I also used two of those stakes to secure the honeysuckle tower in the "H" bed. I may also apply velcro strips to fasten the legs of the benches and tower to the spikes. Hard for me to remember that when I began working in the garden in 2014, there was not even a bench in that NE corner.

**13 April** (10:45 pm). My cold is still seeking control of my life: bad cough, back and chest muscles hurting, some flu symptoms but no fever. Fortunately the two medical concoctions I'm taking do counteract the nasal and cough symptoms, and I'm able to keep going. But I'm weak and must move at a slow tempo.

Big disappointment at Wickiup. Some animal—probably a coon—was in the garden and

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raised hell in a raised bed I planted with carrots and beets three days ago. Ground was totally churned up, almost like a garden tiller had been used. I spent the rest of the afternoon repairing the bed and closing several holes in the fence on the south side—though a coon could easily climb over the fence. For now my plan is to place a wire mesh over the raised bed—or perhaps use one of the green fabric tunnels stored in the shed here at home.

Another depressing factor is that the backyard here at home needs major attention. I did fill our green yardy with fallen tree branches today, and using the mower I vacuumed up three loads of leaves for the compost bin. But a lot of the backyard needs raking, and I just don't have the strength for that kind of effort—plus I'm afraid of over-exerting myself and making things worse, such as developing pneumonia. On the positive side, the weather forecast is for three days of relatively warm, dry weather—so I may be able to catch up on a couple projects. Just need to choose my battles.

**14 April** (Sunday). I discovered this afternoon that about half of the Yukon Gold potatoes I planted at Wickiup had been dug up. My friend Dale, who knows far more about wild animals than I do, guesses this was most likely a coon's work, and an internet search this evening confirmed that coons will dig up and eat potatoes. I found several piles of potato bits, the remnants of their midnight snack. At least the potatoes are much easier to replant than the beets and carrots.

Most of my time at Wickiup I focused on the row of red and gold raspberries. I hoed all around the row, which revealed many baby raspberry bushes. A few of those I transplanted into the middle of the bed. This new berry patch looks promising. Last summer's transplants appear healthy, and they are producing many baby sprouts via their underground root system. I finished working on the bed by laying down newspapers around the outer perimeter and covering the paper with hay and straw from the big round bale that Marty gave me. I've now used about half of the bale. My final act was setting up a live animal trap, using freshly sliced apples as bait—plus a bonus of peanut butter on one slice.

Back at home, I did two flower orders. An Oakes Daylilies catalogue arrived in yesterday's mail, and the front cover had an orange/brown daylily bloom that I really liked. I ended up ordering ten daylilies, including another late season Minaret. The Minarets are expensive (\$30 for one plant) but they are perfect for developing the back range of late-blooming daylilies in the "I" bed. I also ordered another mid-border daylily that should produce orange/red blossoms.

From Strong's anthology, my favorite gardener passage, which comes  
from the Gospel of John, Chapter 20.

*But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in which sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them,*

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*“Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.’ And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, “Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?’ She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, “Sir, if you have borne him hence, tell me where thou has laid him, and I will take him away.’ Jesus saith unto her, ‘Mary,’ She turned herself, and saith unto him, ‘Rabboni.’”*

**16 March** [I wrote “March” for April, revealing my muddled state of mind throughout the month]. It’s well past midnight, but I still feel like it’s Tuesday, the 16<sup>th</sup>. Almost no gardening the last two days—though the weather has been perfect. Yesterday morning I did some work at Coe, but I had no energy after lunch and ended up sleeping most of the afternoon. It felt like I was coming down with the flu: my muscles were sore, I had no strength, and I felt on the verge of vomiting. Then last night, I had a long coughing spell and a slight fever. About 3:00 a.m. I took a night-time cold/flu med and eventually got some sleep. This morning I saw Dr. B. He said I don’t have pneumonia, but he was concerned something more serious might develop and he prescribed an antibody. This afternoon I stayed in the house and tried to rest up, including a two-hour nap. Now, at 1:30 a.m., I feel better than I’ve felt for several days.

One significant gardening confirmation: in doing further Google research, I’m convinced the coons are responsible for tearing up the vegetable beds at Wickiup, and it’s the fresh organic fertilizer that has attracted their interest. It finally dawned on me that the disturbed beds have been where I have applied the Territorial organic fertilizer purchased in January, and the beds where I have not used any fertilizer—for the peas and lettuce—have not been vandalized.

Monday morning I did set up one trap at the garden, using apple and peanut butter as a lure. Tomorrow I’m going to put out a second trap and will try coating the apple with the organic fertilizer. [By the end of the summer Marty, the owner of the farm, and I trapped over 20 coons at the garden and her nearby home. This land is fairly close to the Cedar River, which experienced significant flooding in the spring. We think the floods drove the coons out of their preferred habitat, and they decided to spend the spring and summer in our neighborhood. One night Marty’s motion-activated security camera recorded eight raccoons in a single photo. On two different occasions last summer, we caught two young sibling coons in a single trap.]

**17 April.** Most of the day at Wickiup, the first day in over a week when I could work at a reasonably steady pace, perhaps at 75% strength. I did manage to construct a new 16’ raised bed at the south end of the garden. After the soil was mounded, I drove three steel posts into the ground and installed two 8’ livestock panels so I would be ready for planting—though I’m not sure if I will plant telephone peas or tomatoes.

Today was almost perfect working conditions. The temp started out in the low 50s and was

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in the 60s most of the day; overcast--with brief showers a couple of times--but also moments of sunshine. In addition to creating the new raised vegetable bed, my other accomplishments for the day included:

- Dug up 25-30 volunteer strawberries and replanted in the new strawberry beds.
- Planted two leaf lettuces in cowpots in a "J" bed where I had already sown carrot seeds. [*I created a map of the vegetable garden with each bed receiving a letter/number designation. There is a row of 15 permanent "J" beds, but I usually can't remember a bed's specific number.*]
- Re-seeded the carrots and beets in the bed torn up by the coon.
- Planted 15 hills of Rose Finn Apple potatoes purchased from the Maine Potato Lady. I ordered three pounds of these seed potatoes and that will be plenty. I planted whole potatoes since these fingerlings are not very big. Each potato had several eyes, so I don't foresee any problems with each hill producing its own plant. [*That prediction proved to be close: all but one hill produced a healthy plant and a good yield of fingerlings in the fall.*]
- In a "J" bed with old onions around the perimeter, I planted 10 short rows of carrots: 5 rows of the Seeds from Italy Franci seeds and 5 rows of the Baker Creek Japanese long carrots. Prior to planting, I used the broadfork to aerate and loosen the soil. [*These carrots did well though I should have done a better job of thinning the Baker Creek carrots; with sufficient elbow room, some of the carrots harvested in the fall were the largest I've ever grown, well over one foot in length.*]

**20 April.** Today was all Wickiup, morning and afternoon. When I arrived at 10:00, I discovered that my big trap had caught a big adult coon. I was planning to take him across the river, but Marty came by and after she checked out the big fella (or gal, I don't know the sex), she said that Dale (a neighbor up the road) would be glad to take care of him. I voiced no objection. He was a big critter, and I had no desire to spend time messing with him.

