

Garden Kalendar: Fall 2021

The Fall 2021 Garden Kalendar is composed of condensed and edited excerpts from my daily, hand-written garden journal for October-December, 2020--accompanied by occasional commentaries on those passages. As I have indicated in previous Kalendar posts, the journal records my work in four gardens: the Alumni House Garden at Coe, a 1/4 acre vegetable garden on a small farm adjacent to the Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center near Toddville (a garden typically identified as the Wickiup garden), the gardens and landscape at Buffalo United Methodist Church, and the gardens at my home on Elmhurst Drive in Cedar Rapids. In previous Kalendar postings, I have usually concentrated on journal entries dealing with the Coe and Wickiup gardens. The residential gardens on Elmhurst Drive, prior to the August derecho, were primarily stable, perennial shade gardens populated with several hundred hostas and requiring minimal maintenance. The wind storm, however, profoundly changed that landscape, destroying all our shade trees and necessitating a dramatic redesign of the gardens around the house.

This Kalendar constitutes about half of my journal entries in the last three months of 2020. While most passages are quite mundane and will not likely be of interest to other readers, I wanted this fall Kalendar to provide a relatively thorough record of my efforts to create a new landscape on the Elmhurst Drive property. Accompanying this Kalendar is a map of the new back yard garden design with names for the various beds. While editing these journal entries, I have in some passages silently inserted the bed titles adopted several months later. The Alumni House Garden map is posted on the website's "map" page. As for the italicized quotations inserted between some journal entries, they come from *Cultivating Delight: A Natural History of My Garden* by Diane Ackerman, a book I really enjoyed reading last year. Ackerman is a brilliant writer, consistently entertaining and enlightening. ~Bob

"Shaken down by the transitory blackmail of prewinter, I'd like to relinquish all notions of a four-quartered year, in which months chug past like treats on a tank, each one separate and inviolable. For example, the ragged interface of fall and winter (roughly overlapping November) is an entire season in itself. Winds quibble, alternate, and drop. The air is full of the distinct hollow noise of seedpods clattering on the trees like tiny rattles. Rotting leaves mulch into a fragrant stew. And the meteorological surprise of each moment fills the psyche with exhilaration. The sensual experience is unique and indigenous to a hybrid season for which we have no name. It doesn't exist linguistically, this fall-winter polemic (I suppose we could call it 'winfall'), and so for most people it doesn't exist in fact. I prefer thinking of nature as a free-flowing organism, not as a series of doors slamming shut. In a quartered year there are three months of rain and buds, three months of lowers and scorch, three months of leaf rot, and three months of snow." ~Diane Ackerman

1 October 2020. We're hoping the Summit Tree crew will come tomorrow to start clearing away our big trees. This morning I spent two hours in the back yard trying to prepare for their arrival:

(1) Cleared an area for the stumpery.

(2) Dug out the big Osage orange post that the falling big oak missed. The post was deep in the ground, but I managed to extricate it without any significant damage. Although the post has been in that spot for over 30 years, it's still in great shape—just a bit of deterioration at the soil line.

(3) After the post was removed, I could reach under the oak's limbs and pull out the metal sunflower, purchased in an antique store in Barnes, Kansas perhaps 15 years ago. The oak had smashed the sunflower to the ground. Some of its faded yellow paint had broken off, but miraculously its petals were just bent, not broken. With some gentle massaging, I persuaded the petals to return to their original alignment, looking better than I could have ever imagined.

I spent most of the afternoon at Coe in the "G" bed, working along the north drainage ditch, inch by inch, digging out Joe Pye weeds, vetch, several varieties of grass, gooseneck, goldenrod, horsetail, several redbud seedlings, and other small trees. The vetch is particularly irritating because we had it almost eradicated two years ago—and now it's expanded to over a 10' swath along the north side of the drainage canal. I will eventually have to dig up this area, remove all the roots I can find, and replant with some tough plants not intimidated by the obstreperous vetch. I just don't know what plants are my best option for this challenging opponent. While periodically cursing all these unwanted invaders, I also noticed several limestone blocks beginning to slip into the canal. Sooner or later, I will need to dig them out and restore the alignment. Another challenge is to clean up the rain garden, whose vegetation has exploded this past year. The ironweed, river oats, meadow rue, Siberian iris, and cleomes are all experiencing an adolescent growth spurt.

3 October. The Summit Tree crew came and removed most of the big maple. It took them about four hours with a 3-person crew: one woman, a young kid, and a guy in charge, who handled the big chain saw and the caterpillar. They gave me three 3" thick discs from the maple's trunk, huge "cookies" that we rolled into the garage, candidates for a coffee table or some other furniture project. They also deposited a 6' long trunk section back by the fence, the eventual centerpiece for the stumpery. Now my challenge is to assemble the rest of the stumpery and reconstruct the flower bed that runs along the east-side neighbor's dog fence.

Before the crew arrived, I spent the morning in the back yard digging up stones around the old hosta beds (some much heavier than I expected) and reconstructing the compost bins. I also cleaned up the gooseberry bed, removing long strands of Virginia creeper. I tried to dispatch some grass growing among the small hostas next to the gooseberries, but that entire bed needs to be spaded and replanted. I won't start that project until I know where the hostas will go.

This evening after supper, I drove to Coe, left off two boxes of Colorblends bulbs that just arrived, and then to the Wickiup garden, arriving about 7:00 p.m. The sun had just set, creating a glorious display of purple and peach-tinted clouds. Examining the garden fence, I located one break where a small animal could crawl through, though probably too small for a young deer. After fixing that gap, I harvested raspberries. It was hard to see with so little light, but I filled a pint container with reds, plus a sprinkling of the champagne berries. I also grabbed a dozen

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tomatoes. Although stung by the light freeze two nights ago, the plants should still be productive. Several have large numbers of green fruit, and there is no freeze in the 10-day forecast. Other vegetables are finished for the year: Red Malabar spinach, eggplants, okra, peppers, sweet potato vines, lima beans, zucchini. But I can't complain. We've had a great harvest this year, despite the long dry spell and the derecho. With luck, we'll still be harvesting produce for a few more weeks: carrots, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, Swiss Chard, lettuce, cabbage, melons, winter squash, pumpkins.

4 October. Was chillier last night than I expected. Some light frost in the back yard, but our potted dahlia was okay. I'm wondering about the dahlias at Coe. I'll find out tomorrow. This morning we took some produce to church, our last Sunday for distributing free vegetables. After the worship service I spent most of the morning in the kitchen. We canned tomatoes, and I prepared two meat loaves (one for us, one for K). After lunch I assembled a simple green bean casserole and baked two Autumn Frost winter squash, three Yukon Gold potatoes, and one big sweet potato. At 3:00 I had a ZOOM meeting on the trip to the Holy Land in February. Although the trip is now on hold, the organizers think it's likely the trip will occur, the final decision to be made in mid-December. [*Because of the pandemic, the trip was postponed, rescheduled for February of 2022.*]

After the ZOOM meeting, I worked on the Long East bed. I cut back the Siberian iris and in the next few days will dig it up, separate the tubers into smaller clumps, and transplant to create a border in the Long West bed. My next task was disassembling our half of the circular flower bed that we once shared with our neighbors on the east side. I pulled up the phlox and dug up most of the limestone rocks that had served as the old bed's border. Several were broken, either by the impact of the big maple hitting the ground or crushed by the caterpillar that removed the maple's trunk. The area is badly torn up, and it's difficult to see precisely where the old flower beds were located and what was growing in each area. It's going to be a long process restoring this area. [*As it turned out I was able to get the basic structure of the back yard flower beds rebuilt in the fall of 2020, and by the following summer there was enough new growth that it was difficult to envision the devastation evident six months earlier.*]

5 October. Another day when all my gardening work was at home. Before the wind storm, I did not spend much time working in the back yard. The extensive shade garden was a home to perennials that took care of themselves (hostas, astilbe, phlox, weigela, comfrey, spirea, raspberries, loosestrife, lemon balm, gooseberries, and a large grape vine—which provided marvelous foliage but, due to lack of sunlight, rarely produced any edible grapes). But now the back yard has returned to its 19th-century roots as a treeless prairie, and I feel a compulsion to re-invent this landscape. I've been given this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform this mutilated Iowa prairie into an aesthetically attractive landscape that will appeal both to humans and visiting wildlife, particularly butterflies and birds.

My primary focus today was the old perennial flower bed parallel with the neighbor's new dog fence. By the end of the day, most of the stone wall along the property line had been

removed, as had the railroad ties. The limestone blocks are in good condition and now organized into several piles, according to size and shape. I'm reminded of when we were walking in Cumbria several years ago and came across a rock wall being rebuilt, with hundreds of stones neatly laid out on the pasture, waiting for the return of the laborers. My current plans are to use the old RR ties along the fence and the limestone for the front of the border. As for the cleaning up, it was a slow process: roots and more roots of wormwood and lily-of-the-valley and ground ivy and quack grass, plus the goldenrod and phlox. Although many roots will regenerate, for the moment they are in hiding, giving me the illusion we made some demonstrable progress.

The tree crew did show up, but the brisk wind (just a minor annoyance at my lower elevation) made it impossible for them to do their treetop cutting. So they attacked the big oak in the back yard, and we identified the tree limbs that should be good candidates for firewood. Many of the oak limbs are now in a haphazard pile next to the old raspberry bed, including those that will need to be hauled down to the street.

“Driving to a local nursery, I idly plan how many tall, rangy asters I can cram into my Toyota hatchback. Quite a few really, more than in any other car I’ve owned. I’m sorry we didn’t learn garden math and geometry in school. ‘If the back of your car is 4 feet wide, and 3 feet from bumper to back of the front seats, and an average of 3 feet high, how many 8-inch pots of asters 4 feet tall by 2 feet wide will fit if (1) you lay them side by side, (2) crisscross them on top of one another, or (3) arrange them head to foot?’ When, I wonder, did I stop thinking of cars as transport and begin thinking of them mainly as garden wheelbarrows.”

6 October. A busy day at Elmhurst Drive. At 9:00 a.m. an IMON technician arrived and within an hour our phone service was restored, the first time our landline has been connected in almost two months. Shortly after the departure of the phone crew, Dan from Summit Trees arrived and started trimming the pin oak in the front yard. Unfortunately a limb fell across the electrical line going into the house, pulling the line out of the house’s siding. It’s now hanging a few feet above our driveway. Dan’s first response was a simple “Shit,” but he quickly assured us they would get it repaired. In the afternoon his crew launched a hardcore assault on the remnants of the pin oak and the silver maple. The latter took a long time because several limbs were hanging over a car in the neighbor’s driveway. Each limb section had to be tied and gently lowered to the ground. By 5:00 all the limbs were down. With both trees, less than 20’ of the core trunk still remains. Of course, our front yard is again buried in tree limbs.

One remarkable coincidence. While the tree crew was dismantling the pin oak, a woman was in the street shooting a video with her phone. It turns out that as a young child she lived in our house. After living in Virginia for many years, she is moving to New Mexico and is staying in C.R. for a few days while in transit. She said she had helped her dad plant the pin oak and the silver maple over 50 years ago. Today she witnessed their departure.

