

Fall 2022 Garden Kalendar

This Fall 2022 Garden Kalendar is composed of edited excerpts from my daily, hand-written garden journal entries from October 1 to December 31, 2021--accompanied by occasional commentaries on those passages. The journal records my work in four gardens:

- The Alumni House Garden at Coe;
- A half-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, a small church not far from Mount Mercy College;
- The gardens at my home on Elmhurst Drive in Cedar Rapids.

Kalendar excerpts have in previous years concentrated on journal entries dealing with the Coe and Wickiup gardens. The residential gardens on Elmhurst Drive, prior to the August 2020 derecho, were minimal-care, perennial shade gardens populated with several hundred hostas. The wind storm, however, profoundly changed that landscape, destroying all our shade trees and inspiring a dramatic redesign of the gardens around the house. In the past two years a substantial portion of my gardening (and writing about my gardening) has focused on these new gardens in our front and back yard.

This Kalendar constitutes about 50% of my journal entries in the fourth quarter of 2021. Here are links to simple maps of the back yard garden on Elmhurst Drive and the Wickiup vegetable garden. The Alumni House Garden map is posted on the website's "map" page. As for the italicized quotations inserted between journal entries, they come from Page Dickey's *A Gardener Reflects on Beginning Again*, one of the most enjoyable gardening books I read in 2021. Because of the length of this document, the complete Fall 2022 Kalendar is posted as a pdf.
~Bob

I am one of those odd creatures who actually enjoys weeding. I find it utterly absorbing, on my hands and knees stirring the earth, pulling out interlopers, looking at flowers and leaves up close, their patterns, their fragrance, familiarizing myself with their habit and what they like or don't like. And then, standing up, as I need to do often now, I have the instant gratification of seeing what I've accomplished. ~Page Dickey

Excerpts from Garden Journal, October-December 2021

1 October. Two nights ago I did my fall bulb order, a bit late. My favorite tulips, Blushing Lady, were sold out, but plenty of tulips and other bulbs were still available. At two websites, I spent about \$1,500 on bulbs for Coe, Buffalo, and home.

Colorblends Order

1500 Tommies crocus (for Buffalo and Coe landscaping)

200 Spring Loaded Tulips (Coe's "D" & "J" beds)

100 Sun Disc Daffodils (soft yellow and gold for front yard)

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- 200 Top 40 Daffs (for front yard and Buffalo)
- 100 Judy Beauty Tulips (multi-colored for back yard)
- 250 Fortune Daffs (yellow with soft orange, for Buffalo and home)
- 100 Stop the Car Tulips (purple and orange, for back yard)
- 25 Morel Daffs (yellow with orange, for front yard)
- 25 Frosty Snow Daffs (white with yellow, for front yard)
- 25 Joyce Spirit Daffs (white with orange, front yard)
- 25 Pipe Major Daffs (yellow with orange, front yard)
- 50 Tripartite Daffs (pale yellow with yellow, front yard and Coe)
- 200 Vernal Jewels (undecided)
- 200 Rainbow Coalition (undecided)
- 200 Glory of the Snow (Coe, Buffalo, front & back yard)
- 50 Allium Purple Sensation (Coe & home)
- 100 White Cubed Tulips (Coe & Buffalo)

Van Engelen Order

- 200 Allium Moly Jeannines (Coe & back yard at home)
- 100 Eranthis Hyemalis (Coe & back yard)
- 15 Fritillaria Imperialis (Coe, "D" & "J" beds)
- 50 Narcissus Actaea Daffs (front yard)
- 50 Narcissus Gigantic Star (Coe)
- 50 Narcissus Lemon Beauty (Front yard)

Almost 4,000 bulbs, a lot to plant in the next 4-6 weeks; my two student assistants can help plant the Tommies at Coe.

[All the bulbs got planted and in most instances they ended up where I intended. A few proved very successful. All the tulips were winners, particularly the White Cubed and Spring Loaded Tulips at Coe-- a nice sequence of blooms with dynamic colors. Among the daffodils, the Gigantic Star were very late to emerge, but they produced large, long-lasting blooms; very impressive. As for disappointments, many of the Tommies never emerged, perhaps because of squirrels. Only a few Sun Disc daffodils survived the winter, and as usual a relatively small number of the Eranthis hyemalis produced any flowers--but I'll keep experimenting, trying out new locations, hoping I find locations where they will thrive.]

As for gardening today, it was all at Coe, mostly the garden's east end. I began the day by moving the black metal privacy screen from the "H" bed to the walkways between the "A" beds. My current plan is to place the screen in front of the apartment wall, breaking up that sterile background. But before I can put the screen in place, I need to move the Northwind (or is it "North Wind"?) switch grass that I planted in the "A2" bed a couple of weeks ago. I woke up this morning, convinced the grass will not receive enough direct sun in the bed next to the old student apartments. The best option is to move those four grass clumps to the "H" bed, where I just ripped out the goldenrod and dogwood. Today I turned over the soil in the "H"

bed and removed all the white bindweed roots I could find. Tomorrow morning I'll move the grass to this new location—and try to find an appropriate shade-loving shrub for the back of the "A2" bed. There is a Joe Pye weed volunteer and a redbud in that area; both are potential candidates for saving.

2 October. Major event today was driving to Kalona to the bakery, where we bought a half-dozen donuts, several bags of granola, and a wind chimes for the Buffalo Labyrinth. After listening to all the larger chimes, we settled on a green Corinthian Bells, \$500 model, with beautiful bass tones. This evening, after our return from Kalona, I took three boxes of veggies for distribution at the church tomorrow and mowed the Labyrinth path, the first time it had been mowed since the August 5 dedication. I should not have been surprised at how overgrown the path had become. It was occasionally hard to follow the original path. The difficulties were exacerbated by the taller grasses lying on the ground, covering the pathway. Another issue is that the Labyrinth has many large dandelions and thistles, free to grow oversized since they are no longer being mowed every week. It's going to be a real challenge digging out those bullies.

Earlier in the day at Coe, I moved the Northwind switch grass from the back of the "A2" bed to an area in front of the gazebo in the "H" bed. I was pleased to see the grasses all had fresh root growth. This new site will give them more sun, and they'll add an appealing complement to the nearby miscanthus.

3 October. All gardening today was at Coe. In the morning I worked in the "G" bed, removing gooseneck, horsetail, grass, and vetch along the rain garden's north channel. Slow going. Many roots creating a dense web below the soil. While digging out the roots, I'm trying to save the random daffodil bulbs I encounter. I still have a lot of vetch to remove from the west end of the channel. Removing the river oats from the east end will be another challenge. In the afternoon I switched to the front of the "D" bed. I removed goldenrod and sorrel, dug out several wild milkweeds growing among the stonecrop, and pulled up a dozen or more Queen Anne's lace, a plant that thrives in this area.

5 October. Yesterday was all Coe, mostly preparing for the garden's big event: Megan's performance of her play "The Break." Although the weather was perfect, we only had 15 people in attendance, ten under my goal of 25. I had the impression the audience found it an enjoyable experience.