After Marty left, I turned my attention to preparing a long, wide bed on the west side of the garden. Last year the raised bed was home to three varieties of pole beans, all of which did very well (particularly the Seychelles green snap beans). For this year I decided to divide the bed into four sections: two sections for potatoes and two sections for stuff that will grow on a trellis--either tomatoes or cucumbers.

I used the broadfork to loosen the soil for the first, northern section and had enough space for 20 hills of King Harry potatoes from the Maine Potato Lady. The 2 ½ pound bag contained eight potatoes, all with multiple eyes and early growth. I had no problem obtaining two or three segments from each potato. The planting went quickly, arranging them in a three-row crisscross arrangement.

I then put up two of the 8' livestock panels in the old bed, using four wooden fence posts. It would have been faster driving down steel fence posts to hold the panels, but I had the treated fence posts and they needed to be used somewhere. They do look good.

My last job for the day was preparing the "D1" bed for sowing peas. I hoed the bed, raked away most of the clods and weeds, and was ready to install the livestock panels when MVM

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called, informing me that supper would be ready in 20 minutes. So I closed up shop and headed home. The peas will need to wait till later.

**21 April.** Because of my persistent cough, I skipped Easter Sunday church services this morning, instead worshipping at the Coe and Wickiup gardens. By the middle of the afternoon, the temp was into the 80s and it felt like the first day of summer. Even with a post-lunch 30-minute nap, I had to move slowly, the heat weakening my ability to move with much speed or strength, but I still had a productive day.

One major task was planting 20 hills of German Butterball potatoes. These seed potatoes are relatively small, smooth-skinned, lovely yellow innards, and prominent, multiple eyes. After planting the taters, I still had enough for 6-7 more hills so I planted these in the Y1" bed, the same bed I used yesterday for the King Harry potatoes, adopting the same crisscross planting pattern.

**22 April.** I finished the day at Wickiup by planting the Walla Walla onion sets in the raised G1 bed, and in the middle saved space for a single line of parsnips—a 10' row of Javelin and a 10' row of Harris. For the Javelin, I put a bunch of seeds in a small tea bottle and gave them some water, and let them soak for three hours (package recommended 24 hours). I then had the challenge of getting the seeds out of the bottle—so I poured the water seed mixture into a cup. Since all the seeds were wet, they insisted on sticking to each other or to my fingers while I was trying to get them into the ground. Meanwhile, it began to rain, forcing me to speed up the sowing process. Certainly not the smoothest sowing operation, but maybe it'll work. I have not had a great record with parsnip germination. I didn't grow any last year, but I did manage to grow some in 2017 that survived the winter and were in good shape when harvested last spring. So today's seed sowing is aiming for a harvest in March of 2020. *[My 22 April parsnip sowing produced mixed results. The water treatment did not help and not a single Javelin germinated. As for the Harris parsnips, they produced a solid 10' row of plants; a few I harvested late in the fall, but most were not dug up until March and April of 2020. Harvested 2-3 dozen foot-long parsnips, excellent flavor and texture, three large ones now stored in the refrigerator for a future roasted parsnip/carrot recipe. The carrots were also grown last summer, over-wintered with minimal protection, and were dug up at the end of March—all but a few in unexpectedly good condition.]*

**24 April.** Today's early morning tour of the Coe garden was very disheartening. An animal—probably a coon—had spent the night digging in the two east lawn sections, probably searching for grubs. A lot of the newly germinated grass was dug up, often buried under piles of mud. I spent an hour on my hands and knees, trying to move the soil and grass and straw matting back into place. A slow process, but it now looks much better, and I'm hoping some of the grass will manage to reconnect with the soil. I also sprinkled grass seeds on many of the torn-up areas.

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One curious anomaly: many small holes in the straw matting that covers the grass seed sown last fall. The surface looks like someone had walked across the lawn with an aerator. I eventually realized the holes were caused by birds—mostly robins—pecking holes into the straw netting as they feed on the lawn.

**25 April.** At Wickiup planted two varieties of bush beans in the G1 bed: Mascotte (seeds from Territorial) and Roc D'Or (from Natural Gardening). I thought the Seeds from Italy purple filet beans were bush beans, but the seed packet assures me they are climbers. So I ended up with limited bush bean options this year: no Jade II, no Contender, no Purple Filet—all ones that had done well in the past. While ordering bean seeds in January, I was obsessed with pole beans, which did so well last year, and had decided that this year I would rely more on pole bean production. But the pole beans are slower to mature, and I should have ordered a couple more bush bean options to ensure we have a good early season bean crop. But at least I got these G1 beans planted. I covered half of the bed with netting, hoping that might deter any coon looking for fresh grubs. The other half of the bed I surrounded with metal fencing I purchased last year but didn't use. I didn't use any fertilizer prior to sowing the beans, so I hope this bed will remain undisturbed. [*Wish fulfilled; this bed was never vandalized.*]

My next task was preparing the J7 raised bed for sowing. I dumped a wheelbarrow load of fresh compost into the bed and used the broadfork to loosen the soil. After hoeing and raking, the soil mix looked very good. I planted an 8' row of Bolero Carrots (Territorial seed) on the south side of the bed and a yellow Baker Creek heirloom carrot on the north side. Down the middle I sowed a row of Lucullus Swiss Chard (Annie's Seeds). I covered the seeds with a peat/vermiculite/compost mix. Covering the seeds with this mix makes it easier to see where the seeds have been sown, makes it easier to get the right depth for the seeds, and should provide an enhanced medium for seed germination. To protect the bed, I installed three metal hoop supports covered with a plastic netting. While covering the seeds, I came across a few small peacock orchid corms that had been stored in the peat two years ago. I planted them in a corner of the bed, just in case they might germinate. [*This bed was very productive; the Bolero Carrots and Lucullus Swiss Chard did particularly well; however, the peacock orchids did not germinate.*]

**26 April.** This morning at Coe. Spent the first hour finishing first draft of this week's Monday Morning Garden Report, focusing on the west half of garden as it appeared on Monday. Need another hour of revising/editing, and I'll get it posted tomorrow. The rest of the morning involved cleaning up gravel walkways in front of patio and digging out weeds from under the two painted benches—which have been temporarily removed for sanding and repainting. Both benches also have major structural problems: one has a broken arm piece and the other has rotten wood slats in the seat. Gabe [student garden assistant] sanded and gave one bench a new coat of the “iron ore red” paint; the other bench will need several applications of wood

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filler before it's ready for sanding and painting. These were inexpensive benches when purchased four years ago, and I need to start looking for replacements that will prove more substantial and enduring. [*Alas, neither bench survived the year; in the summer we purchased two teakwood benches that should be much sturdier and resilient. One of the old benches was repaired and acquired a new home in the "H" bed near the Gazebo.*]

**27 April** (Saturday). Winter has returned. Cold front came through last night and the beginning of a long, slow, steady rain/drizzle that by mid-afternoon had turned to snow and sleet, most of it melting after reaching the ground. Both morning and afternoon I was working in the garden studio at home. Finished this week's MMGR and was typing journal notes for this month's Garden Shed submission—a Kalendar composed of 2018 garden journal excerpts.