I spent most of the day in the back yard, but I did go to Coe for an hour to water plants and do a few miscellaneous chores. I discovered that nothing in the garden had frozen. The

dahlias looked good, and the parsley in the herb garden continues to be remarkably productive. Back at home, I focused on the long flower bed bordering the neighbors west of our property. I cut back the Siberian Iris and we talked about using the iris as a border plant. I dug up a lot of grass, gooseneck, phlox, creeping Charlie, ribbon grass (a variegated cultivar of *Phalaris arundinacea* that I planted over 40 years ago), a few hostas, and several unwanted saplings (redbuds, oaks, a baby elm). Created several large piles of foliage, roots, and soil that will go into a compost pile once I have reconstructed the compost bins. That area is still covered by the trunk of the big oak. I did some cleaning up in that area this morning. Saved some of the old firewood, which included limbs of cedar shrubs that once were in front of the house. I was surprised to discover that the wooden frame I built for holding our fire wood was still intact and I was able to pull it out so it would not be destroyed when the tree crew starts dismembering the big oak. I'm not optimistic the rhubarb and raspberries will survive this new assault on their terrain. The rhubarb had a lot of fresh growth and was looking quite good until the crew's Vermeer "Cat" started moving logs around. Now everything is wiped clean above ground. I can only hope that the roots are intact. [*The rhubarb rebounded, undaunted by the beating endured during and after the derecho. The black raspberries, on the other hand, were decimated and only two plants appeared this past spring, requiring that bed to be replanted with new stock.*]

I'm still undecided what style of raised beds I want for fruits, vegetables, and herbs in the back yard. The quickest solution would be to purchase more of those stainless steel beds that I installed at the Wickiup garden. Those structures were inexpensive, a manageable size, and easy to assemble. But I'm yearning for a different aesthetic, one that is more home-grown, less pre-fab industrial. I want something that is practical, utilitarian, not imposing. Sad to think about all this maple and oak wood we are throwing away. Buried in those logs is the ideal lumber for creating these raised beds—but I lack the equipment and skill and time for making such a transformation take place.

"We've become much better at transforming nature than at understanding it."

7 October. A few minutes before the first and last VP debate between Pence and Harris. Pence should be in quarantine and the debate should be without an audience—in fact, the two candidates should not even be in the same room (for the third Nixon-Kennedy debate in 1960, Dick was in California and Jack in NYC so we know it can be done). My morning was initially consumed with a visit to the Mercy Cardiology Unit, where they prescribed, as expected, a blood thinner and a heart muscle relaxer. The blood thinner is going to be expensive, but I can't complain: I reached the age of 75 before my first long-term prescription. The beginning of a new era. Once I got back from Mercy, I returned to the back yard and dove back into the west-side flower bed. It's time to invent names for these beds.

As I'm finishing today's journal entry, I'm struck by how little time I've been spending in the Buffalo, Coe, and Wickiup gardens. I feel completely absorbed in this back yard project. The removal of the big maple has turned my priorities upside down, and I've become obsessed with the Elmhurst Drive landscape, one so familiar and yet so different.

11 October. Yesterday all my gardening work was in the back yard. Now that the big oak has been removed, I could do clean up the area around the storage shed. I carted several loads of broken lumber and other items (such as the crushed leaf shredder) to the front yard for the city crews to haul away. I cleared the area for the three new compost bins, close to their previous locations. I also cleaned up the flower bed next to the west-side neighbors. I can now start digging up the spring bulbs in that large flower bed so the soil can be fertilized and the bulbs replanted. I only had three hours of sleep last night, so I think I will take a short nap.

[*Ten hours later, shortly before midnight.*] In the afternoon I started digging up hundreds of daffodil bulbs, all with white roots. Many of the bulbs are quite small, unlikely to produce any blooms next spring, but I intend to get them all replanted. So far I have only dug up about 20% of this bed. The task at hand is to get them dug up so I can replant them.

After supper I spent an hour in the back yard, laying out the parameters for the trio of connected compost bins. I marked the location where their corner posts will be installed. I took apart the one bin that had partially survived the wind storm and threw its broken pieces on the front yard rubbish pile. BTW, as I'm writing this paragraph, a few minutes after midnight, I can hear a barred owl hooting away. So far I only hear one owl and no response. I can also hear the wind chimes that I hung up this afternoon, which freed up enough space so I could park our orange Honda Fit in the garage. Tomorrow we will pick up our other new car, a conventional gray CR-V, thus spending over \$50,000 on two new cars in four days. That's close to the cost of our home 40 years ago. Takes one's breath away.

12 October. Columbus Day, struggling to evolve into Indigenous People's Day. That tectonic shift may take a few decades. "Columbus" is so much easier to say and to visualize. Regardless of the name, it was a perfect day for gardening in Iowa. After purchasing the new car, I used my Dad's old post hole digger to create two holes for the two old Osage orange posts that will become corner pillars for the new compost bins. These two hedge posts were also from my Dad, arriving from Kansas about 1980. Prior to the storm, one post had been part of a raised herb bed. The other had held up a wooden panel behind the outdoor "museum" I had created for a few old garden tools and ornaments. The old "herb bed post" was too thick for my original hole, so I had to use a spade and my modern post-hole digger for enlarging the hole.

As I was installing the first of the eight poles for these new compost bins, I discovered that the rhubarb—whose tops had been obliterated by the tree crew's heavy equipment—had survived and was producing fresh foliage. I stopped my compost construction project and switched to assembling a new raised bed for these hardy souls, providing them a home where I would not be stepping on them. While laying out a new bed, I discovered two more emerging rhubarb and eventually transplanted five plants, all producing new growth.

About 3 p.m. I left the rhubarb project and went to Coe, my first visit in five days. Unfortunately, my six baby basil in the greenhouse had dried up. Not sure they will revive, but I gave them a hearty rain shower, as well as watering all the other plants still in containers. As for working in the garden, I spent an hour cleaning up the "I" bed. The middle of the bed has a large number of "something in the aster family." They resemble boltonias but I suspect they are

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of wild origin, perhaps *Asters lateriflorus* (side-flowering asters) or a species quite similar. They are covered with small, attractive blooms, but the top-heavy plants have flopped all over the middle of the bed, making everything look unkempt and disheveled. I dug most of them out, along with other weeds, grass, a few hyssop, a few New England asters, etc. I've planted a diverse assortment of perennials in the middle of that bed in the last five years, but with the exception of the *Salvia azurea*, nothing has succeeded. I like the salvia but they look rather rangy and wild, their small light blue flowers not sufficiently prolific to hide the plants' structure. I should cut them back early in the summer and see if that convinces them to produce more flowers. To their credit that have expanded their terrain, with several clumps outside the perimeter of the plant support I provided for the mother plant several years ago.

At home after supper I put in an hour digging up more daffodil bulbs in the long western border bed. I continue to be amazed how many bulbs I've uncovered, almost always in thick clumps, often 20-30 bulbs bound together, all with distinctive white roots. My current plan is to relocate many to the bed above the patio, but I need to wait until the tree crew have cleaned up that area. One other patio bed task is to move some or all of the chicory, which produces lovely blue flowers, but the plants are too large for that space. They will be more attractive if seen from a distance.

13 October. I put in two more hedge posts for a compost bin. MVM helped me install the green chicken wire around three sides of the bins so I can start filling them with "stuff." Our west-side neighbor had located the property marker, which had been buried by tree limbs, and pointed out that the west side of one compost bin is about 4" across the property line. I had thought the new bins were all inside the line, a bit further east than the previous bins, but apparently not far enough. I will redo the border for the raspberry bed so it will not cross the line, but I'm not going to worry about the compost bins. In my haste to get them constructed, I should have been more careful, but I didn't take the time to find the marker, and I've never known precisely which direction the line goes from that marker. I've always assumed the utility pole was right on the property line, but perhaps it is all on the neighbor's property. Regardless, I'm not inclined to worry about 4 inches.

"I find myself shamelessly applying the criteria of gardening to everything. Forget comfort. Forget style. Forget economy. Will it serve the needs of the garden? That is the question that starts to narrow a gardener's life. In the vortex of one's obsession, the landscape starts to spin, and objects one counted on as solid, stubborn givens pull free and swirl into the center of the addiction. Gardening an addiction? I suppose life is the addiction, gardening one of its better drugs."

14 October. At 4:00 pm MVM and I drove out to Wickiup garden, my first trip in a week. Strictly a harvesting expedition:

- Dug up several German butterball potatoes, all volunteers.
- Dug up the remaining Yukon Gold potatoes, the Dakota Pearls, and the remaining white onions.

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- Gathered a dozen large tomatoes and a nice collection of grape tomatoes.
- Harvested one eggplant, 6-7 sweet peppers, one honeydew melon, several acorn squash, three pattypan squash, one watermelon, one honeydew, one cabbage.
- Dug up 6 sweet potatoes, several quite large—all from the circular key bed in front of the garden gate.

16 October. I never left Elmhurst Drive today, a place full of action. Wayne arrived at 8 a.m. and worked on the garden studio until 3:30. He repaired the roof and installed a new skylight. Because he was working without an assistant, MVM and I used our wheelbarrow to move materials from his van. We also picked up discarded roofing and dumped several loads on our front yard trash pile.

What we did not foresee was the imminent arrival of a street crew trucking away the mountains of storm wood piled along the street. Almost all of our timber hoard is now gone. The front yard is badly torn up with many broken stepping stones (damage caused by the Bobcat removing tree pieces), but somehow all the small shrubs (e.g., the arbor vita, the privet, a small mungo pine) are still intact, as are all the large ornamental grasses (river oats, pennisetum, fountain grass, switch grass).

We also managed to do some gardening. We planted Siberian iris in the long west-side flower bed and moved two RR ties to the back of the east-side bed. The ties are partially rotten and don't match up in size or quality, but once the shrubs and perennial flowers (e.g., false indigo, hyssop, Solomon's seal, Siberian iris) establish their presence, people won't notice their imperfections. I also started digging up the Siberian squill. They are very small and blend in with the soil color. Thank goodness their white roots give away their location. I'm saving the squill in two large buckets and hope to replant them in this east-side bed in a couple of weeks.

17 October. Another day working at home. The contractor worked on repairing the garden studio, but he did not need any assistance so I focused on gardening chores.

- Finished planting 15 Siberian iris in the long west-side border. MVM smoothed out the surrounding soil and watered the iris after they were planted. Finally, one big job done.
- Using my spade, I turned over a good chunk of the long west bed, removing grass and gooseneck roots.
- Started replanting daffodils in the long west bed, using my Pig Iron scoop to hold up the dirt while slipping the bulb into the soil. This system worked okay but I still have hundreds of bulbs to plant.
- Decided to introduce a new path from our yard to the west-side neighbors, creating a trail with hardwood chips that will go over the old maple tree stump that never got pulverized by the stump remover several years ago. I will add soil on our side of the path so it is relatively even with the neighbor's lawn.
- In the long east-side bed, MVM and I dug up more Siberian squill and we moved another RR tie to the back of the border. There are just a few perennials we are leaving in place: one false indigo and a hosta at the south end of the border.

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- We talked with the east-side neighbor about several projects, and we started moving from her back yard limestone blocks she no longer wants. We laid out a dozen or more that we can use for surrounding one of the island beds south of the patio.

19 October. Today we had 5" of snow; it started snowing shortly before noon and just kept snowing. The temp remained above freezing so it did not accumulate on streets, but the 2-3" in our back yard is far more than the weather forecasters had predicted. As a result, I got almost no gardening accomplished. Yesterday I spent six hours at Buffalo helping to assemble the new metal storage shed. We were supposed to continue this afternoon, but the snow canceled that effort.