In preparation for the performance, I spent a couple hours on the "F" & "G" gravel walkways, which were just cleaned up less than a month ago. While the paths still looked okay there were many newly germinated weeds and a lot of grass emerging in the cracks between the bricks. In the beds, I dug up horsetail, asters, grass, sedge, miscellaneous seedlings, etc. Also cut back the penstemon flower stalks and trimmed the shrub rose (which included ripping out several bindweed). While in the "G" bed, I found a small clematis under the

Briggs-Farmer arch, but the larger clematis I transplanted in the spring was completely gone. Not a trace. The area around the arch is full of thriving flowers (shrub rose, penstemon, Joe Pye weed, Siberian iris, balloon flowers), but I have not yet convinced a climbing vine to take the bait and use the sculpture as an access to higher elevations.

Today it was all front yard gardening at home. Earlier this summer I planted two ninebark, two serviceberries, and a few ornamental grasses, but most recent efforts in the front yard have been passive caretaking—removing a few weeds so it doesn't become a total disaster. Today, however, I began developing a more clearly defined structure by restoring the paths. This involved a resuscitation of the pathway design decimated by the derecho. I cleared the areas where the paths will go, staying close to the routes of the old paths—though I did eliminate two unnecessary short cuts. The new layout is simpler and tighter. In the process I removed several redundant hostas and relocated several clumps of tufted hair grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), the products of self-seeding. Most of these were replanted along the path curving around the new linden tree. I also removed two large colonies of Solomon's seal growing among the hostas that surround the ninebark.

Once the route was cleaned up, I started laying paper (mostly printed catalogs) on the path, placed the stepping stones on the path, and covered the papers with mulch. MVM helped with this part of the project, and by supper we had used a cubic yard of mulch (one full load in the Chevy S-10 pickup) to cover 1/3 of the paths. We'll need three more yards to cover the full front yard. Although we still have a long way to go, what was immediately striking is how quickly the appearance of the front yard was improved once the stepping stones were in place and the mulch was providing a uniform backdrop for the stepping stones.

After supper I trimmed the Sweet Annie along the driveway--which had grown so large it was making it difficult to park the S-10. I also dug up a daylily in the front that was being suffocated by a mass of lily-of-the-valley. I separated the daylily into five clumps and removed every piece I could find of the LOTV—whose roots were thoroughly embedded in the daylily roots. Tomorrow I'll replant the daylilies along the driveway.

6 October. The major accomplishment of the day: Gary and I attached the wind chimes to the cross beam at the back of the Buffalo Labyrinth. The chimes are, in my opinion, just the right size, and their green patina fits nicely with the background. The chimes, in combination with the bench and the Briggs-Farmer steel entrance, look darn good.

7 October. Today I experienced the illusion of a major accomplishment. Perhaps similar to a contractor building a house. There can be many days of preparations when there's minimal evidence of progress, but then there's the day when the walls go up. It suddenly appears that a lot has been accomplished. The morning began with my third consecutive day focusing on the front yard, digging up the area next to the driveway, removing the hundreds of lily-of-the-valley plants, and lifting out the daylilies so I could remove more LOTV roots intertwined with

the daylily tubers. Today, finally, I replanted the daylilies. After leveling the area, I planted seven new daylilies: five purchased at Cedar River Garden Center and two tiny daylilies purchased in the spring of '20 from Bluestone, daylilies that despite my disregard for their well-being, somehow managed to survive in their small pots. Once the new kids were in the ground, I replanted about 10 daylilies dug up when removing the lily-of-the-valley. I suspect these are all Stella d'Oro. Now that these daylilies are in the ground, watered, and mulched, the eastern quarter of the front yard should be ready for spring.

My next task was removing the river oats from the bed of *Deschampsia cespitosa* in the front yard. Both are self-seeders, but the river oats quickly form tight, hard-fisted root clumps that are difficult to pry loose and quite eager to dominate the more passive *Deschampsia*. This area around our front entrance was looking rather messy and unkempt. It took a couple hours to remove the river oats that had strayed into the *Deschampsia*, but when finished, the area looked much cleaner, more "civilized." While digging around in that bed, I also cleared away various grasses that were growing under the two privets and replanted about 10 *Deschampsia* clumps, placing them along the path between the privets and the linden tree. I also created two new groups of *Deschampsia* on the northwest side of the ninebark. [I had not planned to use the *Deschampsia* so widely, but the parent plants keep producing these handsome youngsters, they are easy to replant, require minimum care, and are a nice-sized ornamental grass for placing along the walkways in the front yard.]

9 October. Spent three hours in the afternoon harvesting vegetables at Wickup. I began in the West Field by digging up a dozen hills of white potatoes—Yukon Gold and Kennebec. Averaged 4-5 nice potatoes/hill. A few had been gnawed on by rodents, but overall the taters were in excellent shape. Because of the recent rain (1.4" in the Wickup rain gauge), the soil was easy to work with and potatoes came out of the soil quite clean. The primary problem was that I had not done any weeding for the past two months. The row was overrun with crabgrass, foxtail, and Peruvian daisies. I ended up with two large piles of grass for the compost pile. After the potatoes, I harvested one large, light green Ali Baba watermelon, three smaller melons, three pumpkins, several winter squash, and one skin-of-the-toad melon.

In the east garden, I harvested two trugs of peppers (all varieties) plus three eggplants, two cabbages, a handful of yellow carrots, and all the cranberry dried beans. I had not planned to harvest the beans, but the pods were splitting and a few beans were on the ground and had germinated. I also brought home six cucumbers. A remarkable harvest for the 9th of October. I dug up three sweet potato plants, but the result was a total of one potato. For whatever reason, the Beauregards put all their energy into making vines and no effort into making harvestable tubers. I had high hopes for this year's sweet potatoes in the big round raised bed, but for whatever reason the soil stimulated leaf foliage, not potatoes.

The rest of my time at Wickiup was focused on tomatoes. Filled two large trugs and could have easily filled a third, but I didn't have another trug and I ran out of time. Several observations on this mid-October tomato crop:

- This was the best day of the year for the Lemon Boy and Hungarian Heart tomatoes. The three Hungarians I harvested were all large, pinkish red, with small patches of yellow on top; they looked in excellent shape.
- Juliet's World, Wapsipinicon Peach, White Currant, and Arkansas Traveler continued their vigorous production and they all have many more green tomatoes. It appears they intend to keep producing until it freezes.

[After re-reading this passage, I looked up the word "trug" to make sure it was an accurate noun for the plastic baskets I use when harvesting vegetables. While confirming my use of trug, Mr. Webster also informed me that "trug" was at one time a "measure of wheat equal to two thirds of a bushel"—which made me wonder if my larger trugs could handle that much wheat. I would guess half a bushel might be a reasonable guess. I also learned that "trug" was also a word for a "concubine" or "harlot." I just finished reading Gordon-Reed's superb book on Thomas Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemmings and her family. The author identifies Sally Hemmings as Jefferson's "concubine," and reading the dictionary led me to wonder if she was ever called a "trug." Dipping into a dictionary often becomes a fascinating journey. You never know where the word connections may take you.]