About 3:30 I drove to the Wickiup garden, which was covered with snow. Many of the plants (peas, cabbage, broccoli, etc) did look a bit chilly. I unwrapped two protection cloths and spread them over the cabbage and broccoli plants set out this past week. I then covered both beds with a layer of straw. The weather forecast is for the temps to drop into the upper 20s tonight. My guess is the young veggies will be okay, but these temps are close to record lows for such a late date in April.

At Coe, I turned on the garden shed heater, closed the windows, and brought into the greenhouse the tender herbs, including basil and tarragon. The space is tight because we have in the garden shed the bench needing repairs and repainting—being stored there to keep it dry. I did stop at Ace to purchase wood filler and a new quart of the “iron ore red” paint for the benches. Tomorrow I'll apply the wood filler and try to fix the broken arm on the other bench.

Despite the cold rain and snow, the Coe garden looks peaceful, content. The tulip blooms are neatly closed up, patiently waiting for the return of the warm sunlight. There was a lot of standing water in the east-end lawn sections, gravel walkways, and rain garden, but no sign of fresh coon damage. I did cut up an apple and threw the pieces into the live trap—just in case the coon decides to return.

**29 April.** A real rain in the past 24 hours. I guessed about 3/4" at home and at Coe (which matches with Channel 7's assessment), but Wickiup rain gauge recorded 1.8". At Coe, the big news was the return of a coon or coons. Terrible destruction of lawn in the NE section: nothing but lumps of mud south of Sisyphus. Most disheartening. The only saving grace is that the straw netting does help keep the soil and new seedlings intact so they can be restored reasonably well, making it likely some of the new grass will survive. It is reassuring that many areas previously torn up now look surprisingly normal. Once it dries out, I'll use the lawn roller and see if we can get these torn-up areas re-seeded and re-leveled. At least I've got plenty of seed. I brought back from Wickiup the big live trap. I set it up in front of the gazebo and provided a bait mixture of apple, peanut butter, and a pinch of the Territorial fertilizer. We'll see how that works.

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At Wickiup the big surprise for me was that the taller asparagus spears had froze. I would have guessed they would be more cold hardy. The newer, shorter stalks, just emerging, look okay, but anything over 6" tall was limp. I harvested a handful of the limp survivors and were added this evening to a carrot/kale dish.

As for the yard at home, the grass has really greened up and grown the last week. The daffs are about done blooming and the blue blooms of the Siberian scylla are all gone, as are the pink "spring beauties." A bunch of dandelions are blooming, calling for my attention. In the perennial flower beds are many leaves that never got raked and composted last fall, but the astilbes and hostas are resolutely pushing right through, treating the leaf mold as a natural mulch—which it is. The maple trees are beginning to leaf out. I still need to prune the tall ornamental grasses—such as the Karl Foerster, which should have been cut back in March.

**1 May.** Big news for the day: trapped a large adult coon at Coe. I set the trap two nights ago, and there's a chance this was the coon's second day in the trap since I did not go to Coe yesterday. It was sad to see how the coon had chewed or clawed off huge chunks of fur from his forelegs. There was fur all around the cage. I sent an email to Chad, asking if the grounds crew would remove the coon, preferably to somewhere far away from Coe. When I left Coe this afternoon at 5:30, he was still in the garden.

A second development today was receiving confirmation from Physical Plant that they will install an air conditioner in the garden shed. They will need to cut a hole in the north wall—and this will require me moving my desk, computer, and plant stand, but it will be wonderful to use the shed during the hottest days in the summer.

As for working in the garden, the big task for today was removing the old rose bushes from the "L" and "M2" perennial beds. The "M2" bed had the big white rose bush. Although producing lovely blooms, they only lasted for a day and had no fragrance. Based on its thick base and extensive root system, I'm guessing this rose was an early arrival in the garden. It took a long time to dig out the roots, but I eventually got everything into the wheelbarrow. I'm sorry to see this old rose be thrown away, but the time had come to create a bed with more attractive flowers and requiring less attentive care. This will also remove another primary attraction for the Japanese beetles.

Before going home I spent an hour attacking "weeds" on the "G" bed peninsula: horsetail, unwanted asters, rampant goosenecks, Queen Anne's lace, self-seeding ox-eye daisies. While I didn't get the area totally clean, it does look more orderly—at least in my eyes.

Finally, the plant order from Bluestone Perennials arrived: six boxes of plants, all expertly packed and labeled. In the shipment were the following items:

- 6 anemones for the "A2" bed
- 1 Astrantia Roma
- 5 Baptisia (yellow blooms)
- 2 Delosperma Gold Nuggets for the Crevice Garden

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- 3 Dianthus Firewitch (for the “C” and “L” beds; to complement the Firewitch already growing in those two beds)
- 3 Geranium Rozanne (for the front of the “G” and “H” beds; to complement the Rozanne planted two years ago in the “F” bed)
- 7 Perennial Sunflowers (*Helianthus microphelus* and *Heliopsis* ‘Summer Nights’ for the “M2” bed where the big white rose bush previously resided)
- 6 Hellebores (‘Wedding Party’ and ‘Rose in Red’ for the Hellebore area by the wind chimes in the “G” bed)
- 15 Daylilies (8 different cultivars; for various locations, in some instances to replace the Stella D’Oro so we have more variety in the daylily displays)
- Leptinella Platt’s Black (an experiment with a different ground cover as part of the big sundial in front of the Gazebo)
- A Munstead Dark Red Sedum and a Pacific Blue Ice Sempervivum (both for the Crevice Garden)
- 11 Tricyrtis cultivars (3 for the existing group of toad lilies near the NW park bench and creating new toad lily colonies on the berm near the wind chimes and in the “A2” bed)
- 3 Veronica Blue Bond (destined for the “B2” bed in front of the patio)
- 3 Waldsteinia Fragarioides (to help fill the mass of barren strawberries at the west end of the “K” bed).

Opening up all these gift boxes and handling so many new candidates for the garden: Christmas morning in May.

*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.*

*Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”*

*~The Song of Solomon*

**5 May.** Yesterday was Harlo’s retirement party at the Alumni House, so I spent over two hours in the morning doing some last minute cleaning up, particularly focusing on the “A” and “B: walkways around the patio. The party started at 2:00 pm with perfect weather. The garden looked at peak condition because of the flowering crab in full bloom, plus a good display of tulips in the “E” and “J” beds. The bulbs at the front of the “C” and “H” beds had a high percentage of no shows, but the species tulips and new yellow daffs on the “G” bed berm worked beautifully. It was fun to have so many people visiting the garden at one of its peak periods. I should also have mentioned the rock garden is also now in its more resplendent phase, covered with moss phlox and veronica flowers, a lovely carpet of color surrounded by the Angelina sedum.