I did go to Coe this morning. The dahlias were not frozen, and I removed their covers. I assume the low temps tonight will do them in—though it's possible the snow will protect them. It is predicted to reach the 70s on Thursday, followed by a more serious cold front with temps into the 20s, certainly spelling the end of the summer flowers. Today the white anemones were finally in full bloom, though not as many as last year. I remain committed to turning that southwest flower bed into an anemone bed—which means moving the lemon balm and goldenrod. Even if the blooms are late in coming, the anemones have lovely foliage.

20 October. Now that the vegetable garden production is 99% finished, this should be a good time to evaluate what proved worthwhile, what did not. I'll begin with the tomatoes, keeping in mind that many plants were set back by the cutworms and had a late start. I also regret that with several plants, my labeling was inaccurate and will be excluded from these evaluations. [*The November 2021 Garden Shed post includes a more comprehensive assessment of vegetables planted in 2021, including a re-evaluation of several vegetables discussed in this journal entry.*]

Tomatoes

- Artemisia Cherry: A mixed review; prolific & crack-resistant, but many did not ripen evenly.
- Berkeley Tie-Dye: Prolific production, more than previous years; fruit is often hard to judge for ripeness, but consistently juicy, good-tasting; the only productive self-seeder from last year.
- Belly Naiv: Highly praised in the catalog but did not produce many harvestable fruit; nothing special about size or taste.
- Yellow Brandywine: A good, solid, productive variety; delicious taste, one of my favorites.
- Red Brandywine: Good production; first vines with good-sized red slicers; fruit not as large as its yellow cousin but still a nice tomato.
- Carmello: A failure; not many fruit on the vine and they did not ripen properly.
- Early Detroit: Perhaps because of cutworm, it was not as early as advertised, but produced good tomatoes at the end of the season.
- Galahad: A top-grade performer; produced many large, tasty red slicers.
- Kellogg's Breakfast: Some huge, early orange fruit; excellent flavor.
- Legend: A dud; a small vine with few tomatoes.

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- Lemon Boy: Historically my top producer but not this year, though it still provided some good, all-purpose fruit.
- Montecarlo: Significant problems with even ripening; few harvestable fruit.
- Nebraska Wedding: A so-so season; did not produce as many fruit as last year.
- Oregon Spring: Many medium-sized fruit, but high % did not mature evenly.
- Pozzano: Another Italian tomato that did not produce many edible fruit.
- Sunpeach: The reviews were accurate—the fruit was more resistant to cracking than Sungold but not as prolific and lacked Sungold's marvelous taste.
- Thessaloniki: Did okay; more productive than last year.
- Wapsipinicon Peach: Only one plant and it was chopped down by cutworm; vine never grew very large and only produced two fruit; dramatic contrast with last year when we harvested dozens of delicious tomatoes from two plants.

Pole Beans

- Kentucky Blue: first year I've grown these; summer's most prolific source of beans; my one reservation is that the beans quickly changed from mature to over mature.
- Seychelles: Did not replicate the huge production of two years ago, but still a great bean; badly damaged by the derecho.
- Trail of Tears: A good fresh bean and excellent dried bean; after the derecho, I let them all migrate into the dried bean stage.
- Marvel of Venice (Seeds of Italy): A yellow Franzi bean; only harvested a few beans; they were planted late and never recovered after the wind storm.
- Climbing French Bean (Seeds of Italy): A purple Franzi bean; same pattern as with the Marvel of Venice.
- Achievement Runner Beans: Many lovely red flowers but not many mature beans; not sure why the bean production was so anemic.

Bush Beans

- Provider: These were sown early, the last week of April; they handled the cool May weather and were the first to produce harvestable beans; long, steady production into September on thick, leafy plants.
- Mascotte French Bean: Sown in early May, a week after the Provider; smaller beans, fewer and smaller pods but still good, steady production through the summer.
- Golden Butter: Sown the end of May; major production beginning in July; nice, tender beans that remained edible into full maturity; very prolific; overall the summer's top bush bean.
- Velour Bush: Sown in a raised bed that the rabbits invaded; spotty seed germination and only a few plants fully developed; minimal production.
- Amethyst Bush: In same bed as the Velour Bush and with similar results.
- Dragon Tongue: Prolific production of good beans, but I failed to keep them picked in late summer; can be harvested as a dried bean but I never got to them..

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- Jacob's Cattle: A great dried bean; prolific production in 2019 but this year devastated by rabbits.
- Vermont Cranberry: Planted late, spotty germination, problem with rabbits; almost no crop.

Cucumbers This year's production was far below the crop two years ago—when I set aside more space and allowed the vines to run on the ground. This year the cucumbers were on trellises and badly damaged by the derecho. I don't know if the vertical growth hinders production, but it certainly saves space, makes it much easier to control cucumber and squash bugs, and much easier to keep track of mature fruit. This year I experimented with several pickling cucumbers, but none were productive. This year I was unable to plant the SVC- hybrid from Johnny's Seeds, my top producer in recent years. The seeds were no longer available in their catalog.

- General Lee: Not as fertile as last year but I only planted a short 4' row and they were still the garden's top producer.
- Sweet Burpless: a few good cucumbers, but nothing special.
- Jade II: same assessment as for the Sweet Burpless.
- Diva: Nice cucumbers in shape and taste but so-so production.
- National Pickling: The most successful of the pickling cucumbers, but they often jumped quickly from too small to too mature.
- Arkansas Little Leaf: Planted very late (2 July) and only produced a couple cucumbers.
- Beth Alpha (from Italy): Planted very late (2 July) and they never got going; the young plants were immediately fighting the wilt; only produced a few fruit.

22 October. This morning at Coe, I did a "police call" picking up trash--wrote notes for a Monday Morning Garden Report--fed chopped food scrapes to the red wigglers--reset the overload butter so electricity was working in garden shed--returned two DVDs to Library (*Emma* and *Belgravia*, both enjoyable 19th-century British period productions)--watered four small basil plants--emptied the trash can next to the NW gate--opened the Alumni House and filled watering cans (now that the water in the garden has been turned off until next spring). I intended to take photos of the garden, but there was a light mist in the air, and I didn't want the camera to get wet.

In the afternoon I worked in the back yard here at home; it was muddy after a substantial 3" rain, but I kept at it:

- Took three loads of trash down to the street; surprised to see a city cleanup crew picking up our tree pieces we deposited in the front yard yesterday; their third pass on our street.
- Planted another row of daffodils in the long west bed, putting them in groups of 8-10 bulbs, mixing small and large bulbs previously harvested in this area.
- Dug up grass, phlox, creeping Charlie, and miscellaneous weeds in the long east bed and uncovered a few more Siberian squill.
- Spent an hour in the garden studio typing MMGR to cover the first week in October; I'm always behind on that project. I enjoy writing them, but they're never done on time.

25 October. The weather forecast predicted snow for this morning, but so far no snow, the front apparently sliding north of us. The day was overcast, temp in the low 40s, some light wind but all things considered a good fall day for rebuilding a garden. This morning after church I tried to lay out the two elongated oval beds south of the two triangle beds. Spent a lot of time digging up several Miscanthus, which I will probably replant further in the back or as a border in the front yard. [*As it turned out, the clumps of "miscanthus" were Karl Foerster Feather Reed grass and were planted at the north end of the long east bed.*] They have a dense root system and were not easy to disengage. I also removed a dozen or more volunteer raspberry canes and many small trees. The turf in that area is very tough, and it was a slow slog constructing these two elongated, oval flower beds. Once I had the basic shapes, I started assembling the rocks that will serve as their borders. I eventually got all but one of the borders "rocked in."

Despite all that remains unfinished, the design of the back yard area closest to the house is beginning to emerge. Once I have cleaned up the long east bed, I can do some serious bulb planting in both long beds, the two triangle beds, and the two long ovals. The next big challenge will be to create a basic design for the deep half of the yard and how to lay out the gooseberries, raspberries, rhubarb, strawberries, grape vines, herb beds, stumpery, hosta beds, and whatever flowers we retain. I also need to construct two more compost bins to go with the one we just finished. I'll build these new ones using hedge posts and chicken wire, and surround them with a cedar fence so they don't look quite so primitive. As for the firewood, there should be sufficient space for a wood pile behind the garden shed. That still leaves the issue of what materials to use for the raised fruit, herb, and flower beds. Almost all of my rocks have other commitments. Perhaps it makes sense to buy some decorative stone or cement blocks. We need something that will give the illusion of a coherent aesthetic.

26 October. C.R. set a new all-time record today: the lowest high temp on this date. The previous record was 35F; today's official high was only 32F. Our garage thermometer reached 36F but it benefits from the heat radiating from the house. Today felt much colder because of the wind and no sun. Overnight we had about ½" of snow but the streets were clear by the end of the day.

I spent the morning and afternoon in the back yard. First order of business was moving the firewood pile from the area in front of the studio. I hoped that clearing away that little hill of wood would help me "see" more clearly how this area should be laid out. I created a stack of future firewood behind the garden shed where a corner of the cedar fence was located before it was wiped out by the neighbor's oak tree. I moved the logs—most 12-18" in length—using the dolly, 2-3 logs at a time. By early afternoon I had them all moved, though I kept about 15 in a semicircle in front of the studio. This is where I envision the installation of a firepit. I made no attempt to situate those logs in a permanent arrangement (I'll wait until after consulting with MVM), but I could begin to visualize how this space might work out, with the garden studio south of the pit and the new shed and 12' long greenhouse extension to the west. We'll use the logs as seats arranged around the firepit and as small tables to hold the smores that our grandson will be preparing for everyone. Who knows? Maybe it will really come to pass. [*While*

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our three-year old grandson has not yet made any smores, within 12 months this arrangement was complete: the studio fully repaired, the garden shed rebuilt with a new greenhouse, a firepit in place with many of these logs becoming seats and small tables. I had originally intended to plant grass in this area, but I eventually decided to extend the woodchip paths so they cover the area around the firepit and the paths connecting the studio and greenhouse with the rest of the back yard.]

The other big step forward today was rearranging two lines of stones to create a path around the two triangle beds and separating the NW triangle bed from the patio flower bed. In the garage I discovered some weed barrier fabric intended for the Wickiup garden but never used. I laid out the fabric and established a clean line between the rectangular patio bed and the triangle bed.

29 October. Overcast, cool, and windy—too windy to work on Buffalo’s new shed, which we have been assembling this week. I spent the morning composing and editing the November church newsletter, and this afternoon I worked on the new path between our place and the west-side neighbors. After digging out a small trench (and depositing the excess soil in the new oval beds), I filled the trench with sawdust and chips from the neighbor’s sandbox and then laid a dozen red cement blocks across the bed for stepping stones. These blocks were originally from the patio, but when we added the new family room in 2011, the blocks were used at various locations throughout the back yard. The sawdust/block path is probably not a permanent solution, but it will work fine for now. *[A year later I can report that the path has worked beautifully. It has remained free of weeds and grass, and is well-positioned for entering or exiting the neighbor’s back yard. And its aesthetic appeal has grown on me; it may remain for longer than I expected.]*

The next stage was completing the outer boundaries of the NW Triangle bed with limestone blocks. With MVM’s assistance I arranged the old pavers so we now have a complete boundary line from the Gooseberry bed all the way to the maple stump in the Patio bed. To fill in this stretch, I dug up all the pavers around the old hydrangea—which never bloomed this year, though it produced abundant foliage. We still need to re-align the pavers long the Long West flower bed border, but it’s now doable. One other task MVM and I completed today was covering the path encircling the NW Triangle bed with a layer of newspapers and wood chips. The structure of the northern half of the back yard is really starting to feel both functional and coherent. If I can just get the bulbs planted before the first hard freeze, we might have a real garden in the spring. I’m feeling an itch to start cleaning up the front yard, remove some hostas, and plant ornamental grasses and spring-flowering bulbs. The front yard is a much smaller area to work with, and once the two tree stumps are ground up, it might not take long to get it ready for spring.