9 October. Began the day by cleaning and assembling veggies for the Buffalo congregation: three boxes with tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, winter squash, onions, yellow carrots, two small watermelons, two eggplants, two small pumpkins. After church I returned to Wickiup to harvest more tomatoes. Came home with two large trugs of miscellaneous tomatoes and two small trugs loaded with Wapsi Peaches—perhaps 150 mid-sized tomatoes from five plants. Also harvested okra, peas, zucchini, a dozen orange onions (from sets planted in 2020), and several nice cucumbers. A couple of the oldest cucumber plants in an "R" raised bed have revived and started producing more fruit. I intended to harvest Red Sail leaf lettuce but forgot.

The afternoon was consumed with preparing and canning tomato juice. We canned 5 ½ quarts of yellow Wapsi Peach juice and 5 quarts of red varieties. For supper I cut up an Hungarian Oxheart tomato, which peaked later than other varieties. The yellow top was not fully mature, but most of the tomato had a juicy red texture with excellent flavor. A tomato deserving a second trial season.

12 October. Another day at home, gardening in the back yard. A day of decisions, mostly involved volunteer phlox and goldenrod in the Big Maple bed: what to keep, what to kill, what to compost, what to move elsewhere. I'm trying to clear space for sowing the wild flower seeds from American Meadows. In some areas it's automatic: dig up, discard to compost pile, good riddance to ground ivy, Sweet Annie, quack grass, wild violets, nightshade, most of the goldenrod, some of the phlox, several weeds for whom I have no name. The phlox decisions

are the trickiest. I love the blooms, most welcome in the late summer, and this summer they provided gorgeous violet and light blue flowers throughout the garden. But they are susceptible to fungal problems and they often look stranded and in the wrong place, based on my intuitive, ill-understood aesthetic principles. As I spent the day making these life and death decisions, a few of my basic principles did become clearer in how I perceive the back yard:

- If possible, I prefer not to move plants. The phlox, for example, have chosen to be where they are, and my inclination is to find some way to support their decisions.
- I must become more rigorous in relegating the phlox and goldenrod to the center and back of the flower beds.
- I need to be more rigorous in removing the goldenrod; their root system is aggressive; we need other varieties of goldenrod that are shorter and less expansive than the wild Canada species.
- I am not sure what to do with the purpleleaf loosestrife. I did not attack it today, but now that it's in the full sun, it will become aggressive, and I suspect it's impossible to restrain in its current location.
- I need to find a new location for the Culver's Root. It's too large for its current location in its small triangle area where three paths converge.
- I must do a better job of protecting the stepping stone paths, which were overwhelmed this summer by miscellaneous vegetation.
- I do not know what to plant around the big maple stump. For now we'll stay with the hostas, but that can't be a long-term solution.

The four-foot wall we had just built would seemingly overnight become a vole condominium, with breakfast and dinner at their beck and call. Tulips beheaded, seedlings devoured, violas demolished. I wish I had a video of the white-blooming tulip as it was tugged by its stem into the wall while I watched in disbelief. I had to laugh, before I cried. We bought a load of snap traps, recommended by our friend, garden guru Margaret Roach. And we put them in small boxes, each with one entrance hole, which we placed strategically along the foot of the wall. That first season, a lot of voles met their end in those boxes.

14 October. After working at home for two hours in the morning, I spent the next two hours in the garden at Coe, where I began by hoeing and raking the gravel walkway west of the fountain. A lot of small weeds/grass just beginning to emerge. Some of the grass tenaciously resists the hoe, even with the ground relatively soft from all the recent rains. I also cleaned out the front half of the area west of the baptisia in the "I" bed. The dominant plant in that area is now the *Salvia azurea*—which has notably expanded its territory, going well beyond the single plant support I provided it two years ago. While working on the bed this morning, I realized I'm missing (i.e., "I've lost") one of my Japanese hand hoes, my #1 gardening tool. In this case I

have no recollection when I last used it or where it might be, my mind a total blank. Very irritating this inability to keep track of my tools.

After lunch I put in three hours cleaning up the gooseberry patch in the back yard. I pulled up dozens of nightshade plants, and I fear the little black seed pods will produce many more of these poisonous critters next year. But I'm planning to cover the bed with paper and mulch in the next week, which should restrain some progeny. I also encountered far more pokeweed than I expected, many with long, thick, deep roots. Several were difficult to extract because they were growing close to a gooseberry plant. I was impressed, however, that the three Joe Pye weeds I planted in the spring west of the gooseberry patch had all survived the summer, even though they received minimal care.

I finished the day back at Coe, sorting out bulbs for planting and examining the lawn. With all the rain we've had, the grass looks good, perhaps the best it's looked since I started working in the garden in 2014. We've done a decent job removing the crab grass, and the lawn surface looks quite attractive shortly after being mowed. I'm not usually a big fan of lawns (which is why all the lawn areas around our home have been transformed into flower beds), but this was one moment when I felt the many hours caring for the Coe garden lawn had been worth it.

"I do not love the lawn. I pity the controlled and stunted grasses that are cut down again and again and never allowed to seed themselves; there is no life, no growth there, no renewal or chaos. A sterile green field designed only to be used as empty space between the changing colours. The lawn is relatively unchanging while the seasons come and go: its height alters a little, slowly as it grows, quickly when I cut it; sometimes it goes yellow for a short while when we have a drought. If I go away for a day or two, or can't mow it because of rain, the irrepressible dandelions (my favourite plant) appear above the grass—they only take a day to flower. Life is change. The lawn's job is never to change, to remain immortally green and flat." [quote from Marc Hamer, a Welsh gardener and author of *Seed to Dust*]

15 October. This morning, weeding in the back yard, on my hands and knees, cleaning up the area between the gooseberries and the long west bed. Very slow progress because the roots of the gooseneck and ground ivy and Virginia creeper and lily-of-the-valley are intimately interwoven with the tall Karl Foerster grass that I don't want to harm. The gooseneck and lily-of-the-valley were planted four decades ago, and now I'm trying to restrict, if not eradicate, their presence. Both plants have many attractive qualities and they are super tough in dealing with challenging weather and environmental conditions, but they are too aggressive, their dense root systems inevitably overwhelming their gentler neighbors. They are really tough to remove, and despite my best efforts, I'm sure they will re-emerge next year. My goal for today was simply to clean up the area so I could cover it with papers and mulch, making it a challenge for the aggressors. We'll see.

In the afternoon I went to Wickiup and began the fall cleanup. This will be a huge task because the garden is badly overrun with grasses and weeds that have appeared in the past two months. But it was fun to get started. The weather was perfect, though by 5 p.m. there was a distinct chill in the air due to a brisk north wind. I began the cleanup by focusing on the south end nearest the compost bins, initially cutting down and composting the big stuff, such as the Sweet Annie and the Hopi Red Amaranth. I also did some harvesting, found a few cucumbers, and dug up a bed of red fingerling potatoes in one of the "J" beds.