As for today, I spent the day at Coe unpacking, organizing, and finding spaces for the Bluestone perennials. Focused a lot of my attention on reorganizing the “I” bed. I trimmed the Russian Sage and cleaned up the area around the *Baptisia*. I dug up and moved several smaller

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hollyhocks to create a brood around the big mother hollyhock. The hollyhocks don't like to be moved, and they were very droopy after the move, but with regular watering they should be okay.

**6 May.** A great way to celebrate my 74<sup>th</sup> birthday, working all day in my favorite gardens. This morning at Coe, I focused on the "D" and "F" beds on the south side of the garden. In "D" I removed a lot of obedient plants. I hated to dig them out but they have over-run neighboring flowers, and their removal enabled me to bring together the four tall stonecrop in the middle of the bed. I then planted a new Bluestone stonecrop in the middle and behind the old quartet. This required digging up another large colony of obedient plants and moving them about 12 inches from their prior location. A lot of time and work and hesitation and uncertainty in deciding what to move and how to arrange these combinations. In clearing the area for the stonecrops, I also cleaned up areas around the salvias and veronicas—groups that were obscured last summer. In this bed I also planted three new cranesbill at the west end of the border, in front of a Johnson's Blue cranesbill that always gets leggy and floppy after its bloom cycle. These new Roxanne and Rosetta cranesbills should remain more compact and have longer bloomer cycles that stretch into the fall. The other three Bluestone cranesbill I planted in the "F" and "G" beds. The goal is to have a sequence of cranesbill blooms that run along the front of these borders through the summer.

In the afternoon to Wickiup where I celebrated my birthday by doing a lot of weeding, cleaning up the walkway between the K1 and L1 raised beds. I then prepped the L1 bed and sowed two varieties of bush beans (Contender and Dragon Teeth) and two varieties of Zucchini (Astia F1, which produced very early fruit last year, and a striped Italian summer squash from Franzi). The sowing went quickly because these are all big seeds, easy to plant. While at the garden, I also cleaned up the south end of the asparagus bed and harvested about a dozen spears for K. In the herb bed, I trimmed back the sage and covered the path around the bed with newspapers and straw mulch. In checking out the peas, I discovered that many tops had been recently been eaten, probably by a rabbit. The peas will bounce back, but this undesired pruning will delay and reduce their productivity. Fortunately I had a good germination percentage and a majority of the peas have not been damaged. On my next trip to the garden, I need to do a thorough fence investigation and see if I can determine where my unwanted visitors broke through.

*Ah, het, ere I descend to the grave,  
May I a small house and large garden have;  
And a few friends, and many books, both true,  
Both wise, and both delightful too!  
And since love ne'er will from me flee,  
A Mistress moderately fair,*

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*And good as guardian angels are,*

*Only beloved and loving me.*

*~Abraham Cowley, "The Wish"*

**7 May.** At the Coe garden all day. Overcast, temp in 50s; felt like it could rain, but it never did.

A day of miscellaneous jobs:

- After I had painted the bottom of one park bench, Gave arrived and he finished the top side and gave a second coat to the bench in the gazebo. Once I have given a second coat to the bench in the garden shed, we'll call 'em done.
- Spent several hours with the "I" bed. I moved a clump of perennial sunflowers to clear up an area so I could plant three Gold Prize daylilies that arrived from Oakes nursery. I wanted to get them planted asap because these large bulbs are shipped bare root. I placed them so they should create a small colony between the *Baptisia* and the Autumn Minarets. I also moved some hyssop, placing it behind the Bacon plexiglass sign, and I yanked out several clumps of New England asters. In the middle of the bed I planted a single *Astrantia Roma* from Bluestone. [*Alas, the astrantia did not survive the summer, the victim of a hot, dry spell and an inattentive gardener.*]
- In the afternoon I worked on the north end of the "L" bed, adding nine Oakes daylilies to an area that had been a home to the rose bushes I removed earlier this spring.
- In the "A2" bed, I moved a bunch of perennial sunflowers from the front of the bed to the back, filling in a gap in the planting as they have been moving toward the front of the bed. I intended to plant two more River Wye daylilies at the front of the bed but ran out of time. I did, however, plant five *Helianthus microphiles* and four *Heliopsis 'Summer Nights'* in the M2 bed, filling in the space where the big white rose bush was located until a week ago. I am hoping these perennial sunflowers will complement the "A2" sunflowers on the other side of the garden.

**10 May.** Began the day at Coe, repotting some plants and then revising and posting this week's Monday Morning Garden Report, accompanied by a photo of the "L" bed with a white canopy of the flowering crab over white tulips, spring snowflakes, a few red tulips, and a lovely patch of blue grape hyacinths. A classic spring arrangement.

I then drove to the Wickiup vegetable garden, which involved a stop for my regular gas sans ethanol. The 1988 Chevy S-10 continues to average 300 miles between fill-ups, usually requiring about 15 gallons, so we're averaging 18-19 miles per gallon—not great but could be worse. A round trip to the garden is 19 miles, so it's a gallon (about \$3) per trip. Perhaps 200-225 trips per year, costing perhaps \$750 for the gardening season--though last year's accident with the deer easily doubled the cost.

Overall the Wickiup garden was in good shape, aided by the 1" rain since I was last there two days ago. Bush beans have started to emerge, as are the parsnips, scorzonera, several rows

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of carrots and peas, which appears to have had good germination rates. The early-planted peas have not done as well, only 50% germination, a problem compounded by the rabbits eating off the tops. I need to be more proactive in finding ways to improve the protections for these early sowings.

I had intended to sow cukes and pole beans, but I ended up spending most of time weeding, clearing a path between several raised beds. I did plant several Peat Pots of Batavia lettuce started in January before our trip to Georgia (which now feels like a previous lifetime). The lettuce has been in a holding pattern the past month, so we'll see what happens now that the roots have room to stretch themselves.

In the afternoon back to Coe to transplant seedling herbs into the herb garden, choosing from 15 potted basil started two months ago. The crimson basil was rather thin and undeveloped, but the Everleaf Basil (from Richters Seeds) looked great: robust green leaves, thick stems, robust fragrance. After planting the basil I finished the day by digging up and throwing away an unwanted volunteer gooseberry in the "A2" bed and moving to the back of the bed two large clumps of lemon balm. My plan is to create a row of lemon balm across the back of the bed, a partner with a row of hyssops between the balm and the perennial sunflowers. I also spent a few minutes doing some simple weeding in the "C" bed: removing grass growing in the yarrow and digging out the artemisia popping up among the penstemon and daylilies. Also removed several asters among the hostas and allium. While doing this weeding, I noticed a young lady taking photos of flowering crabs and tulips. She had a good camera and she was taking her time in shooting closeups of the flowers. She gave the impression of someone who knew what she was doing. I asked her if she was a Coe student ("yes") and if she liked taking photos (another "yes," accompanied by a smile). I told her that if she sent me 15 good photos of the garden for a website slideshow, I would pay her \$50. She said she was interested. So we'll see what, if anything, turns up.