“Seedpods decorate the garden from season to season. At first, they contain an Orient of riches. Giant pods have developed on the false indigo, and I love playing pendulum games with them.

They look like green pea pods and make a wonderful thuddy rattle when shaken.

Because they sit atop long stems and weigh more than the leaves, they move forcefully

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when you thwack them, swinging back and forth faster than the leafy arms of the plant, and even picking up a counterweight rhythm. Late in the season, when they turn a deep eggplant purple, their weight drags them down to ankle level and it's noisy fun walking past them. Last year, I gathered every beautiful stem of the false indigo for arrangements, so I never saw the pods. But the plump purple and green pods are as beautiful as flowers."

31 October. 9:30 pm, Central DST. Full moon on Halloween, once in a blue moon, my parents' 78th wedding anniversary. Earlier this afternoon at Wickiup, a gorgeous sunset. About 4:30, the sun found a slit in the clouds, its thin rays christening the underside of the gray clouds. Later the sun was a huge orange globe—one moment in full glory and then "poof," gone. To the east, there was this huge white globe, an impressive offspring rising above the horizon. It was a beautiful exit for October. I never looked at a thermometer, but the temperature would have been in the 60s. By early afternoon I had shed my coat, my black fleece jacket, my Henley t-shirt. I was just wearing a cotton tee and short flannel shirt. Felt just right.

I began the day by unloading wood chips from the pickup, 5 wheelbarrow loads, then drove to Ever-Green for a refill. Next three hours at the church, helping the gang install the metal roof, nearly all our time absorbed in figuring out how to attach a "capstone piece" (real name escapes me) at the apex of the roof. I was precariously perched at the top of a tall ladder, trying to get a bolt and nut joined together for attaching two roof sections, quite frustrating until we discovered we had the wrong pieces. By noon, it was getting windy, and we called it quits for the day.

After lunch MVM and I moved several RR ties, including two heavy ones from the old hosta bed next to the patio. I can remember talking with MVM's mother the day I was constructing that bed, a summer evening in the 19 80s. Today those old ties were used to reconstruct the east-side path border that runs along the Long East flower bed. The new border is not perfect—dependent on several RR ties in various stages of deterioration—but overall it looks okay. One can now envision the path that will run from the garage to the garden studio, a distance of 200'.

1 November. This morning I drove to Noel Ridge and picked up the coral berry and oak tree we had ordered. The coralberry is a *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*, Indian Currant Coralberry, a member of the honeysuckle family. Native to the central U.S., it supposedly will grow 2-6' tall, not fussy about soil, tolerant of full sun or shade. Flowers in mid-summer, off-white with a touch of rose, producing reddish fruits in the fall. It will be planted in the Big Maple bed, near the center of the back yard. As for the Chinkapin Oak, another Midwest native, I've read it likes limestone so perhaps I should surround it with a circle of limestone rocks. Common names include Chestnut Oak & Rock Oak. It has elliptical leaves, prominent veins, capable of growing 50-80' tall, leaves turning red or brown in the fall. I had initially thought about planting it the front of the house, but after thinking about potential issues with underground water/sewer lines and overhead electrical wires, I think it will go in the back yard, east of the big maple stump—which we have decided to keep and use as a giant planter.

2 November. Beautiful November day. Started out chilly, in the mid 30s, but by afternoon I was working without a jacket. Another long, beautiful sunset, the golden light drenching everything, an exquisite moment in one's life. All day in the back yard, tackling these projects:

- Moved gooseberries from the Stumpery area to the old west-side gooseberry bed. I thought there was just a single plant, but it turned out there was a combination of one large plant and five babies surrounding it.
- We planted over 200 daffodil bulbs in the Long West perennial bed. We need to get the remaining bulbs planted since they have been out of the ground for over two weeks. While digging holes for the bulbs, MVM encountered a dense pack of 50+ bulbs clumped together that I missed when turning over the soil in October.
- Decided to rebuild a raised bed using the old gray cinder blocks, creating a rectangular bed (25' long x 4' wide) for rhubarb and chives. Today I found two more chives that had broken through the debris and compacted soil in the old herb bed. Who knows how many times they were run over by heavy equipment, and yet here they are in the first week in November, sending up new foliage. The chives and rhubarb need to be moved to make way for the new path stretching along the back yard's west side up to the garden shed (and future greenhouse). If the weather cooperates, I can finish the bed tomorrow.
- After a brief consultation, MVM and I settled on the location for the Chinkapin Oak, which will still be here many decades after we are long forgotten. Day by day the pieces continue to fall into place, even when we don't yet know what we're missing. It's a daunting task to solve a jigsaw puzzle when most of the pieces don't yet exist.

3 November. Waiting for the election results: Biden or Trump, Greenfield or Ernst, Blue or Red? For most of the day I ignored politics and focused on gardening. We had ideal weather: sunshine, not much breeze, temp into the 70s, one of those days I dream about when gardening on a sultry morning in July. All day in the back yard. I had thought about going to Theisens, but yesterday Linn County had 300 new COVID-19 victims, hospitalizations and ICU patients at an all-time high. So I decided to delay my purchase of the chicken grit, intended for the long oval beds.

This morning I concentrated on finishing the chives/rhubarb raised bed. One immediate task was redoing the long south side I constructed yesterday. I was so focused on getting the line straight that I had failed to notice the uneven height level. I used a long cedar fence post to guide me in raising several blocks to the correct height. By 11:00 I had the bed's frame finished. After spading and spreading the soil and compost throughout the bed, I planted three clumps of chives in a triangular arrangement at the east end of the bed. Tomorrow it's the rhubarb.

In the afternoon, I cleaned up the area around the big maple stump, raking dirt and weeds away from the base, revealing more of the trunk's expansive character. I also cut back the hydrangea. Tomorrow I'll dig up half of the hydrangea and replant it about 10' south of the current shrub. The rest of the afternoon I planted daffodil bulbs in the Long West flower bed. I settled on a new planting technique that helped speed up the planting process. Using my Dad's old shovel, I dug an initial hole and then plunged the dibble into the soil to create a

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constellation of 10-12 holes for individual bulbs. I'm hoping the random mix of bulbs we dug up in October will help create a bed with groups of different varieties blooming at different times through the spring. I planted about 350 bulbs today.

4 November. Our amazing Indian Summer continues: temp into the 70s, sunshine, low humidity. This afternoon in the back yard, I was surrounded by a golden light, revealing a flock of effervescent gnats, not bothering me in any way. They may have been around me all day, but in just that moment of radiant illumination, they caught my attention—and when my gaze shifted back to my bulbs they disappeared.

Another day when all my gardening was in the back yard—though twice I was at Buffalo to help with the shed project. A few accomplishments worth noting:

- Last night I woke up about 3:00 a.m. and “saw” how the stepping stones should be arranged among the daylilies and ornamental grasses in the bed parallel with the Big Maple bed. And so this morning I laid out the circular steps, using several composite cement/stone steps that had been buried under debris in the front yard. So far, so good.
- I transplanted several daylilies and dug up half of the hydrangea, splitting that half into two clumps and planting them on each side of the old maple stump.
- MVM and I moved three big square posts that at one time had held up the children’s “tree house.” We used them to help create a new border on three sides of the Big Maple bed. One post wouldn’t lie flat because of a protruding tree root. In the afternoon I drove to Coe to get the battery charger so I could recharge the battery for the electric hand saw. It’s going to be a formidable project carving out the tree root so the post will lie flat.
- I finally decided which grape roots/plants I’m saving and laid down several boards to outline the new grapevine bed. While I was working on that project, MVM planted a couple hundred daffodil bulbs. The Long West bed is now done.
- MVM and I did more weeding and digging in the Long East bed, collecting dozens of Siberian squill bulbs.

Still no final decision on the Presidential election—though today Biden was declared the winner in Wisconsin and Michigan. Still too close to call in Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Nevada. Biden has a decent lead in several states and should be in a good position to win the Presidency. But disheartening setbacks in the House: only one Democratic representative from Iowa in D.C. I had not expected Finkenauer to lose to Hinson. I assumed putting up a sign for Finkenauer in our front yard would be sufficient to insure her victory.

6 November. A broken record: another beautiful day. Except for a brief walk around the Coe garden, I spent all my gardening time at home. Began the day by turning over soil in the Long East bed. Unearthed a few more bulbs, including some snow drops, and dug up more rocks from the old circular flower bed.

About 2:30 I went to Menards. Hated to go because of the pandemic raging full throttle: almost 1,000 COVID-19 patients hospitalized in Iowa and 120,000 new cases in the U.S. in one day. Despite my fears, I masked up, walked into Menards, and selected the pavers for building

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new raised beds. I ordered 270 gray pavers—plus purchasing a kit for an outdoor fire pit. I paid extra for the delivery, which will save me a lot of time, including two trips to the store. On the way back home, I stopped at Theisen's and purchased 150 lbs of chicken grit to help improve garden soil drainage. Tomorrow I hope to construct the oval rock and mulch gardens, and for each bed I'm planning to add a 50 lb. bag of the grit. Once the soil is prepared, it should be ready for serious bulb planting.

Another accomplishment was planting the oak I picked up last Sunday. I spent over an hour digging the hole for the tree, south of the big maple stump. The underground was saturated with a dense web of maple roots. Thank goodness for my electric handsaw. It was a slow process cutting through the roots, but I eventually had a good-sized hole that I filled in with a mixture of old soil and fresh compost. I'll add the mulch tomorrow.

7 November (Saturday). Two notable events come to mind as I start this journal entry:

(1) Joe Biden wins Pennsylvania and is the President-elect. The Donald has not yet acknowledged this defeat—perhaps he never will—but his days as the country's worst president are numbered. And we can hope he will be confronted with a long list of legal problems once he is no longer protected by the Presidential Seal. Of course, we can't expect him to go quietly into the night. He still has millions of admirers and millions of dollars, but maybe he will be easier to ignore.

(2) Curt, the stump guy, arrived with his stump grinder and turned the front yard's oak and sugar maple stumps into two large piles of wood chips and sawdust. That should be the last of the large machines wheeling around in our front yard, and I can begin cleaning up that terrain, three months after the derecho.

I started my day's chores by driving to Ever-Green for a load of wood chips, only to discover they were no longer operating on Saturdays. So I loaded the pickup myself, one scoop at a time. It took me about twenty minutes to load a cubic yard of shredded wood. Certainly more strain on the back in loading than unloading. In the afternoon I worked on the long oval rock garden. After dumping into the bed area a wheelbarrow load of broken limestone, I covered it with a mix of soil, chicken grit (two 50-lb bags), and four loads of compost. Tomorrow I might be able to plant some spring-flowering bulbs.