17 October. After picking up two American hornbeam trees from Trees Forever (to be planted near the Buffalo Labyrinth), I spent the rest of this Sunday afternoon working at Coe. I trimmed the viburnum and weigela in the "A2" bed and settled on the position for the three Hicks columnar yews I bought yesterday at Cedar River Garden Center. I then turned my attention to the middle of the "A1" bed. The crocosima did not do well this past year, so I dug them all up. Their corms remind me of peacock orchids, and I discovered many instances when the corms were attached as a group. I broke apart many of them and using my dibbler planted them about 3" deep. Later I will cover the area with a layer of mulch to provide further insulation. This "Lucifer" cultivar has survived several Iowa winters, but most crocosima are not rated for Zone 5. I'm always a bit nervous wondering how they will do each spring. Two books I read on caring for crocosima recommended that they be divided and replanted in the spring, but I decided to proceed now, hoping it's better late than never.

Next to the crocosima, I planted three *Astrantia major*. Several years ago I purchased a single astrantia destined for the "I" bed. It did not survive the summer, wiped out by too much dry summer heat. The "A1" bed has more shade and the soil is more effective in retaining moisture. One of these masterworts has variegated leaves; the other two are more of a uniform light green, the leaves lobed in a palm-like shape. *[The fall replanting of the crocosima corms was a complete failure. It appeared I had several dozen healthy corms, but not a single crocosima emerged in the spring. The three astrantia started out much better, and produced small blooms that resemble miniature Queen Anne's lace—and indeed they are in the carrot family. Unfortunately, some animal (probably a ground hog) ate their tops to the ground and was determined to dig them up. On three different occasions I had to replant the variegated cultivar. Despite having a challenging summer, they are still alive.]*

18 October. Another beautiful fall day. The temp was in the 40s when I walked out this morning at 8:30, but it quickly warmed up and most of the day stayed near 70, with steady sunshine. I worked in the back yard all day. Began by cleaning up an area in the middle of the east triangle bed and transplanting a coneflower and a rudbeckia, plants I bought at Cedar River Garden Center in June, but only this morning did I finally know where I wanted them to go. Once they were in the ground and watered, I turned to the walkway between the west triangle and the west long bed. That path was completely overrun with grass and weeds. As I

began working on this project, I pulled up all the border stones so I could get underneath them and remove any roots of violets, dandelions, grass, etc. I managed to clean up about 10' of the walks, half of the total length.

After lunch, I moved to the other end of the long west bed and started cleaning up the area around the park bench. I dug up dozens of gooseneck roots; also repositioning two hostas so they now create a triangle with the miniature hostas (that I planted 40 years ago) and another group of hostas. I then laid down two strips of weed control fabric. Under the park bench, I laid four broken stepping stones and covered the area around the bench with fresh hardwood mulch. While working in this area, I also cleaned out weeds and Virginia creeper mixed in with the Feather Reed grass (also planted about 40 years ago). I'm sure I failed to remove all remnants of the gooseneck and lilies-of-the-valley, but the area is much tidier than it has been for many years. And once everything is covered with newspapers and fresh mulch, the area should be more manageable. As for the Feather Reed grass, it is much taller and healthier than it has been for many, many years. Prior to the derecho, it lived in the shade of the Big Maple and received no direct sunlight. Now that the Big Maple is gone, it has really thrived. In fact, all the ornamental grasses in the back yard look very good, particularly the Miscanthus and Pennisetum in the west triangle bed. It's hard to believe that just a year ago that whole area had been chewed up by a Bobcat when the tree crew was removing the fallen trees from our back yard. Now the ornamental grasses look better than ever.

19 October. A year ago today, we had a real snowfall; twelve months later, it's all sunshine with an afternoon temp in the low 70s. I prefer this year's weather. I began the morning by weeding around the red raspberry bed, preparing for the day when I'll install the steel posts and give the cane some support. I then turned my attention to the black raspberries. I dug four post holes and positioned four cedar posts about 2' deep in each hole. The first hole was very slow. I had to cut through several layers of roots, either from the big maple or a cherry tree on the neighbor's. Fortunately the other three holes went much faster, but a couple of times I had to take a break. My back was not pleased with all that leaning over while pressing down on my Dad's old post hole digger. Despite my aches and pains, it went well, and I need just two more holes for the last two posts. I can then decide how to install the wire supports. I'm thinking of putting three steel posts in the middle of the bed and creating a web of wire supports crisscrossing the bed. I definitely need to move the rose of Sharon planted this spring west of the raspberry bed. Perhaps I will replant it in the nearby clematis bed.

In the afternoon to Buffalo, where I laid out the perennial grasses in the labyrinth, positioning them at points where the Labyrinth path changes direction. The grasses include prairie dropseed, Cheyenne Sky switch grass, sideoats grama, little bluestem, and deschampsia. As for the two American hornbeam, I had intended to plant them along the fence line, but when I drove up to the Labyrinth, I felt like the site needed "fillers" that could go on each side of the chimes. I positioned the two trees about 12' east and west of the wind chime poles. My hope is that these two trees, plus the service berries that still need to be planted, will

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create a more distinct perimeter for the outer boundary of the Labyrinth. [*Most of this work proved to be a failure in design and execution. In the spring both hornbeams leafed out, added new growth, and appeared to be thriving, but they were hit hard by the hot summer's dry weather. Neither survived. As for the grasses, they disappeared in the larger masses of grasses that were already in the Labyrinth.*]

When I arrived at the Labyrinth, I saw that someone had placed a small vase of white and pink delphiniums under one of the benches, perhaps in memory of NancyC. It's heartening to see someone using the Labyrinth Memorial for this purpose. While at the Labyrinth, there was a sufficient breeze so the wind chimes were humming. A marvelous accompaniment to my planting efforts.

*That old maxim, preaching patience toward newly planted shrubs or perennials,
comes to mind: "Sleep, creep, leap."*

20 October. Another beautiful day, but the temps will soon be dropping. Light frost predicted for tomorrow night and hard freeze for Saturday night. Our long summer is reaching its inevitable end. This afternoon I made one more trip to Cedar River Garden Center. Everything was 50% off so I went crazy one more time. One unexpected surprise is that I found three nice-sized Korean feather reed grasses that had been set aside but not purchased, so I grabbed them and will plant them in the back yard in front of the grapevine. I also bought two weigela, small-sized, with red flowers that should match nicely with our old weigela along the long east border. I planted both this afternoon at the south end of the SE triangle bed after removing several goldenrod, a lot of grass, several phlox, and the ubiquitous ground ivy. These two shrubs really set off the back of that bed. I also brought home two dianthus, two Rozanne cranesbill, and a globe flower for the Coe garden. For our front yard I bought an Ilex, the first holly I've purchased since the Ilex I planted at Coe died several years ago. Another plant for the front yard is a lovely yellow-green cypress to replace the dead ninebark in the old silver maple bed. My last, impetuous purchase was a small quince, which I'll try planting in the middle of the Big Maple stump.

This morning before the plant buying spree, I worked for two hours in the gooseberry patch. After a round of weeding, I covered the bare areas with newspapers, followed by a layer of mulch. The gooseberry bed is beginning to take shape and return to its old density—minus the red currants, none of which survived the derecho. I also planted six more millennium alliums along the edge of the long west bed, one every 4-5 feet. That planting went quite smoothly, though I did have to replant several daffodils dug up in the process.