*Nothing can be more absolutely unscientific than my ways, according to the usual sense of the word. I wish to gain a knowledge of all garden flowers, but only to see which can be used in a beautiful and picturesque way, and which had better be rejected or left along. In gardening I try to paint living pictures with living flowers, paying attention to throwing them into groups both for form and colour, and so on. I am perpetually at amicable war with the gardener for over-trimness. His grand idea is that edges must be trimmed, and all walks brushed every Saturday, while I hold the heresy of not minding a little moss on a path, and of rather preferring a few scattered cluster rose-petals lying on its brown-green velvet.*  
~From a letter by Gertrude Jekyll (1885)

**11 May** (Saturday) Since this is commencement weekend, I went to the Coe garden early. When I arrived there were two seniors with a mother (I presume) having their photos taken in the garden. And, indeed, the garden looked good, an appropriate back drop for photos

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intended to capture such a key moment in one's life. The flowering crab have held up well, their display of white blooms still close to their peak.

I did a police call around the garden, picking up an occasional piece of garbage. The sky was overcast, temp in the 50s, not raining. I did discover some minor coon damage at the east end of the lawn, but it took just 3-4 minutes to get most of the sod back in place.

**12 May.** Lovely day, sunshine, temp into the 60s. My morning at Coe to meet Rita, my summer student garden assistant at 9:00 for an intro the garden. We spent almost three hours in our garden walk. 3 hours! She had a lot of questions, she took notes, and we covered many topics, including commentaries on many plants. It would be impossible for her remember all (or even most) of what we covered, but it was fun to talk with a bright student so interested in learning about the garden.

This afternoon I was at Wickiup. Using the broadfork, I tilled the long bed where I intend to sow pole beans. I did add some Territorial fertilizer, though I feared it might attract more coons. Marty in the past week has trapped four coons by her bird feeder. Fortunately no signs of recent coon activity in the garden. Tomorrow I'll put in the poles and the pole bean seeds.

The bush beans sown last week have already germinated. I placed a set of wire supports around the bed and covered a portion of the bed with a plastic netting. Perhaps that will keep the young beans from being eaten. I also prepared another strawberry bed (the J4 bed) and will start transplanting volunteers tomorrow. We already have a few white strawberry blossoms and the plants look very spunky. Also have a few potatoes breaking through the surface and fresh growth on the peas that had their tops eaten off. Very exciting to see all this spring-time energy. Didn't get anything planted but it was still a good day. Left the garden at 6:20 pm for supper, a meal of spaghetti (with our home-made tomato sauce from 2018) and MVM's delicious rhubarb/strawberry dessert, using this spring's first crop of rhubarb. Darn good.

**14 May.** At Coe all day. The Trustees will be on campus this weekend so I'm trying to get the garden in decent shape, in case any of them become lost and end up wandering into the garden. Rita could work this morning so I wanted to have her help with a few projects. Before Rita arrived, I discovered that we had caught an adult possum in the big animal trap. Not aware that possums are a source of any of our problems, but I did ask the grounds crew to send him off campus.

Much of the day was focused on cleaning up and moving stuff around in the "F" bed, re-positioning old perennials.

- Dug up 8-10 small Husker Reds and put them in a group at the front of the border.
- Dug up and moved two small bleeding hearts, placing them in a triangle with the white bleeding heart.
- Separated the perennial sunflowers, creating a row of five clumps that now encircle the big tansy.

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- Moved a Stokes' aster so it was no longer in the shadow of the *Baptisia* and is now in front of the other two Stokes' asters. I looked up the name and discovered the apostrophe that goes with the Stokes.
- Moved a perennial coreopsis about 10" so it has more space around it in the middle of the border.
- Repositioned some Black-eyed Susans so they are in a tighter clump and more separated from the sunflowers.
- Dug up and threw away a dozen or more New England asters.
- Created a new group of Husker Reds in the "D" bed behind the gazing ball. I'm hoping that in another year or two, a visitor to the garden in June would see a series of Husker Red and Dark Tower penstemons in all the beds circling around the lawn and the central fountain.
- One real downer: discovered yellow-nut sedge growing in the two eastern lawn sections. Very disheartening. It's probably impossible to eradicate this sedge—and, of course, I still don't know if the crabgrass will come back in June. If the crabgrass also reappears, it will be a long summer. [*The crabgrass did return and the sedge emerged in all four lawn sections. Through the next two months Rita and I spent untold hours digging up by hand every sedge, crabgrass plant, and dandelion we could find. I've read the sedge produces tiny bulbils that remain in the soil when you pull up the mother plant. They will almost certainly be back this coming summer. There's no chance we can eliminate them—just as we have failed to extinguish the horsetail in the Rain Garden area. The challenge is to keep them under rein, in the shadows. And, indeed, by August of last summer, no sedge or crabgrass was to be seen in the lawn. A temporary but welcome victory.*]

**22 May** (Wednesday). Yesterday felt like winter. Since the temp was still in the 40s, an unwarranted hyperbole, but the air felt chilly and damp and dispiriting. Incredible improvement for today: warm, sunny, ideal working conditions. This morning Rita and I moved plants from the third floor of Peterson Hall to the Alumni House Garden. Actually, it might be more accurate to say that Rita did the moving while I chatted with Prof. Dean in the Chemistry Dept. I did give the big scented geranium a summer crewcut and stuck ten stems into peat pots and another half dozen in a vase filled with water. We'll get a few new plants.

When we were finished moving plants, we turned our attention to the "H" bed, reconstructing the wood chip path where a lot of gooseneck and horsetail were growing. Rita scratched back the mulch and dug out the weeds and their roots, and then she covered everything with the weed suppressant fabric and mulch. The area looks much cleaner, and the lady's mantle in that bed looks more significant, becoming an attractive specimen plant with a nice mounded shape, quite different from the sprawling lady's mantle in the "B2" bed. For the rest of the morning, Rita turned her attention to the sedge in the SE lawn section. She's made real progress, but it's a slow, slow process. Meanwhile I worked in the greenhouse, transplanting some sweet peppers and three ornamental ferns, placing the latter in a sunken barrel next to the rose bush in the "G" bed.

In the afternoon I went to Wickiup, where I assembled the galvanized steel garden beds that arrived on my doorstep two days ago. The assembly takes time, but it's relatively simple and straightforward. I was able to get five of the seven beds put together, though one of the beds was missing a full complement of nuts and bolts. I installed two beds in their permanent location and they are now 2/3 full of a soil, compost, and vermiculite mixture. Two other beds are in their assigned space, but have not been leveled or filled with any garden soil. To give my legs and back a break from the assembly line, I weeded the round garden bed where I planted sweet peppers last year. Assuming the weather cooperates, early next week I'll move the eggplants and peppers out to the garden, planting them in the two round beds next to the garden gate entrance.