8 November. Add another beautiful November day to the memory page. Temp into the 60s shortly after sunrise and still in the 60s after sunset. A perfect fall gardening day. Since church services were cancelled, I had a full a morning in the back yard, and in the afternoon to Wickiup, the first time I've been there in a couple weeks. It felt strange opening the garden gate, but after a few minutes walking around I felt back in the groove. My primary task today was planting garlic from the Garlic Store. I thought the "B1" bed would be a good candidate: it's the right length and the garlic might benefit from the bush beans having done their nitrogen-fixing thing in the bed this summer. As I pulled up all the dead bean plants, I was struck by the larger mass of the Golden Butter Wax bean plants—and they were the summer's heaviest producers. Once the beans were removed, I added an organic, all-purpose Territorial

fertilizer, plus mixing in some of John & Bob's soil enricher in the north half of the bed. I had four varieties of hardneck garlic to plant:

- Chesnok Red: 8 bulbs, about 70 cloves; the bulbs were quite large but the cloves irregular in size; the Garlic Store's planting guide indicates this variety most likely originated in the nation of Georgia; known for a "full and robust flavor and a nice, lingering bouquet"; supposed to be easy to peel and hold their flavor in cooking.
- Lithuanian Purple: 5 bulbs, 32 marbled and purple-striped cloves; quite large and consistent in size; reputed to have a "full-bodied garlic flavor ideal for cooking"; they like cold weather.
- Kisklyk: 6 bulbs, 47 cloves irregular in size; they originally came from Kisklyk, a southern region of Uzbekistan; supposed to have a complex, moderately spicy flavor.
- Bogatyr: 4 bulbs, 21 cloves, most quite large; a purple marbled hardneck; known to grow well in cold winters and to store well; "rich and interesting flavor."

I enjoy planting garlic. No messing around with tiny seeds. They are easy to handle and can be planted with some precision in location and depth. Today the dry, warm soil was perfect: no problem pressing the garlic cloves into the dibble's holes. As I was planting at dusk, I was struck by how far south the sun sets on the horizon, many degrees from where it sets in mid-summer behind a grove of willow trees. Tonight's sunset cast a heavenly glow over the landscape, exquisitely beautiful.

10 November. The warm, golden weather has gone south. Last night the rain came—which we needed—and today we had overcast skies with occasional showers and the temp steadily dropping, spurred on by a stiff west wind. Wayne came by about 9:00, I paid him for repairing the garden studio, and we discussed repairing the shed and adding a greenhouse. After he left, I did accomplish one notable milestone: I removed the broken rim and backboard from the basketball pole. Now we have a single steel pole rising 11' feet above the driveway. The next issue is deciding what to do with the steel pole. Perhaps it can support a honeysuckle or some comparable vine.

Yesterday afternoon, for the first time in two weeks, I worked at the Coe garden. Began by jotting down notes for a Monday Morning Garden Report—a task I've ignored for the last four months. I then spent a couple hours with the "E" dahlia bed. Dug up all the dahlias—mostly Bishop of Llandaff, easily filling my bucket. Tubers were in good shape, though this summer's bloom rates were abysmal. Also dug up ten peacock orchid tubers, most of which had bloomed, and 15-20 Blushing Lady tulip bulbs, most quite small. Tomorrow I'll clean the bishops and the African gladiolas, give them another day to dry out, and store them in peat.

13 November. Cold front came thru last night; temp this morning in the mid 20s, but a day of sunshine and minimal breeze. By early afternoon the temp was up to 40F, and I could work with just a fleece. First morning task was emptying the pickup of wood chips (three wheelbarrow loads) and then to Ever-Green for another load. Back at home, I started moving the pavers to the back yard, eventually determining that I did not have enough to build another raised bed, so I used the remaining pavers to enclose three sides of the old raspberry

bed. On the west neighbor's side I dug a small trench to separate this restored bed from their property. The bed is narrower than the old bed, which means that I had to dig up several raspberries and move them into the new space. Although I only have 5-6 raspberries that survived the storm, these dudes will spread fast and within a year it should be bursting at the seams.

My next job was constructing a path between the champagne/red raspberry bed and the large astilbe/peony bed. It took a long time with a shovel digging out that path. I should have made the path wider, but for aesthetic reasons (and because I was tired of shoveling), I left it relatively narrow, a decision I will regret once the raspberry bed has matured.

This evening, I edited photos. After preparing a large group of September Coe garden photos for the website, I edited the photos from 23 October, the only day I took any garden photos that month. I also drafted and revised this week's MMGR; should have it edited and posted by tomorrow night.

14 November. A gray, drizzly, November in the soul day. Worked in the back yard for a couple of hours this morning. I pruned the bridal wreath (wrong time of the year but it had not been pruned after it bloomed in the spring and was sprawling over its neighbors) and cleaned up the path between the stumpery and the studio. Next task was expanding by one paver a new rectangular bed; once the weather cooperates I'll expand its partner, restoring their symmetry. The rest of my morning was in the garden studio editing this week's MMGR and working on my overdue October blog. This afternoon I bounced among miscellaneous tasks: assembling the firepit, putting away laundry, paying credit card bills, setting up an online account for our credit cards, editing November garden photos, watering plants, and feeding the red wigglers in the Coe garden shed.

17 November. Today was colder than yesterday but reasonably comfortable working in the back yard, temp to about 40°F, some sunshine, minimal wind. Here are a few of today's chores:

- Started to construct a small flower bed at the end of the Long East bed, using the red pavers that were once part of our patio. For almost 10 years they have been lined up in front of the burning bush west of the house. The new bed is now two tiers high, and I should have enough pavers to add one more level.
- Expanded a flower bed in back with the newly purchased gray pavers.
- After removing their nails, I laid out several posts to help visualize a new flower bed south of the red raspberry bed; later I will use Marty's cement blocks to construct the actual bed.
- Moved two loads of compost to the first long oval bed; need two more wheelbarrow loads and that bed will be ready for planting spring bulbs.
- Unpacked the new Rogue hoe that arrived in the mail. It has a tough, light-weight ash handle; small, sharp blade with a good angle; should be a sturdy workhorse hoe.

I did some computer work, posting a new slideshow to the Coe garden website, using about 60 photos from the middle of July. Going through those photos takes my breath away: all that riot of color, all at the same time. One so easily forgets how dynamic the garden was –so much

happening, particularly with the daylilies in the “C” and “L” beds. I have photos for one more late July slideshow before the derecho. This morning while editing photos shot in late October, I discovered in one picture, hiding among a peony’s brown foliage, a large praying mantis. I had no idea the mantis was there and did not expect to see one so late in the year.

18 November. Another day in the back yard. Tasks included:

- Built a new retaining wall, using old red pavers, on the north end of the Long East bed.
- Added more soil, compost, and chicken grit to a long oval bed. After MVM and I decorated the bed with an assortment of limestone rocks, it’s now ready for planting bulbs. I’ve decided to treat this oval bed as a rock garden and cover the surface with more pebbles and rocks. We’ll leave the other long oval bed in mulch, introducing a contrast between the beds and perhaps inspiring a different planting scheme.
- Cleared out the paths on two sides of the rhubarb bed; covered the paths with paper/cardboard and two loads of wood chips.
- Planted about 150 small daffodil bulbs on the NW side of the old maple stump; I was surprised how few big tree roots I encountered on this side of the stump—a dramatic contrast to the entanglement of underground roots on the SE side.

19 November. The morning temp was already at 50F when I walked out the door at 8:00 a.m. Nine hours of ideal gardening weather. After working on paths between raised beds in the “deep” back yard, I drove to the Coe garden. Did a brief garden walk, picked up several aluminum cans (one beer), and noted numerous cleanup jobs still to be done, but I left those chores for another day. Today’s assignment was serious bulb planting. Whatever the reasons may be, I’m usually more interested in preparations to plant than in the actual planting. But today I was determined to get bulbs in the ground. I brought home from storage in the Coe greenhouse several bags of bulbs purchased from Colorblends and Van Engelen: reticulated iris, fritillary, daffodils, tulips, snowdrops, summer snowflakes. Most of the day’s planting was in the two long oval beds, these varieties usually in groups of 5-10 bulbs:

- 100 Tarda species tulips
- 75 *Poeticus Recurvus* daffodils, the Pheasant’s Eyes
- 50 Tete-a-Tete miniature daffodils
- 50 Narcissus Actaea (the Poet’s Daffodil, an old heirloom)
- 100 Katharine Hodgkin reticulated iris
- 100 Red-Yellow Cubed tulips

The hybrid tulips were planted along each side of the central axis walkways between the two large triangle-shaped beds. The planting went quickly in both oval beds: the freshly reconstructed soil is loose and easy to work with. The tulip planting, however, was another story. Before digging the holes, I had to scrape away a top layer of grass, weeds, and roots—and the soil was tightly compacted. The whole process was very slow, even with the big bulb planter. About 3:30 MVM came out and helped me plant the remaining tulip bulbs and the operation became much more efficient: I dug the holes and MVM put the bulbs in the holes and

covered them up. I'm anxious to see how they'll look in the spring. If a decent percentage of these bulbs produce blooms, we could have an explosion of color across the back yard.

20 November. Finally, I could turn my attention to the front yard. I picked up most of the pavers that had been part of the labyrinth path and created a large pile next to the porch. I then started raking and picking up trash and dead foliage, tree limbs, etc. Once an area was cleaned up, I could level the soil—which required cutting through exposed oak roots. In the afternoon I switched to the back yard. Planted daffodils and Siberian squill in the Long East bed. In the long oval rock garden I planted 50 *Galanthus nivalis* 'Flore Pleno' in several colonies. At the higher elevations of the bed I planted 20 *Leucojum* 'Giant' bulbs in three groups. Those bulbs are quite large, similar to good-sized daffodil bulbs. Finally, I planted 50 *Fritillaria meleagris alba*. These small bulbs were easy to plant in the soft, crumbly soil. The long oval rock garden is now "full" of spring bulbs. The long oval mulch bed still has room for 2-3 more varieties, and I have saved some allium specifically for that bed.

The last task of the day was cleaning up the patio bed, working in the area on the east side of the maple stump. I removed several chicory and a thick network of lily-of-the-valley roots. Perhaps 1/3 of the bed is now ready for new bulbs. It was very slow going near the trunk. I removed a lot of the soil so the base of the trunk is more fully exposed, revealing more of its unique structure.

21 November. Today I finished assembling the fire pit and started my first fire. I had plenty of kindling and for a few minutes enjoyed an unexpectedly robust fire. I need to find the rubber tube I use as a bellows for feeding the fire oxygen. I've dreamt for over 40 years of having a "fire place" in the back yard. Today, thanks to the derecho, the dream has been fulfilled—plus I will now have a source of ashes for the garden soil.

22 November. One lucky survivor of the derecho is the wooden Leopold bench that was next to the big maple. While the tree and all those enormous branches came crashing down, the bench emerged unscathed. After moving it out of the way while cleaning up the back yard, I assumed it would return to its old location, a testament to it surviving the wind storm. Well, this afternoon I did move it back, and the proportions were all wrong. It looked so large without the tree—in contrast to how small the bench looked when it was next to the big maple. I immediately knew it needed a new location. At least for the time being, it's now in front of the old ornamental grasses that border the gooseberry bed. It looks good in that spot and should look even better if I add a tall switch grass or a small tree behind the bench, replacing the Japanese maple that died two years ago.