23 October. Truth be told, my old body is rather tired this evening. I was up by 6:00, outside by 7:00, unloading mulch from the S-10 so I could drive to Ever-Green and get a yard of wood chips. As it turned out, I brought home my first load shortly after 8:00 and was back for a

second load an hour later, having unloaded the first payload in about 45 minutes. And at 11:45, I returned to receive my third load of chips. Perhaps not a personal record, but a lot of shoveling in a short span of time with my Dad's old coal shovel.

Most of the day was involved in preparing walkways in the back yard: weeding, hoeing, laying down newspapers or weed control fabric, moving rocks and cement blocks as borders, spreading the hard wood chips. Most satisfying was the completion (at least darn close) of the walkway around the west side of the NW triangle bed. I finished raking and smoothing out the path while in the dark, but I'm hoping tomorrow's sunlight does not reveal too many oversights.

I also spent several hours working in around the studio/garden shed. One major accomplishment was creating a walkway from the compost bin to the greenhouse door. I also started two more paths, creating new connections with the two long north-south paths. One path recreates an old path that once ran through the peony beds. The other new path intersects with the recently constructed firepit. Clearing that path involved digging up a dozen or so hostas. Some I deposited in the compost bin, but several larger ones I saved and will replant along the west side of the greenhouse after the construction work is finished. On Monday the dry wall installation should begin. Unfortunately the new windows are on back order and probably won't be here until the middle of November.

This morning there was a serious frost on the S-10 and CR-V windshields. I thought for sure the tender flowers would be zapped, but such was not the case. The basil was killed, but two of the large eggplants and their fruit appear okay.

26 October. A little frost on the pickup's windshield, but not a hard freeze, and so far most of the tender plants/flowers continue to look okay. This morning I worked at home after leaving the S-10 at the auto shop (oil change, brake light, brake "adjustment"). I tore out more purple leaf loosestrife, while reflecting on how so many hours this past month have involved removing plants (and their roots) that I either introduced to Elmhurst Drive or allowed to expand through negligence or incompetence or ignorance: lilies-of-the-valley, gooseneck, sweet Annie, purple leaf loosestrife, perennial artemisia. All these plants have attractive qualities, but they are so bloody aggressive in their insistence on expanding their terrain. And to this group I can add ground ivy, violets, goldenrod. I am not yet finished with the loosestrife, but may be close to having it cornered into an area where I can control it. In the small bed where I have removed all of it (I hope), I planted three black chokeberry plants: *Aronia melanocarpa*, A North American native. Some varieties have a tendency to sucker and will spread, so in a few years I may regret having planted them. But my plan is to give them this bed as their own and we'll see what happens. They should remain relatively small shrubs, perhaps maximum of 5' tall, and are amendable to serious pruning. Two of the Aronia are labeled as 'Autumn Magic'; the other is a 'Doctor Ed'—developed by a prof at the University of Wisconsin. The first one I planted was a long process because I ran into roots of the old big

maple. Fortunately the electric hand saw was working, but it still took a lot of cutting to create a hole deep and wide enough for the shrub's root ball. The other two holes proceeded without such difficulties. I also planted three Korean feather reed grasses (a species of *Calamagrostis*) in the SW corner of the Big Maple bed, immediately north of the grape vine. The three look quite healthy. While I was working with plants, the contractor made notable progress with the garden shed. The dry wall was installed and the sealant is now drying. I was surprised to discover how much smaller the room feels with the ceiling and walls covered with the dry wall. [I eventually looked up the Korean feather reed grass in Darke's *Encyclopedia of Grasses and learned the scientific name is Calamagrostis brachytricha. It's a distinct Asian species which flowers in late summer. Introduced in the U.S. by Richard Light for Longwood Gardens in 1966, the species is shade tolerant, but in full sun it would be more upright and with stronger flowering. It might self-seed but is not reputed to be aggressive.*]

After lunch, I worked at Coe, cleaning up the middle section of the "I" bed—which is the least coherent, least attractive bed in the garden. It now looks much better, simply by removing goldenrod, asters, and several vagabond azurea salvia. I also did some planting:

- Two Rozanne cranesbill in the front of the "I" bed, intended to complement the cranesbill in the middle of the "F" bed on the other side of the garden. [These two cranesbill disappeared over the winter; I've successively planted and transplanted dozens of cranesbill, but for some reason these two youngsters did not survive.]
- Three toad lilies in the "G" bed on the hosta berm, next to the two toad lilies that this year grew quite large, with many blooms. The *Tricyrtis* varieties seem to like that shady spot.
- In the "H" bed, in front of the Northwind switch grass, I planted a flower started from seed last spring. The pot's label has been lost, but I feel reasonably sure it's a Jacob's Ladder. Twice this summer it went a long stretch without watering, and I thought I had killed it, but in both instances a thorough watering revived it.

27 October. This morning I worked at home in the front yard, primarily cleaning up the borders along the walkway leading to the screened-in porch. Next to the front porch I replanted three volunteer *Deschampsia cespitosa* (tufted hair grass), which has been producing many offspring in the front yard. Easy to dig up and transplant, they have become one of my favorite ornamental grasses. My next task was cleaning up the walkway next to the burning bush. Removed most of the wild flowers that had emerged so profusely this summer. I also cut out three large, dead trunks of the burning bush. The walkway now looks much better.

In the afternoon I went to Coe and did something I have not done for a long time: I sat on a garden bench (the south bench facing the fountain, which just got turned off for the year) and ate my lunch: ham & cheese sandwich, chips, chocolate granola bar, and a Pepsi. I spent most of my meal watching birds, primarily starlings, fly in and out of the flowering crab, feasting on the soft, red fruit, most prolific on the NE tree next to the gazebo. The flocks, 20-30 birds per flock, would move between the flowering crab and the top of a much taller maple outside the

garden, its leaves now an orange and dark russet brown. The day was overcast, cool, a distinct breeze, but I felt quite comfortable, protected by the brick wall.

After lunch, I spruced up the area around the garden shed, emptying pots of planting soil into a large planter. Discovered several spring-flowering bulbs I'll plant here at home. Also discovered several plants in small pots hidden behind tall hyssops. Despite several months of negligence, the plants were still alive, including a toad lily and a variegated hosta. Miracles never cease.

I concluded my Coe gardening efforts by planting white tulips in the south side of the "C" bed. Last year I was impressed by the impact of a group of white tulips in the NE corner of the "L" bed. I thought it might work to have a complementary colony of white tulips on the other side of the garden in the "C" bed. Of course I don't know that they will bloom at the same time—nor do I know that the tulips in the "L" bed will come back or produce another powerful white bloom statement. But I thought it was worth a try. [*It worked: both colonies were in bloom at the same time. Miracles never cease.*]

I couldn't find the small bulb planter so I used my Japanese hori knife to dig the holes for the tulips. I liked planting bulbs with this tool. It efficiently loosened the soil, and I was able to create reasonably deep holes. I also felt I had a better chance of not cutting through bulbs already buried in the soil. Although the planting went more slowly, that's okay. We're still in October and I don't yet feel I need to be in a big hurry. The soil is still reasonably warm and easy to work with.