**23 May.** A beautiful day. Worked at Coe and Wickiup from 7:00 am til past 8:00 this evening—though I did have an hour break this morning when I walked to the PCI ENT and had fluid drained from my left ear. That immediately helped my hearing, though I still have the nasal congestion I've been struggling with the past two months. At Coe I focused on transplanting and rearranging a couple of perennial flower beds.

- In the "B2" bed I planted three new veronica in an open space next to the lady's mantle. I also cleaned out the asters and "lazy susans" [*for several weeks I was consistently identifying in my garden journal the "Black-eyed Susans" as "lazy susans"*] emerging in the lady's mantle. I also removed the Susans from the Millenium Allium patch at the corner of the bed.
- In the "D" bed I planted three more clumps of blue-eyed grass to go with the three clumps already there. The new plants have a different species name, and they've been given the cultivar name 'Lucerne.' I also moved a salvia to create a tighter bond with four other salvia brethren. In the middle of that group I placed a taller veronica. I also re-arranged the tall stonecrop, planting two new stonecrop to go in front of the older plants.
- Finally, I tackled the moss phlox that has been over-run by the purple coneflowers in the "K" bed. I dug up all the moss phlox, separated out the coneflowers, and replanted everyone. Looks much better.

As for Wickiup, the last two galvanized steel planters arrived. These are a circular design that I assembled at the garden (a simple design and easier to assemble than the five rectangular ones I assembled earlier) and then decided on their permanent locations. Other jobs included preparing the "K2" raised bed for three more pole bean varieties. Used the broadfork to loosen and lift the soil, then sprinkled Fertilome tomato/veg fertilizer in the bed, thoroughly raked the bed, inserted the bamboo triangles, stabilized them with steel pots, and sowed the long red noodle beans, Hidatsa Shield dry beans, and scarlet runner beans. Next, I sowed the General Lee cucumber seeds along an 8' steel livestock panel and planted five tomato plants in the "L2" bed that runs parallel with the pole beans. Last job of the day was hoeing weeds in several paths and raising the hills over several rows of potatoes: the Rose Finn Apple fingerlings and German Butterball. Rita will accompany me to the garden tomorrow morning so she can see

what's involved while I'm in Scotland. She can help me cover some paths with the newspaper and straw mulch, a tactic that has worked beautifully in deterring weeds and making it much easier to work in the garden after a big rain. Plus there is an aesthetic element: the straw paths make the garden more attractive and the paths easy to see and follow.

*I am strongly of the opinion that the possession of a quantity of plants, however good the plants may be themselves and however ample their number, does not make a garden; it only makes a collection. Having got the plants, the great thing is to use them with careful selection and definite intention. Merely having them, or having them planted unassorted in garden spaces, is only like having a box of paints from the best colourman, or, to go one step further, it is like having portions of these paints set out upon a palette.*

*~Gertrude Jekyll, Colour Schemes for the Flower Garden (1908)*

**24 May.** This morning Rita and I drove to Wickiup for an intro to the vegetable garden. It proved to be an insightful visit. We arrived shortly after a 1.25" rain, and many of the pathways were temporarily flooding. It was fascinating to see the garden as a little Venice, linked together by a series of canals. But the moment also demonstrated the value of the raised beds: all the plants were elevated above the flood waters, while the water was steadily seeping into the soil, providing an invaluable water supply for the future. The system works, though this morning it meant that we could not tackle two jobs I was hoping Rita could help with— putting netting over some strawberries and laying down paper and straw on several uncovered paths. But we had a good walk around, she took a lot of notes, and we had the good fortune to spot some shriveled leaves caused by “worms” (larva stage of a strawberry leaf roller) attacking some strawberry plants. So we crushed several of these sap-sucking varmints. We also saw many flower buds on the raspberry bushes, confirming that Rita will have some berries to harvest in June. We also spotted blooms on the white snow pea plants, the first peas I planted in March. Rita said she likes radishes so we harvested four Sora radishes. I also pulled up and composted several radishes that had split—perhaps because of so much moisture this past week.

In the afternoon, back to Coe. My intent was to get a bunch of the Santa Rosa plants into the ground so I can then focus on the dahlias and peacock orchids—which should have already been planted. But, alas, just my effort to plant three veronica speedwells turned into a long ordeal, addressing a sequence of tasks so the veronicas could find their permanent home.

- In the “K” bed moved several artemisia to the front of the bed in an open space next to the walkway lamp. I thought last fall the artemisia was finished, but it miraculously produced lovely new foliage on it this spring. One patch already arranged with some linear coherence I left in place, but the remaining scattered fragments I reassembled at the front of the bed. In digging them up, none of the pieces had any significant root system, so I gave each of them some fresh composted soil.
- In the open space left by the departed artemisia I planted three Santa Rosa veronicas. They

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should grow to about 15", but this area is dappled shade after 11 a.m. so who knows how they'll do.

- My next task was using my line kniphofia to fill in an open area west of the newly planted veronicas. I just read in Penelope Lively's *Life in the Garden* that these red hot pokeres are out of fashion, having become a flower no longer "modern," but I still recall their wonderful energy communicated in a garden we visited several years ago on the south bank of the Thames. This loner won't have that effect, but if it produces any decent blooms, it will be a reasonably attractive specimen flower. Last year, when it never left its pot, it produced two small, transient yellow blooms. Perhaps four months in garden soil will produce different results. [*I'm not sure what happened but by the fall the lone kniphofia had vanished, nary a trace.*]
- In this same area in the "K" bed, I removed several coneflowers and filled the space with several Husker Reds from the "C" bed. Removing those Husker Reds really opened up that spot in the "C" bed, making it much easier to see the Miscanthus planted immediately behind them. Meanwhile the "K" bed immigrants fit neatly behind a small penstemon clump, producing a significant improvement in both beds.
- There was a single bloody cranesbill in the "K" bed that I dug up and moved to the border under the pergola, near several other cranesbill patches.
- Back to "K," I moved a painted daisy planted four years ago at the back of the bed, thinking it would grow much taller than it ever managed. It has flowered each year, but it becomes lost in a boisterous crowd of asters and purple coneflowers. I moved the daisy to the front of the bed, hoping that would provide it a more distinctive presence.
- At the front of the "K" bed is a single lungwort which looked robust earlier in the spring when it was in bloom, but now it appears lank and unfocused. It does produce many small red and blue blooms—though I've always felt those intense colors never seemed appropriate for its attractive silver/green foliage. Because it has been intertwined with a wild buttercup, I dug up the lungwort and moved it to a new location in the middle of the bed. I had not expected the buttercup to have such a long, fat taproot, and the plant soon expressed its dissatisfaction by going limp, ever after intensive watering. So I cut off the top of the plant, which might make it easier to maintain its turgidity.
- Further east in the bed is a large patch of Canada goldenrod. Perhaps in the future I'll remove them, but today I just tried to corral them by pulling up their outliers and provide some separation between the goldenrod and the nearby balloon flowers and daylilies. We have a similar problem with an aromatic aster over-running two of the small salvias near the front of the bed. I did install a circular metal plant support for the asters to grow through.
- Pulled up several volunteer Joe Pye Weeds growing in the middle of balloon flowers.