My major accomplishment today was digging three more holes for the old hedge posts and completing the basic structure for the trio of combined compost beds. I attached chicken wire around the perimeter and installed boards to separate each pile. As I expected, I had trouble hammering into the Osage orange posts the staples to hold the wire in place. I was always impressed by how expertly Dad could secure those staples with just a couple blows of

the hammer. Despite my limited skill, I'm hoping my stapled wire will stay in place. I still need to construct and install the panels that will serve as the outer facade for the bins, but that final cosmetic touch can wait for a later day. I did, however, take care of other tasks that were more decorative than utilitarian:

- Set up the hummingbird mobile (T. Nelson sculpture) in the Big Maple bed. I anchored the mobile with several cracked stepping stones; later I might cover the base with wood chips.
- Set up the stone pillar with the Japanese script—though I have no idea what the script says—at the SE corner of the Big Maple bed, next to the pathway.
- Set up the rain gauge post—though I'll wait until after the last hard freeze in the spring to install the glass rain collector.
- Installed the tin owl in a raised bed across from the raspberry bed and placed the black steel snail (another Nelson sculpture) on the maple stump in the patio bed.
- Realigned the twisted steel sunflower from Kansas and planted it in the stumpery—where I think it looks darn good. Nearby I stuck in the ground the steel fork (missing two teeth) that used to be in the “museum” next to the old compost bins.
- Placed the gazing ball in the center of the large flower bed next to the fire pit.
- Moved the old chaise lounge so it is again beside the garden studio. I still am not sure where to place the old swing (another miraculous survivor of the derecho) and Elisabeth's hammock. *[The swing and its steel frame were buried in limbs and yet came through the storm with only minor damage. In the spring I set up the frame and swing under a small maple tree outside the Wickiup vegetable garden. It soon became one of my favorite spots for sitting in the shade, drinking iced tea, and planning my next garden task. As for the canvas hammock, it still has no home.]*

23 November. Chilly morning, frost on pickup's windshield, but sunshine warmed things up rather quickly. Began the day by getting a load of mulch from Ever-Green, but the rest of the morning was absorbed with a doctor's appointment and driving to Kirkwood for a COVID-19 test so that, assuming the test results are negative, I can have a procedure in the hospital where they blast my heart with one or more electrical jolts. They hope that will convince my heart to return to a regular, steady drumbeat. I did learn this morning that the echogram results indicated my heart was in decent shape. While there was evidence of “mild” problems, there were no gross abnormalities—so that's good. The big hassle with tomorrow's procedure at 1:00 p.m. is no food after midnight.

One blessed benefit of gardening is that I can usually set aside other affairs, ignore concerns about an erratic heart beat, and enjoy a few hours playing with the soil—and I did have a productive afternoon at Coe. A couple friends came by the garden to help plant tulips. We began by digging up the “J” bed dahlias, plus a few peacock orchids and delphiniums that never bloomed. We then planted 100 red-yellow cubed tulips. At the back of the “J” bed I planted five *Fritillaria imperialis rubra maxima*, which I hope will be an attractive partner with the tulips—though there's no guarantee the tulips and fritillary will bloom at the same time. I would like to plant more Tarda tulips in the front of the “J” bed. Today, we did encounter a dozen small bulbs, probably the species tulips planted a year ago.

After my friends departed, I took a 15-minute break to warm my fingers and toes before tackling the “E” bed. I had already removed the Bishop dahlias, so all I had to do was prepare the holes and plant the Blushing Lady tulip bulbs—the same variety planted there last fall. By the time the Blushing Ladies were going in the ground, it was rather dark, and even with the garden lights it was hard to see what I was doing, hard to keep track of which holes did or did not have tulip bulbs.

27 November. Sunshine all day, temp in the 40s; a bit breezy but a good day for gardening. At home in the morning, first two hours cleaning up the front yard. Dug up more stepping stones and piled them by the front porch. Several red pavers I moved to the back yard to add another tier for the new raised bed where I’m transplanting several ornamental grasses. The front yard is still full of trenches and wheel tracks and holes and mounds of churned up soil, but it’s beginning to look more orderly. It would help if I had several more of the city’s green carts for disposing of the tree debris. I’ve not been saving much for the compost piles because of all the branches and roots and other tree parts mixed in with everything. My immediate goal is simply to get everything cleaned up. The second half of the morning was in the back yard, planting daffodil bulbs in the east-side shrub bed. I drilled about 150 holes and filled them with bulbs dug up in October. This bed is about half done; I need one more good planting day.

In the afternoon to Coe, where I worked for about four hours, primarily planting bulbs:

- Planted 20 *Leucojum* in the “L” bed grape hyacinths. I was surprised to come across so many small hollyhocks in that area. Their leaves had been chewed on, perhaps by a rabbit. I planted another dozen *Leucojum* in the hosta bed behind the NW bench. It was easy to locate vacant areas because the old *Leucojum* and allium were already sending up fresh, green shoots.
- Along the stepping stones in the “L” bed I planted 25-30 Elegant Lady tulips where there had previously been New England asters and a few renegade rose bushes.
- In the “F” bed I planted another 30 Elegant Lady tulips in front of the perennial sunflowers and the *Baptisia*. In that bed were a few baby *Baptisia* that would be good candidates for replanting in the Long East border at home. Many of the false indigo seed pods had already broken open, but I could still find plenty of seeds for sowing.
- West of the Elegant Ladies I planted 15 Lava tulips (a red and yellow mix) in front of the Sioux Blue grass. For a couple weeks in late April the Lavas should add a visual zip to this area.
- Finished the day by planting the remaining Blushing Ladies in the middle of the “A1” bed next to the patio. I initially was fearful of damaging any bulbs planted in 2020, but that precaution proved unnecessary. Only encountered one old tulip bulb.

28 November. This was a BIG bulb planting day—at Coe in the morning, at home in the afternoon. At Coe I planted the following:

- *Allium schubertii*: 5 large ornamental onion bulbs planted in the midst of an old Siberian Iris colony in the “L” bed. This is a late blooming allium; I just hope it’s tall enough to rise above the iris foliage.

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- *Allium Christophii*: 25 of these Van Engelen bulbs went into the “K” bed, most planted among the barren strawberries--another attempt to use an existing group of plants as a backdrop for the allium.
- Daffodils: planted 40 Tete-a-Tete miniature, early-blooming daffodils at the east end of the “A” bed in three groups--one group between two hostas in the raised section and two groups near the Millennium allium; also planted 15-20 Pride of Lion daffodils in the “A1” bed. In three hours I should have done more, but I had to clean up each area, a particularly slow process in the barren strawberries. I had intended to plant more *Leucojum* behind the NW bench but ran out of time.

Worked at home this afternoon for four hours, concentrating on the patio bed. I began by weeding and raking the bed. West of the maple stump I worked a long time digging out lily-of-the-valley roots, a real mess. I’m sure I missed a lot of them but I’ll pretend I made some progress. I did create a new space where I planted 25 Tete-a-Tete daffodils and 25 Pride of Lions. Positioned in front of MVM’s studio window, they should produce a nice display for a couple of weeks in the spring. On the other side of the maple stump I dug out more lily-of-the-valley, as well ground ivy and a grass with extensive rhizomes. In between the extended stump roots I planted snowdrops (*Galanthus elwesii*), and in the main body of the bed, I planted two more groups of *G. Elwesii* and four groups of Dutch Iris ‘Mystic Beauty’, plus another 20 Dutch Iris in the long oval mulch bed. The last bulbs I planted were two groups of small *Fritillaria meleagris alba* in the patio bed. While preparing that bed I came across a fritillary bulb planted last year, which had produced several baby bulbs, a good sign.

I forgot to mention that I planted about 40 jonquil bulbs in the bed (yet unnamed) next to the stumpery. Those were the first bulbs I dug up when I started salvaging bulbs back in October, before the heavy equipment started driving around in the back yard. That now seems like ancient history. Most of those jonquil bulbs are rather small and perhaps they won’t bloom this spring, but in a year or two they should evolve into an impressive colony. We’re supposed to have one more “nice” day before it gets really cold tomorrow night--temps into the teens and highs only in the 20s. A sequence of several days and nights of freezing temps will end any possibility for planting more bulbs, but I can’t complain. November has nearly been an ideal month for a multitude of gardening projects. Today the temp was into the 50s, no problem working without a jacket or gloves.

“The poppy forms a perfect round pepper shaker with tiny chambers that release one seed at a time, as if it were a pill-minder dispensing the day’s drug. The columbine creates dry brown purses, open at the top, and I usually thwack them as I pass, scattering seeds higgledy-piggledy. I like to shake the pods, sprinkling hundreds of seeds on the ground beside each plant. I shake them not because it’s efficient to, but just because I like the shak-shak sound of the seeds as they ricochet around the pods and fly out. Some people harvest seeds more carefully and plant them with a clear method in ideal spots. I figure offspring will grow well where their parents do, but I also like the feel of batting seedpods and watching the chaotic panspermia that follows.”

29 November. A Sunday morning but no church services because of the pandemic, so I could start working in the Coe garden after breakfast, temp around 40F and windy, but the garden walls provided moderate protection, and I chose to labor in sunlit beds. Most of the morning involved planting alliums and snowdrops. I began in the “C” bed, inserting *Allium Christophii* among the grape hyacinth. Also planted several allium with the astilbe in the “D” bed. In the two raised “J” beds, I planted *Leucojum aestivum* to fill in two open areas. BTW, the snow-in-summer in these two beds looks great. The severe pruning in the summer really paid off: foliage is a rich silver gray, and we even have a few white blossoms.

The rest of my planting was at the east end of the garden in the “I” & “H” beds. I planted two colonies of *Leucojum* on each side of the plexiglass panel with the Bacon quote. Behind the NE bench I planted several groups of *Allium sphaerocephalon*, a total of 50 bulbs. I then planted 15 big globe alliums, 5 Mt. Everest and 5 of a giant white in the bed of Siberian Iris in front of the gazebo and 5 large purple Globemasters among two clumps of Siberian Iris near the front of the “G” bed.

After lunch I drove to Wickiup. One task was to harvest the remaining sweet potatoes and Yellowstone carrots. The potato digging produced mixed results. Two vines were loaded with nicely formed potatoes, one vine with a single large potato, and several plants with no tubers. Not a record-breaking season. As for the carrots, they suffered from my perennial failure to thin them properly, but it was still a good crop of yellow carrots, many over a foot long. I also dug up 5 parsnips: four respectable chaps and one rather deformed fellow (short and squat, with a leg shooting off to the side). I left about 10 parsnips in the ground and covered them with a thick layer of straw mulch, trusting they will be waiting for me in the spring.

Once the harvesting was finished, I became a garlic farmer, planting four varieties: two Elephant garlic bulbs (11 cloves), two German White stiffneck bulbs (11 cloves), one Chesnok Red (11 cloves, some small & thin), and one Music garlic (6 cloves). I planted them in the north half of the M1 bed, where the burgundy okra and desert zucchini were growing this summer. The first task was pulling up the old okra stalks—most of whom strenuously resisted. While the stalks’ slimy outer skin was easy to remove, the inner stalk was composed of long, flexible strands that did not break easily. But I eventually got them all out of the ground and deposited in the compost pile. As for the zucchini, they were dry wimps and easy to dispatch. Because of their potential for harboring disease and insect eggs, I’ll bring them home and put them in the city’s green yard container.

Once the summer’s plants were out of the way, I used my Korean hand hoe to turn over the soil—while removing weeds and grass—and repaired the raised bed. I rarely use this hoe, but today I unintentionally left my garden tool bag at home, and the Korean hand hoe, which I store in the pickup, was my only option. As the soil preparation progressed, I began to develop a better sense of how to use the hoe for hoeing, spading, weeding, and raking. It began to feel quite comfortable and I was pleasantly surprised how effective it was in all stages of this planting project.