We have a young grove of native chokecherry here, Prunus virginiana, that I also spray against deer browse. The birds love the fruit of this shrubby understory tree, and even more important, its foliage, like that of the black cherry, supports the larvae of hundreds of butterflies, moths, and skippers. As Doug Tallamy wisely reminds us, if you want butterflies, you have to make butterflies.

We need to plant and protect native species of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers because they serve as host plants for butterfly larvae and because the birds that we love are dependent on those caterpillars as a source of protein to feed their young.

29 October. Today's gardening all at home. One notable achievement was installing the last post for the black raspberry bed—though I had to overcome two challenges. First, it rained all day yesterday, and while I could keep working, the soil in the post hole was a sticky mess. The other challenge is that in digging the post hole I encountered a vertical tree root going straight down in the middle of my hole. I should have started a new hole, but instead I decided to cut through the root with my yellow camping saw. I had a terrible angle and I eventually had to cut through the root a second time. But I somehow reached the desired depth, got the square post in the round hole, lined it up so it was reasonably vertical, and filled in the hole with the sticky soil. I also drove two steel posts into the middle of the bed to provide the canes with additional lines of support.

Today's other notable achievement was setting up the log seats around two sides of the fire pit. A couple of the logs were quite heavy and difficult to maneuver, but we now have a semi-circle with six stumps of different heights, all reasonably level for sitting. I then surrounded the fire pie with a weed control fabric and stapled it in place. Now we're ready for a load of wood chips. Perhaps by tomorrow night we can have our first s'mores, prepared with an open fire.

30 October. After picking up two loads of mulch at Ever-Green, I drove out to the Wickiup vegetable garden, the first visit in a week. The rain gauge recorded 2.1" of rain in the past six days, a little more than what we've received in C.R. Everything above ground was frozen with the exception of a row of peas. Hundreds of green tomatoes will soon be in the compost. It was an incredible year with so many tomato plants robustly producing new tomatoes until the last week in October. As for today's harvesting, mixed results:

- Dug up all the sweet potatoes, the dozen plants yielding ten decent potatoes. The plants looked great, with extensive root systems, but lackadaisical potato production. Some ingredient missing or out of balance.
- Also disappointing results with the fingerling potatoes, particularly in the big, round V1 bed, which has historically been very productive. Similar to the sweet potatoes: the plants looked healthy but no potatoes. The fingerlings in the W2 and O3 beds did much better, though some evidence of rodent damage. One hill had at least 25 nicely formed fingerlings, perfect for roasting.
- The King Harry bed produced excellent numbers of good looking potatoes, all volunteer plants from potatoes I failed to unearth last fall. As usual, this strain often forms new potatoes far from the mother plant. When I began digging the first hill, I was at least a foot from the center of the hill, but my spade cut through three potatoes. I only dug 2 hills, but harvested over 20 smooth-skinned, nicely formed taters.
- Dug up two rows of carrots. Harvested all the Little Finger carrots in the O2 bed. These are beautiful carrots: long (many over 12" long), straight, relatively thin, no blemishes, not bothered by rodents or other vermin. As for the row of Scarlet Nantes, they also did well, much bulkier than the Little Fingers, but not as smooth or elegant looking.

1 November. Halloween was a big gardening day in the back yard. I cleaned up the walkway from the rhubarb bed to the studio, laid down the weed-control fabric, replaced the border rocks along each side of the walkway, and covered the walkway with fresh wood chips. I did the same with the walkway from the studio to the shed, while also covering several areas around the shop and the firepit. I used several small oak trunk pieces as the border between the hostas and the studio/shop path. About 5 p.m. I started a fire, using my fancy long-burning matches and a fire-ignition gel purchased from Piragis in Ely (the one in Minnesota). While it wasn't a great fire, it was fun to get it started and the three small logs burned for 30-40 minutes. I didn't have much dry kindling, so I frequently used my rubber bellows tube to fan the flames.

A tough decision this morning: I threw into a dumpster the green wooden porch swing that had been at MVM's farmhouse when she was growing up. I had intended to repair the swing, but this morning I decided its repair was beyond my capabilities. After pitching the swing, I spent the rest of the morning planting daffodil bulbs in the "H" bed at Coe. I spread them around the Northwind switch grass I planted earlier this summer. I used a new bulb plant with a mechanism for releasing the soil after making the hole for the bulbs. It worked okay, though the damp soil would often cling to the inside of the planter. But with the soft soil, the new tool was easier to use than my larger bulb planter.

In the afternoon I worked with Gary at Buffalo. We planted three trees (a hornbeam and two service berries). We decided to place the service berries so they can serve as part of a barrier between the church pasture and a rental property. Later we'll plant another service berry and some switch grass in front of the gate that provides access to the rental house's backyard. Previous occupants have driven across the church lawn in order to use that gate. On several occasions the problems with this fence and gate have been pointed out to the owner, but so far nothing has been done. Perhaps the placement of the trees and tall grasses will help rectify the situation.

After planting the trees, we worked on the center of the Labyrinth. We brought in two cement slabs that can serve as a foundation for one of the benches, keeping the wood feet out of the soil. The slabs were heavy and difficult to maneuver, but we finally got the slabs and bench lined up with the tulip tree, wind chimes, and entrance. Our results are not perfect, but the basic arrangement looks okay. We have two more benches to place on slabs, but their precise alignment is not so critical.

*. . . daily I find I am drawn away from the gardens to the wild land. I cannot easily explain why the fields and woods we've inherited call to me in a way the flower gardens do not. Perhaps it is precisely because they're not cultivated, they hold mysteries, they offer discoveries unknown to me. I thrill to the unexpectedness of flowerings almost every day in spring, summer, and fall as I walk through the meadows and along the woodland paths, many that send me to books to find their names.
I'm beguiled by the traces and sightings of denizens that share our land.*

2 November. A real freeze last night, wiping out the dahlias at Coe. No complaints. It was a great October with no hard freeze, over 7" of rain, and many ideal fall working days. After digging up and cleaning the dahlias, I started preparing the dahlia beds for planting tulips. I left most of the tall verbena, hoping they might survive the winter. In the "J" bed are many nigella and plains coreopsis seedlings; also a few cleomes. When planting the tulip bulbs, I won't worry about all those small seedlings. A few should manage to survive. Speaking of nigella, one that I transplanted to the long east bed at home is still blooming. All the nigella at Coe stopped blooming months ago. I wonder what makes the difference in their flowering schedule? [As it turned out, the nigella and plains coreopsis continued to be prolific in 2022, but the

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cleomes only produced one small plant that appeared late in the summer. None of the verbena in the two dahlia beds survived the winter, and there were just a few seeds that successfully germinated in the bed. Fortunately the verbena love the gravel walkways and produced hundreds of seedlings among the small rocks, many of which were successfully transplanted into the two dahlia beds.]