**26 May** (Sunday). Next Saturday we drive to Chicago and on Sunday fly to Glasgow. A lot of gardening to do, and the forecast is for a big rain tomorrow and possibility of showers every day for the rest of the week. Today I put in eight hours at Wickiup. I filled three stainless steel

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beds with soil, compost, and vermiculite. Most of the soil came from shoveling up thin layers of soil in the walkways that have not yet been covered by the paper/straw mulch. In one on the new beds, I sowed yellow zucchini seeds; the other two are ready for planting.

I prepped the last long tomato bed and it's now ready for tomato transplants—and I did plant one tomato, a porkchop. Also sowed burgundy okay in a 5' long bed at the south end of the asparagus bed. In J14 I planted two kinds of lima beans, both bush varieties.

One ugly bit of news: found and killed 7-8 Colorado Potato Beetles, all adults, plus I found a leaf with their eggs. All but one beetle was on the Rose Finn Apple or the German Butterball. No beetles on the Yukon Gold and only one on the King Harry, which is reportedly a potato variety the beetles do not find attractive.

**27 May.** At Coe I concentrated on the south side of the "L" bed, an area that currently has a lot of small stuff crying for attention. One immediate decision was to remove two small yarrow from the front of the bed and transfer them to the "B2" bed, in front of three veronica I planted there last week. Back in the "L" bed I did a lot more "weed" pulling, removing a bunch of individual coneflowers and many of the sorrel with attractive little yellow blossoms.

Meanwhile Rita worked next to the Eiffel Tower honeysuckle in the "H" bed, removing horsetail and gooseneck, covering the area with weed fabric and mulch, and then planting three Moonbeam coreopsis. Area looks much improved.

After lunch, I crashed; slept for almost two hours, so I didn't head out to Wickiup until after 3:00. Worked til past sundown. It was a glorious afternoon, though a bit sultry. Did no planting—just cleaning up, weed control, preparing beds for planting. A few notable accomplishments.

- I filled two more steel raised beds with the soil/compost/vermiculite mix. The soil is really too wet to handle properly but given my schedule I have no choice.
- Covered two paths with newspaper and straw mulch, making it easier to plant the tomatoes in the beds next to the paths.
- Cleaned up the north half of the Yukon Gold taters and the nearby raspberry bushes. While hoeing around the potatoes, killed about ten mature Colorado Potato Beetles and squished their eggs on the underside of several leaves. Found four sets of eggs on one plant, another with three. I still have the south half of the row to do. I'm interested to see if there are so many beetles and eggs in that stretch because there were no potatoes in that area last year.
- Cleaned up the round bed by the entrance; it should now be ready for the sweet pepper transplants.

This evening was a glorious sunset, the sunlight shining under low lying clouds, turning the cloud bellies a mix of magenta, purple, violet, blue, pink, and gold. The light was streaming through the cottonwood trees, the leaves shimmering like golden coins in the evening breeze. I thought of the paragraph in Thoreau's essay "Walking" when he describes bathing in the sunset's "golden flood." It did indeed feel as though I had slipped into another

world of inexpressible beauty. And it persevered, lasting almost an hour, with that silent shower of cottonwood radiance, a priceless gift. [*Here are a few sentences from the passage in "Walking" that I had in mind when composing my garden journal entry. Thoreau was revising this essay shortly before his death from consumption in 1862, and it was first published in The Atlantic, a few weeks after his passing.*]

*We had a remarkable sunset one day last November. I was walking in a meadow, the source of a small brook, when the sun at last, just before setting, after a cold grey day, reached a clear stratum in the horizon, and the softest, brightest morning sunlight fell on the dry grass and on the stems of the trees in the opposite horizon and on the leaves of the shrub-oaks on the hillside, while our shadows stretched long over the meadow eastward, as if we were the only motes in its beams. It was such a light as we could not have imagined a moment before, and the air also was so warm and serene that nothing was wanting to make a paradise of that meadow. When we reflected that this was not a solitary phenomenon, never to happen again, but that it would happen forever and ever, an infinite number of evenings, and cheer and reassure the latest child that walked there, it was more glorious still. . . . We walked in so pure and bright a light, gilding the withered grass and leaves, so softly and serenely bright, I thought I had never bathed in such a golden flood, without a ripple or a murmur to it. The west side of every wood and rising ground gleamed like the boundary of Elysium, and the sun on our backs seemed like a gentle herdsman driving us home at evening.*

**28 May.** Arrived at Coe by 7:00 a.m. The Weather Channel claimed the likelihood of rain at only 10%, but the clouds and the "feel of the air" suggested quite different odds—and the "feel" was right. I focused on getting the dahlia tubers into the "E" and "J" beds. I opened the two black containers and discovered the tubers were all in good condition—though some had started growing, despite no access to light or moisture. One wonders what triggering mechanisms convince them it's time to get going.

I began by planting the unnamed dahlias in the "J" bed—where they were last year. After laying them all out, I decided not to divide any of the tuber clumps. I did prepare a special dietary mix for covering the tubers—a blend of fresh compost (some of my best from the composter under the lilac bush at home), soil from the "J" bed, some greensand, some bone meal, and some of the peat used for storing the tubers. Planted about 30 dahlias. By 9:00 a.m. the rain had arrived, but I kept working, and by 11:15 had them all covered. My trousers were thoroughly soaked, but my head and torso were dry, and it felt good to have this job finished.

After lunch I revised last week's MMGR and then took a short nap. When I woke up at 2:30, the sun was shining, the sky was blue, and I thought this would be a good opportunity to drive out to Wickiup and plant some tomatoes and sweet peppers. By the time I arrived, however, it was overcast, with dark blue clouds to the north and west, threatening rain, and occasional lightning perhaps 2-3 miles away. Determined to get something accomplished, I dashed around, setting out four tomato plants. One took some time because it was lanky and twisted, but I eventually got most of the main stem covered with a soil/compost mix, plus some peat

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and a few organic tomato fertilizer pellets. I also wrapped each stem at ground level with a strip of newspaper, to protect them from cut worms, just like my Dad taught me almost 70 years ago. As I was putting a wire cage around the fourth tomato plant, the rain arrived. I drove back to CR, my windshield wipers going crazy all the way home.