After the raised bed was back in shape, I sprinkled Territorial organic fertilizer on the bed, thinking the garlic might appreciate this nutrient boost. The soil worked up nicely, and I had no problem creating planting holes with my wooden dibble. In a few places, the holes initially went extra deep, entering into old mole tunnels my initial hoeing had missed. Unfortunately the mole tunnels would suggest a low earthworm population— though I did find a few—but it should also mean few grubs, and I don't recall uncovering a single grub. Even with the mole tunnel issues, the actual planting of 39 cloves went quickly. After marking each garlic variety with a yellow wooden marker, I covered the bed with a layer of straw and let the garlic know I would see them in the spring. Here are a few notes on the four varieties I planted:

- Elephant: not technically a garlic but is grown and treated as if it were; according to the directions, they should be planted 6-8" apart and covered with 4-6" of soil. Because I was using a dibble, my garlic was not planted that deep. The sheet from Territorial Seeds (the supplier) indicated that these garlic could grow to the size of a softball, but I'm not expecting any to grow that large. They should have a mild flavor, suitable for many recipes.
- German White: a porcelain, hardneck garlic; strong, robust flavor but not hot or overwhelming; noted for their roasting quality; very cold tolerant and if harvested at the right time should store for up to six months.
- Chesnok Red: a standard purple stripe garlic; also known as "Shvelisi"—a reference to its origin in an area in the Republic of Georgia near the Turkish border; reputed to have a "robust" flavor with a buttery texture; should store well for 4-6 months.
- Music: named after Al Music, who brought it to the U.S. from Italy in the 1980s; known for its true garlic flavor, described as "fragrant, floral, peppery, sweet"; should store for up to 9 months.

While planting the garlic, I was working on my hands and knees, facing south, trying to stay close to the ground, the north wind at my back. I was reasonably comfortable, but once or twice I put on my gloves to restore warmth and flexibility to my numb fingers. Occasionally, for a few seconds, the sun would burst through the low-lying cloud cover. During one survey of the horizon, I noticed that deer had again broken through the SE corner of the fence, but there is not much left for them to eat. They had nibbled on strawberry leaves and carrot tops. Deer prints confirmed they had walked through the garlic bed I planted earlier this fall but there's no evidence they have any interest in the garlic. While preparing the M1 bed for the garlic, I swept away a few cottonwood branches, lingering evidence of the August derecho. It pains me to see all those cottonwood trees lying in a tumbled mess on both sides of the creek. At home the broken tree parts have been chopped up and carried away, only a couple decorative stumps left as modest memorials. But here at Wickiup, it's like having a garden next to an overtaxed emergency room, littered with patients that can never be revived. The hospital ward has become a morgue, the bodies scatted above ground, left to take care of themselves, paralyzed in what will be a long, slow funeral procession. But the scene will soon be full of new life, baby cottonwoods and black walnuts pushing up through the debris, a drama of rebirth that will continue long after I'm gone.

30 November. Today was warmer than predicted so I could do some unexpected outdoor gardening after lunch. I spent about three hours at Buffalo, under the red-leaf maple south of the church, planting 100 miscellaneous daffodils from Colorblends. This maple has a dense network of roots so it's a challenge finding space for a hole deep enough for these large bulbs. Occasionally I cut through an existing daffodil planted 2-3 years ago, lurking under the surface, but I only ruined a few bulbs. I still have another bag with 100 of the "Spring Loaded" mix. Perhaps the soil will remain warm enough that I can plant those this weekend.

After Buffalo, I went to Coe and straightened up the greenhouse. I trimmed the big rosemary so it would fit on the work bench, saving the trimmings for soup. I also cut back the tarragon, which looks quite forlorn, but there is fresh foliage emerging at the base, suggesting it will revive now it's indoors for the winter. I brought into the greenhouse four trays of perennials that should have been planted this summer but I never got them in the ground. Unless we have a stretch of unseasonably warm weather, I'll treat them as house guests and plant them in the spring.

When I got home, there was still some light so I grabbed my bag of *Galanthus woronowii* snowdrops purchased from High Country and planted 45 bulbs in groups of 6-8 at the front of the Long West perennial bed. This is the first time I planted this variety, hardy to Z3 and supposedly fragrant. They are reputed to be good naturalizers so we'll see how well they do in this location. The species is sometimes known as green snowdrops, probably because of their larger and wider green foliage. According to my Snowdrop book, they have been in European gardens since the late 19th century, but they have often been confused with two other species and were only named and accurately identified in the 1930s. The species name *woronowii* is in honor of a Russian biologist Voronov. Their native area is Turkey and the Caucasus. The blooms should have a touch of green at the base of the 3 inner tepals; the outer tepals are much larger than a typical snowdrop.

4 December. MVM and I drove to Kalona today to buy donuts, granola, baking items for a friend, and a vegetable scrubber. Got home at 1:00 and left for Wickiup about 2:15. First stop was the Christmas tree farm off of Feather Ridge. I cut down a 7' white pine with a nice shape and foliage. Then to Wickiup garden where I repaired the hole in the fence, stretching new netting over the gap the deer have been using as their private entrance. I also repaired a break in the top of the fence east of the garden gate. After the fence repairs, I pulled up a few tomato cages and covered my first garlic planting with straw mulch.

5 December. Another lovely, sunny day; temp into the mid 40s, minimal wind, no problem working outdoors. Unfortunately it has been dropping below freezing at night and the ground is remaining frozen through the afternoon except for a few exposed black areas facing the sun. And that's where in a long oval bed I planted 30 Dutch Iris in two groups and 25 Fritillaria midgets (my description), alba variety. The other accomplishment today was finishing the construction of the new perennial flower bed with the large red pavers. If the weather cooperates tomorrow, I will plant several ornamental grasses and tulips in that bed.

6 December. Despite most of the ground being frozen, I finished planting the jonquils in the Comfrey bed. The primary achievement of the day, however, was moving two loads of compost into the new red paver bed along the east-side neighbor's fence. One load came from the compost pile next to the old white shed. The top tier of the compost was frozen, but below that layer was a good quality compost that easily filled the wheelbarrow. The other load of compost came from the rotating composter on the patio. Despite all the high-quality food scraps and greens that go into that container, it has never produced good compost. For some reason the material does not decompose uniformly. But today I managed to remove a generous load of usable compost. Once I had dumped those two loads into the new bed, I transplanted into the bed four clumps of ornamental grasses. I think three of them are miscanthus, coming from a row of ornamental grasses badly beaten up by the motorized equipment racing around our back yard. The clumps were frozen solid and have a lot of other grasses and weeds mixed in, plus I'm planting them over a web of artemisia roots, that they should rebound in the spring. I still want to plant some tulips at the front of the bed. I'm choosing tulips over daffodils because these beds will need to be redone next summer.

One accomplishment this evening: I posted to the garden website the third July garden walk slideshow, the last set of photos before the derecho. Sad to discover that these photos—most from July 20—included no overall views of the garden, but there are some decent closeups, particularly the photos of the tiger lilies, several shots of a swallowtail on a purple coneflower, and images of bees feeding on coneflowers, veronicas, and platycodons. There were no photos of daylilies, the garden's dominant flowers at the beginning of the month.

"A butterfly sitting on a coneflower is turning slowly in place, sipping nectar as it pirouettes. Its wings open and close in slow, regular beats as it turns. Whenever the wings open they look like a Cupid's bow mouth. Closed, seen from the side, they are the stylized angel's wings (minus head and body) so popular now as decoration, by relying on synecdoche (the part stands for the whole) just show us the wings, and we know it's an angel."

7 December. A's birthday, born 44 years ago in a Texas hospital; per tradition, we sang Happy Birthday over the phone. As for gardening, the cloud cover kept the temp in the 30s, and it never felt very warm. I was at the Coe garden all day. Started the morning by shooting over 150 photos, compensating for my failure to take any photos in November. I experimented with different techniques for the close-up shots, hoping for a few winners. The visual pleasures of the late fall garden often require attention to intimate details, discovering small spots of color, unexpected textures, hints of spring in early December. *[Those photos were eventually posted as two slideshows on the garden website, one set of 50 photos exclusively on various seed heads. Although not professional quality photos, they do a reasonably good job capturing some lovely details in that end-of-the-fall garden.]*

9 December. I remember watching a ten-day weather forecast last week, the meteorologist foreseeing the possibility of temps into the 50s by the middle of this week—and the computer

models were spot on for today, ideal weather for tackling overdue fall gardening tasks on Elmhurst Drive.

- I planted about 30 Elegant Lady tulips in the new red paver bed along the east neighbor's fence, placing the bulbs in front of the miscanthus I transplanted earlier. Covered the soil and tulips with a layer of hard-wood mulch.
- Spent more than an hour clearing away soil, grass, lily-of-the-valley roots, tree saplings, creeping Charlie, and old mulch surrounding the patio's maple stump. The lily-of-the-valley troops adamantly resisted the assaults with my hand hoe, but occasionally we made progress and the old tree stump continues to emerge from obscurity. In the spaces between the stump's more prominent flying buttresses, I planted about 60 *Galanthus woronowii* bulbs, hoping they will complement the *G. Elwesii* planted earlier this fall on the east and south sides of the stump.
- Planted two Serendipity Allium at the SE apex of the NW triangle bed. It took a long time to remove the sod cover. Although I'm sure I failed to dig out all the grass and wormwood roots, I should have given the allium a fighting chance. [*As I had hoped, the allium dominated that space this summer, unimpeded by a few small competitors.*]
- Finished planting the small, miscellaneous, homegrown daffodil bulbs in the NE corner of the Long East flower bed. For the past two weeks, most of these bulbs have been lying on top of the limestone border, exposed and unprotected. But the bulbs seemed fine; many had fresh green tips. I still have a large cloth bag with several hundred more bulbs to plant somewhere.
- In the front yard I cleaned up the border with the west-side neighbors and planted five Karl Foerster *Calamagrostis acutiflora* (Feather Reed Grass) that I dug up in the back yard a couple months ago. The transplanting was relatively straightforward. The biggest challenge was removing several hostas. In front of the hosta/feather reed border, I planted about 60 Actaea Narcissus, organized in groups of 6-7 bulbs.
- Transplanted ten small *Baptisia* that I dug up at Coe yesterday afternoon while cleaning the "I" bed. The false indigo don't like to be transplanted, but perhaps some will survive. They are quite small, their tap roots appear to be in decent shape, and they all had fresh growth at their base, indicating they were ready to start growing in the spring. I also harvested *Baptisia* seed pods a few days ago and tomorrow I'll sprinkle these seeds at the back of the East Long bed. [*None of the seeds produced any new plants, but several of the transplants did survive the winter; unfortunately two of them died when I neglected to keep them sufficiently watered in the middle of the long, hot dry spell in July.*]

10 December. I failed. As I had suspected, I failed to plant all my spring-flowering bulbs, but I gave it my best shot. I would need at least two more warm days to bury the remaining bulbs; however, today at Coe I made some significant progress:

- Planted Red & Yellow tulips (from Colorblends) at the juncture of the "B2" and the "M1" beds next to the NE corner of the patio. In front of them—in the space between the lady's mantle and the cranesbill—I planted *Allium aflatunense* Purple Sensation (Van Engelen bulbs). Along the front of the bed I planted several groups of *Galanthus nivalis flore pleno* and also a couple groups

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in the "L" border across from "B2." And a group of allium—I think Purple Sensation—were planted north of the stepping stones, next to the yew in the "L" bed.