5 November. All my gardening work was at Coe today, primarily planting perennials purchased from Sooner. I began the morning by planting two perennial sunflowers and a tickseed in the middle of the "I" bed. That bed receives the most full sun of any bed in the garden, and I expect these plants to do well in that location. In that bed next to the baptisia I also planted twenty daffodil bulbs. I next turned to the raised "J" beds and trimmed back the snow-in-summer, which has really revived after its mid-summer doldrums. I also pulled up the gladiola tubers in the east end of that bed. The tubers were large and healthy looking, but the plants didn't produce a single bloom. I need to start them in the greenhouse earlier in the spring and plant them outside in the middle of May. After removing the gladiolas, I planted 20 white tulips, the same variety planted in the "C" bed. I would like to add a similar group in the other raised "J" bed, but first I need to remove the little bluestem. It has thrived in that bed, but the grass doesn't fit well with the bed's over residents.

In the afternoon I concentrated on the two "A" beds. I began by cleaning up the middle of the "A2" bed and planting five anemones: three 'Wild Swan' and two 'Curtain Call Rose' hybrids. This area does not get much direct sun, except in the early afternoon in mid-summer, and I suspect these anemones would prefer more sunlight, but the anemones planted two years ago have done well in this location. I did leave some space behind the tall white anemones now in place. Those blooms finally froze two nights ago, but the plants are still erect and continue to look quite attractive.

I finished the day by cleaning up the west end of the "A1" bed. Earlier this fall I replanted the crocosima bed, but the western end of the "A1" bed was left untouched. It has always been rather wild, an indiscriminate mix of nondescript hostas, volunteer elderberry and redbuds, a few golden rod, a sprinkling of wild strawberries, some tufts of grass, and at the front of the border several native columbine. Today I removed almost everything except for the columbine, the hostas, and a Joe Pye weed. The elderberry are easy to dispatch, though a couple had rather large lateral roots. My plan now is to plant a hundred or so daffodils for April/May blooms and wait until next spring to decide on what should be featured in the summer and fall. The space needs perennials that don't require much sun. I forgot to mention that in the upper "A1" bed I planted two new *Asclepsia tuberosa* from Sooner Farms and in the corner of the bed a Summer Beauty Allium from Cedar River Garden Nursery.

9 November. Four days since my last entry. Over the weekend we drove to Kansas, met MVM's sister & husband, and on Sunday attended the "final" church service to be held at Fancy Creek Zion United Methodist, the church where we were married 54 years ago. Actually

the small congregation (now averaging about ten people per Sunday) will meet in the church for two more months, but this service involved the District Superintendent's official desanctification of the church. It was a lovely weekend weatherwise, with ideal travel conditions, but the trip means I missed three days that were ideal for planting spring-flowering bulbs. Fortunately today was another beautiful day, temp in the low 60s, so I could get a lot done, but cold/wet weather is due to arrive tomorrow. By the weekend we may have light snow and evening temps in the low 20s—which means frozen soil.

This morning I began the day by picking up a yard of wood chips at Ever-Green and taking the S-10 to Keenan Auto so Clint could fix the tailgate, which was refusing to stay closed. While he was adjusting the tailgate mechanism (at no charge), I worked at the Coe garden for a couple of hours. With MVM's assistance, we planted 15 white tulips in one of the raised "J" beds and planted some miscellaneous colored tulips in one of the sunken tubs in the "H" bed, a tub where I planted daffodils two years ago. Our first task was removing those daffodils, a slow process since I didn't want to damage the bulbs. We then turned our attention to the "A" bed, where I had removed unwanted plants and weeds last week. We planted 60 Giant Star daffodils, which have very large bulbs. In many instances I had to dig a double hole so we could get them planted at a sufficient depth. In front of these big yellow daffs we planted 25+ of a smaller variety (the name escapes me at the moment). Later this afternoon I planted another small daffodil in front of the anemones in the "A2" bed. Not many people ever walk through this part of the garden, but it's an area that I pass through every day. I'll feel better with this area acquiring a more "cultivated" appearance.

I finished the afternoon at Coe by planting 50 small alliums, Moly Jeannine. The small bulbs look like pearls, and I felt like I was dropping priceless pearls into the holes created by my dibbler. I planted half of them in two locations on the west side of the "C" bed. Another 15 went into the "B2" bed, in an area where the lady's mantle meets the coreopsis. The lady's mantle took a severe beating during the hot/dry summer months. It has recovered some of its vitality, but I'm thinking the remnants would best be served by moving them to an area that has more protection from the summer's mid-day sun.

Outdoors, Bosco [Dickey's husband] is all for more variety in the flower borders. I want drifts and puddles of a few plants. "Too many this's and that's," runs through my head, the observation of a dear colleague about a particularly busy garden.

10 November. Today's gardening started at Buffalo planting a mixed assortment of 200 daffodils along the parking lot and in the rocky/sandy stretch next to the building. The parking lot border was a real challenge because that soil is full of pebbles and larger rocks. I also tried to avoid digging up any white daffodils I planted in that area several years ago. As I was finishing up, a light drizzle arrived. The temp was about 50 and there was a brisk NW wind, but the soil felt warm and my fingers never got cold.

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After lunch I worked at home in the front yard. I continued with the planting projects started yesterday, creating groups of daffodils at various spots along the stone steps. I planted two groups of Tripartite daffs in front of the ninebark and a large group of the Gigantic Star daffs in the center of the bed, fairly close to the curb. As I was finishing that group another light shower arrived, which soon turned into a serious rain. My gardening was done for the day.

12 November. First taste of winter today. The temp stayed above freezing, but we dealt with a mixture of drizzle and snow throughout the day. Not pleasant conditions for outdoor gardening. This morning I had a one-hour interview on Zoom with a research team investigating how retired rhetoric/composition faculty deal with retirement. It was a pleasant conversation and provided an opportunity to reflect on the eight years since retiring from full-time teaching and administration. The rest of the day I kept thinking about issues and experiences I should have mentioned but didn't.

As for gardening, it was almost all inside. One primary task was cleaning up the dahlia tubers (plus a few gladiolas and peacock orchids) and storing in peat moss. Many of the dahlia tubers initially appeared shriveled and in bad shape, but as I worked with them and trimmed them down, they looked healthier and more robust. I made no attempt to separate the varieties, and I discarded all the bishops. Those tubers were quite small and they produced no flowers. It's time to order new stock and start fresh. I may also discard the gladiolas: the plants looked great but no blooms.

16 November. Today was a real gardening day. Although the temp at 8:00 a.m. was in low 30s, the daytime temp rose into the 50s, with periodic sunshine breaking through the thin clouds. Only downside was a brisk wind, but it was from the south, and I could work without a coat most of the day. This morning I went to Buffalo and drilled holes for daffodils to be planted along the edge of the parking lot. As I have noted in previous journal entries, working in this area is slow going because of the rocky soil, but I was pleased that only once did I accidentally cut through a daffodil bulb planted in 2019. After creating about 70 holes, I took a break and planted Vernal Jewel crocus on the hillside near the red maple. I was surprised how dense the soil was, and I'm no longer strong enough to push the dibbler sufficiently deep into the soil. Fortunately I had my hammer along and on several occasions pounded the dibbler into the soil. Thankfully this plastic dibbler is really tough. The best spots for planting the crocus were where I had dug out a dandelion. Thank goodness for dandelions!