*A garden is like those pernicious machineries which catch a man's coat-skirt or his hand, and draw in his arm, his leg, and his whole body to irresistible destruction. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**31 May.** Last entry for three weeks since we leave for Scotland tomorrow. Today it was all Coe; never made it to Wickiup. As expected, I feel like most of my Coe gardening tasks remain undone. Today's efforts were focused on cleaning up the gravel walkways. I did take my mower to Coe and gave the lawn a thorough mowing. From a distance the lawn looks pretty good, but when you get up close, one sees all the sedge, which resists cutting and grows back much faster than the grass.

One other depressing note: today I witnessed a steady shedding of leaves from the flowering crab trees. The return of the scab. Last year most of the leaves stayed on the trees until fall, and I was hoping the pattern would be repeated this year, but it's not to be. *[By the end of the summer, the flowering crab were almost completely defoliated, with the exception of the new, small, green leaves at the end of the branches.]*

**19 June** (Wednesday). We got home from Scotland last night. We had a great trip but it's good to be home. Today was split between my morning at the Coe garden and the afternoon at Wickiup. It was exciting to see the gardens after being away for over two weeks. Both gardens looked okay. We've had ample rain, and the weather today felt like Scotland: showers last night, cloudy all day, temp in the 70s, light drizzle this afternoon, great gardening weather.

As I looked at the Coe garden this morning, I felt some pride and satisfaction. Many imperfections, a lack of a clear and coherent design in many of the perennial flower beds, but overall it gave the impression of a rich, diverse, full display. Many wonderful plants in bloom, and the garden looked appealing, like a real garden. Rita was already in the garden when I arrived, pulling sedge. We decided she would focus first on the SE section, which has the least amount of sedge, and we'll try to clean up one section at a time. While Rita worked on the lawn, I tried to repair the broken bench, drilling screws into the back to keep the bench from completely splitting apart. Not a pretty fix, but at least the bench is now usable.

While I was in Scotland, the air conditioner was installed in the shed, a godsend. Rita and I did some post-installation cleanup, vacuuming, and repositioning of furniture. Got the computer back in place, hooked up, and running. The shed is now fully functional and in appearance quite professional. In my retirement I somehow ended up with one of the best offices on campus. I still need to put up a few photos, my world map, the bulletin board, but the basic work is now done.

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As for Wickiup, a lot of weeds, but the paths were in good shape and the garden, having received ample rain, was green and robust. I concentrated on harvesting strawberries, gathering two gallons, all from the oldest bed. A few soft berries, but these Flavor-Fest berries hold up well, they were a good size, and tasted wonderful. I also picked 4-5 servings of snow peas and two heads of lettuce—which we had for supper with the broccoli I harvested.

**21 June.** Key moment today was while driving back in the Chevy S-10 from Wickiup. On I-380, just past the Blairs Ferry exit, the right rear tire blew out. Fortunately I was in the right lane and no car near me, so I was able to get the pickup parked on the side of the highway. Called AAA and within an hour I was riding in a tow truck to Keenan Auto. Since it's Friday evening, nothing will happen this weekend, but at least the pickup is off the Interstate and in a safe parking lot.

As for gardening, the day was split between Coe in the morning and Wickiup in the afternoon—separated by three hours of rain. This morning I started working about 7:15, initially cleaning out unwanted vegetation and cutting back the ox-eye daisies in the “G” bed. In the process made a great discovery: the new “H” wisteria—which I thought was dead—has new branches emerging from the base. I cut the dead stock away and cleared the area around the wisteria. During the morning I also tramped around the garden and took 50+ photos to help me prepare this week's MMGR and a slide show for the website. With all the Scotland photos to edit, I've got enough photos for a dozen slide shows.

About 10:45 it started raining. Rita kept working in the rain and was thoroughly drenched by noon. Being older and wiser, I moved my operation into the garden shed, hung up my bulletin board, re-arranged my Tybee group photos, and caught up on old email, deleting hundreds of messages from the past three weeks.

After lunch I went to Wickiup, but it was raining when I arrived so I sat in the pickup and enjoyed a short nap, something I don't recall ever have done before in the pickup. About 3:00, it stopped raining (1.3") but I was still able to do some weeding.

**22 June.** Up early and driving to Wickiup before 7:00. Except for an hour interlude for lunch worked until 4:30 at Wickiup. A beautiful day for gardening: temp in 70s, overcast and a bit humid but still quite comfortable. My main focus was on planting:

- In a new steel raised bed I planted slips of Burgundy sweet potatoes from the Maine Potato Lady. Recent arrivals in the mail, they appeared to be in good shape; long stems with tiny white roots wrapped in moist paper surrounded by a wax paper sheet.
- Sowed a 10' row of Jacob's Cattle dry beans (a beautiful two-toned bean). In one bed ob peas, I planted two varieties of cucumbers: Diva seedless and Tasty Jade F1 (both from Johnny's Seeds). In another pea row, I planted several Telegraph Improved cucumbers (an English heirloom from Botanical Interests). On a bed near the rhubarb patch, I planted a 10' row of Lebanese white zucchini. [*This was the third year I've planted this zucchini and every year it has been*

Garden Kalendar: April 2020

*an outstanding producer.*] Although late for radishes, but I did sow a short row of Rover radishes, and in the big round bed I sowed more watermelon to go with the Ali Baba I started before the Scotland trip.

**25 June.** This morning at Coe I watered plants in the greenhouse and then attacked the nut sedge in the lawn. I did take a break to do further online research on the sedge, which confirmed the futility of pulling up the plants because of the tuber “bulbs” left behind. A video from Oklahoma Stated discussed some chemical options, but I did not see anything that we would want to put on our lawn. So I went back to pulling up sedge, one at a time. On the plus side, I have been impressed by the thickness of the rye and bluegrass we planted last fall. I am particularly pleased how well the early December seed sowing worked, much better than I had dared imagine.

I finished my morning by hoeing and raking weeds from the gravel walkways, a job we were doggedly doing a month ago in preparing for a garden wedding. Today, I focused on the “F” bed walkway, which had a lot of grass growing in it, some very hard to hoe. While diligently hacking away at it, I looked up and saw Floyd watching me. He commented that “this looks like very tedious work.” I agreed, though my response included a defense of the gravel walkway as portrayed in Francis Bacon’s 17<sup>th</sup>-century garden essay. Our conversation then turned to more pleasant topics, including penstemons. I gave Floyd two varieties growing in the garden: two Dark Towers and several Husker Reds that I had dug up a week before the Scotland trip.

**30 June.** Today was our first black raspberry harvest, 3 pints worth. Also gathered a few of the golden raspberries—which are super delicious but small and very fragile—and a quart of gooseberries.

*Along with the urge to make a garden usually comes the urge to keep track of it in writing—to note planting dates and the weather, and the outcome. (Dorothy’s peas turned out well; they were eating them all through July and into August. But I can’t make out what happened to the broccoli, which on looking it up I find the English don’t distinguish from cauliflower.)*

*Once started, the habit is hard to break. It expands to includes lists of plants ordered, maps of the vegetable garden (illusory because real vegetables won’t conform to them), hints and comments.*

*~Eleanour Perényi, Green Thoughts (1981)*