- At the end of the "M2" bed I planted three kinds of allium near the Leopold plexiglass panel, the Purple Sensation on each side of the panel and five big globe allium behind (4 whites and a purple Ambassador). The other three purple were in the "D" bed, next to a Joe Pye.
- Planted a bunch of Katharine's Gold *Iris histrioides* in the crevice garden.
- I finished the morning by planting about 20 Red & Yellow tulips under the Espalier flowering crab, including a clump in the back of the bed, next to the fence. The other bulbs were planted in groups of 3-4 across the front. In only one instance did I encounter a tulip bulb from a previous planting.
- In the afternoon I planted *Galanthus elwesii* in several clusters at the front of the "C" bed. At the NW corner of the bed, near the yarrow, I dug out some of the rhizome-spreading grass and planted snowdrops. In one area I had planted Glory of the Snow last year, and today I discovered some corms just below the surface.
- The next big job was in the "D" bed. I wanted to plant allium in the area between the Johnson's Blue cranesbill and the dwarf lilac. But the first job was to clean up that space, which meant removing most of the goldenrod, which could still be easily identified because of their distinctive seed heads. I then planted 15 Purple Sensation Allium and some Tete-a-Tete daffodils in that area before encountering an existing bed of daffodils.
- At the other end of the garden in the "G" bed, I dug up some vetch and planted my remaining Blushing Lady tulips. After cleaning up an area behind the SE bench, I planted 35-40 *Leucojum aestivum* among the hostas and another 15 around the ferns in the pottery bowl. I finished up by planting Red & Yellow tulips with a few mid-sized allium in the two "G" bed faux whiskey barrels. Also planted a dozen of the *Allium aflatunense* among the ox-eyes north of the rain garden's drainage channel.

By now it was almost 5:00 p.m., the sun had set, it was dark, and my hands were cold, but I felt blessed that I could work all afternoon without a jacket or gloves. Tomorrow the forecast is for rain turning to snow, followed by a week of serious cold temperatures. It's time for my '88 Chevy S-10 to go into storage for the winter and for the suspension of most outdoor gardening efforts for the next two months.

11 December. I was surprised this morning to discover the temp was in the upper 30s and the ground not frozen. Although it began to rain about 9:00 a.m., it never rained hard, and I could keep planting until the middle of the afternoon--when the rain intensified and the temperature began a serious slide downward.

The day started with a trip to Buffalo and planting 3/4 bag of daffodils around the big oak stump, a project I started a week ago but curtailed because of the frozen soil. Although today's soil was cold and damp, I was able to plant about 75 more bulbs. I then drove to Coe and worked in the chilly drizzle, classic English gardening weather. I was wearing my Norm Thompson wool hat, L. L. Bean work coat, Gore-Tex hiking boots, and all was good. Over the next two hours I planted about 60 Siberian blue squill in the "G" bed in two clusters and

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another 40 in front of the red twig dogwood in the "H" bed. Next up were 100 Tinka species tulips deposited along the front border for the "G," "H," & "I" beds and 30 *Galanthus woronowii* snowdrops in the sundial bed. While at Coe I also carried the two new park benches to the gazebo to store for the winter.

After lunch I stayed home and worked in the front yard, determined to get the remaining Pheasant Eye daffodils in the ground. I created 3-4 groups north and east of the old oak stump. I tried to avoid areas where the soil was sticky clay and ended up planting the largest group quite near the street. They should add some vibrancy to the front yard in the spring. Several of the old *Leucojum* in the front yard are already breaking through the soil. While planting the daffodils, I came across five more buried stepping stones and moved them along side the house. Now we start the waiting game, to see what will come up in the spring. [*I am amazed at how well the bulbs planted so late in the fall did the following spring. While we certainly did not have a 100% survival rate, I can't recall a single bed where bulbs planted in November and December did not emerge in the spring and produce flowers, an achievement far beyond my expectation.*]

13 December. Sunday evening in the "sun room," sitting by the Christmas tree with the white blinking lights (minimalist decorations, no other ornaments) and single white bulb, symbolizing a star, above the ancient creche. Outdoors, it's cold and white, 5-6" of snow. Shoveling the drive yesterday morning, the snow was heavy and wet. The moisture is most welcome, good winter provisions for the bulbs, evergreens, shrubs, trees, etc. But my outdoor gardening is on hold for the time being. I still have many unplanted bulbs, but I will take those to Coe and plant them in containers in and around the greenhouse. For today, my gardening was all on a computer. I drafted an MMGR for the past week, finished the fall *Garden Quarto* (except for a final copy editing), and polished off the garden calendar file. Made a final decision on the photos and their sequence, then lost an hour on the title page, trying to position the wording over the photo. Tomorrow I'll take the flash drive file to the printer, and it should be ready for distribution by Friday. I can now turn my attention to working on unfinished blog posts (e.g., essays on planting garlic and the derecho) and this month's almanac. I've also started focusing on my garden book reading and notes for the February blog post. I'm now reading on Kindle *The Well-Gardened Mind: The Restorative Power of Nature* by Sue Stuart-Smith. I had reservations about the book (which is one reason why I purchased it on Kindle), expecting it to be a collection of trite cliches. At times it does celebrate some old truisms about the spiritual/mental benefits of engaging with nature, but the book is immersed in scientific and enlightening personal research, giving a resonance and persuasive depth to these truisms. I've been surprised how many passages I've been highlighting. I'm about 1/3 through the book and have already gained many rewarding insights.

19 December. At home most of the day. Worked on draft of November blog post for two hours this morning. The essay started as a series of reflections on planting garlic but has evolved into an essay comparing my Kansas garden in the 1950s with my current vegetable garden in 2020.

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A classic example of Doctorow's description of the writing process: it's like driving a car at night, never knowing for sure where we are going or what our headlights will reveal.

This afternoon I checked the proofs of the calendar. Vibrant colors, a satisfying representation of the garden in the middle of July. This year's calendar lacks the seasonal progression of the 2020 calendar, but that's okay. After giving the thumbs up on the calendar proofs, I went to Theisen's and bought three bags of chicken grit for my potting soil mix and for covering the soil of seedlings. The heavier chicken grit should not clump together like sand and remain on the surface better than the lighter vermiculite. Tomorrow I'll go to Menards or Home Depot and purchase some compost/manure and a couple bags of top soil to create a potting soil mixture so I can start transplants in the greenhouse. I may also purchase more bags of pebbles for the back yard rock garden.

"Wind-pollinated plants [such as ragweed and goldenrod] don't have to design alluring colors or create nectar as bait for insects. They just flood the neighborhood with seed. Humans produce millions of sperm, too, which is why one teenage boy could populate an entire nation, and many have tried."

23 December. The day started out quite friendly for a late December morning, temp up to 50F. It was windy, the clouds sailing out of the west at a brisk clip, but there was no problem working within the walls of the Coe garden. My first task was stretching new "Christmas" lights over the standard hawthorn in the "H" bed. Of course, I didn't bother to insure the lights were working before arranging them on the tree. The electrical outlet on the pergola only works after sundown so I could have driven back to Coe this evening to check them out—but the temp has dropped well below freezing and the north wind is sending the wind chill below zero. I'll wait for another evening to see how well they work.

My other job today was cutting back the bloody cranesbill in the B1 and B2 beds. That's an easy job, but it does take time. All the plants have new growth at ground level, and this pruning should make it easier to appreciate their emergence in the spring. I also cut back most of the tall stonecrop. Normally I leave them through the winter because of their distinctive seed heads and ability to remain erect even in heavy snowfall, but many were beaten up by the derecho and never recovered. I had hoped to prune the peonies in the "M1" and the asters in the "H" bed but daylight hours are short in December.

Yesterday (Tuesday) was my most productive day at Coe since the arrival of winter weather. I trimmed all the yews on the east end and the sides and tops of the yews on the north end. Just a few spots I could not reach because of how the wooden fence, twisted by the derecho, leans in against the yews in several areas. I did the sides of the yews on the south side but will need to use my ladder outside the twisted fence to reach the top of those evergreens.

On Monday, I cleaned up the "G" bed. My first task was cutting back the purple-leaf loosestrife. The ground is covered with the new foliage—which resembles a purple ajuga ground cover. It took me over a year to figure out this plant was a loosestrife, misled by its imitation ajuga phase—plus its yellow flowers appeared so structurally different from the

gooseneck loosestrife. Speaking of goosenecks, while working on the “G” bed peninsula, I was surprised to discover the uncovered soil had warmed up enough that I could dig up many of the unwanted goosenecks. I cut back all the peonies and trimmed the Dark Tower penstemon (removing the dead flower stalks) and the big clump of Siberian Iris (which needs to be dug up and replanted). When these penstemons are finished blooming in the early summer, I should cut most of them to the ground so I don’t have to deal with so many of these old flower stalks in the late fall. On the other hand, I need to leave some of them to distribute seeds and increase their population throughout the bed. One other “removal” task was pulling up the cane pole tied to the Japanese Maple. That pole had originally helped hold the young tree upright, but after two years the relationship has reversed, and the tree had assumed responsibility for holding erect the cane pole. It was no problem removing the small pole once I cut through the green strips of tape binding them together. I finished up my day’s work by raking up the peninsula and dumping everything into the big compost bin. The area is not pristine, but it looks better than it did.

27 December. Another good day at the Coe garden: I finished pruning the yews. For the northside yews, I took the ladder outside the garden, leaning it over the top of the fence (which is leaning into the yews) and trimmed everything I could not reach from the front of the yews. The southside yews were easier because their fence was relatively undamaged by the wind, and the space between the yews and the fence is relatively clear and easy to navigate. Two years ago I thoroughly cleaned out the interior behind these evergreens—and that effort saved me a lot of time today.

Today’s other notable achievement is that I started using my new potting soil formula with chicken grit instead of vermiculite. I filled two large pots with the new mix and planted three tulips and 5-6 fritillaries in each pot. After watering them, I covered the surface with grit, hoping that might help keep the surface dry and reduce evaporation once the water has soaked into the soil. *[I eventually experimented with several different arrangements for planting bulbs in pots; some I left in the greenhouse and some I set outside. The results were mixed. I don’t believe any of the fritillary bulbs ever produced a flower and the chionodoxa were hit and miss; however, the tulips, snowdrops, leucojum, squill, Dutch iris, and daffodils were consistently successful.]*

31 December 2020. Just finished our last meal for 2020: tofu with peanut sauce and salad greens (drenched, as usual, with my Dorothy Lynch salad dressing, a nostalgic evocation of eating lettuce salads in the 1950s). I’m using a new fountain pen, one that has been lying in my office drawer for several years. This evening, I finally located the right ink cartridges. I like the thickness of the grip—though at the moment I’m having trouble with spelling errors. But that’s probably my fault, not the pen’s.

Both this morning and afternoon I worked at the Coe garden. This morning I posted the year’s final Monday Morning Garden Report, which included a mini-essay on gardening and story-telling. This was followed by posting a 60-photo slideshow of pictures shot on three mornings in September, which included 5 photos of a praying mantis lurking in the stonecrops,

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one of their favorite hideouts. In the afternoon I posted my 4-H garden essay. That was a fun project and it came out okay, helped immensely by information recorded in my 4-H record book. I'm particularly impressed by our estimations in 1959 of the gross weight of our summer's harvest. I was also surprised by how much sweet corn we planted. Corn, potatoes, tomatoes, and cucumbers were our four primary crops. When not working on the website, I enjoyed a couple hours in the greenhouse, potting more bulbs. I did two containers with Katherine's Gold Dutch Iris, a pot with Pheasant Eye daffodils surrounded by snowdrops and squill, and a pot that married tulips with daffodils. I hope some of these will produce a few blooms next spring. [*They did.* :)]