17 November. Today turned out to be far more pleasant (higher temp, less wind, no rain) than the weather forecast had foreseen. I was able to garden all day: home, Buffalo, and Wickiup. I began this morning by planting bulbs in the front yard--almost 100 allium moly (pronounced "moll-ee," with accent on the "moll") 'Jeanine' bulbs along each side of the stepping stone walkway that comes off the driveway. I planted these at Coe last year, and they produced

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delightful yellow umbels in June. I created 5-6 different groups, averaging 12-15 bulbs per group. I also planted several groups of daffodils in the front, including a large community in the middle of the triangle bed east of the front porch. With those bulbs in the ground, the front is finished—at least for this fall. I then moved to the astilbe pots west of the porch and planted old tulip and daff bulbs in those pots, a task that first required cleaning out the “weeds”—mostly violets and an unnamed vine with tiny white flowers still in bloom. Four of those big pots now have spring-flowering bulbs surrounding the astilbe. *[All of this planting turned out well except for the daffodils introduced into the triangle bed east of the front porch. Only a couple of those daffodils appeared in the spring. I have no idea why they failed to thrive. In contrast the daffodils disappointing performance, the alliums’ yellow blooms were a delightful addition to the front yard garden.]*

This afternoon I went to Buffalo and planted about 50 crocus (mostly Vernal Jewels and a few Tommies) in the south lawn. I began by digging out dandelions and a few other weeds (one had an incredible tap root, well over a foot long). The weeding loosened the soil and made it much easier to plant the bulbs. I still have 300 Tommies to plant somewhere. My first option will be the two lawn sections at Coe, searching for areas missed when my garden assistants were planting the Tommies earlier this month.

After Buffalo, I drove to Wickiup and harvested Kennebec potatoes. I began by clearing away the grass and weeds from the 5th row of potatoes. Hard to believe that in July this area was weed-free. Some of the grass was really tough to dig out. Fortunately the Kennebecs produced a plethora of potatoes with relatively minor rodent damage. Only in the last hill did I encounter several potatoes that had recently been chewed on. While digging the potatoes, I came upon two rodent nests made of grass but no evidence of recent occupancy. I wonder where these critters go once the temperatures fall below freezing.

21 November. I probably could have finished planting bulbs this afternoon, but instead I straightened up the garage—which primarily involved pushing the wheelbarrow up the “hill,” moving to the shed and greenhouse piles of pots, fertilizer, potting soil, a tiller, garden tabs, tools, and ten boxes of magazines that will eventually become weed control material under a layer of mulch. Of course, the immediate result of all this moving is that now I have piles of stuff in the shed and greenhouse, but at least these items are in the right structure, though not yet in their “final” resting place.

22 November. This morning’s temp was in the low 20s, but we had sunshine and not much wind so it was reasonably comfortable working outside. My primary focus was on organizing the greenhouse and garden shed. After moving more stuff from the garage, I drove to Ace Hardware and purchased a small weather station for the garden studio, an outdoor thermometer to put on the fence behind the garden shed, and three panels with hooks for hanging garden tools on the wall in the shed. I also purchased a new space heater for the shed.

In the afternoon I unloaded the mulch in the pickup and covered several areas in the two large triangle beds and the big raised cloth bed. Also placed mulch around the new cypress in the front yard.

While working on afternoon projects, I started thinking about how my approach to gardening compares with my how I taught my writing courses. Many of my writing assignments were segmented essays, collages, appositional texts—all texts that relied on the reader completing the texts, inferring the thesis or main idea, recognizing the connections and possible relationships among various passages in the text. My ideas on gardens and written texts have consistently emphasized the value of juxtapositions, multiple-level relations, the writer and the gardener discovering those relationships in acts of exploration and discovery. Gardening deals with appositions: putting plants and garden structures in juxtaposition and seeing what will result. Always looking for surprises, expecting the written texts or the gardens to tell you something you had not previously known.

23 November. The morning was absorbed with sorting potatoes, putting them in storage bins, placing the bins in a corner of the basement, hoping the corner will remain dark and cool. After lunch, I placed a space heater next to the lawn mower, warmed up the engine so it would start, and mowed the hostas, daylilies, and mint in the front yard. I then unloaded the pickup load of mulch I obtained this morning and covered several areas in the front yard. I also planted about 40 allium in the front yard along the stepping stone path. I still have about 200 bulbs to be planted, probably in the back yard.

24 November. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and today we cooked the turkey, trying a new technique by removing the backbone and spreading the bird flat (there's a term for this procedure, "splatch turkey"). This technique is supposed to equalize the cooking time for both dark and white meat—and we think it worked. As for gardening, I intended to address several website writing tasks, but the nice weather (no rain, temp in the 50s) intervened. Given the frigid forecast for Thursday and Friday, I tackled a few jobs on Elmhurst Drive.

- Cut the Sweet Annie along the driveway and put everything in a green bin for today's garbage pickup.
- Spent over an hour weeding the old hosta bed above the patio. I left the hostas and most of the lily-of-the-valley. I was surprised how much sweet woodruff I found, hiding under the hosta leaves. After getting the area in decent shape, I planted circa 40 "Stop the Car" tulips, a Colorblend marketing language that worked with me. In late April or early May the tulips should bloom directly outside MVM's studio.
- Planted 40-50 Glory of the Snow along the walkway bordering the long west border.
- In the SW corner of the long west bed, I planted 25 Purple Sensation allium, the variety that I just came across as highly recommended by Dan Pearson in his book, which I'm now reading: *Natural Selection: A Year in the Garden* (slightly misleading title since he talks about working in

several gardens). Pearson's text is very detailed, revealing an encyclopedic knowledge of plants and how to blend them in a garden, aware of distinctions far beyond what I will ever know.

- After lunch, I planted 30 Tripartite daffodils in the middle of the NW triangle, creating a semicircle of bulbs around the tulip tree.
- Cleaned out the wormwood and dandelions in the small bed at the north end of the Long East bed. I then planted 20-25 small tulip bulbs I had salvaged last spring from a couple beds at Coe. A few bulbs of decent size and they might bloom. *[Their bloom rate far exceeded my expectations; they produced a lovely row of white tulips across the bed.]*
- The big accomplishment for the day was re-assembling Leon Bentjeman's whirligig. Leon, who died this past year, was a farmer in north central Kansas and a friend of MVM's parents. In his semi-retirement, he constructed whirligigs, using whatever scrap materials he could find. The post his whirligig was mounted on was destroyed by the derecho, but the whirligig itself survived in decent shape. After finding a sturdy square cedar post, I dug a 3' hole, inserted the post, and checked its alignment several times while filling in the hole with soil and small rocks. I attached the whirligig to the post with three large screws, and was surprised to discover it worked beautifully, easily responding to the gentle breeze. When at rest, the blades naturally revert to an easterly direction, but overall, the red and white whirligig appears to be reasonably well balanced. While standing on the deck this evening, scanning the back yard, I saw the blades spinning. A joy to see it back in action.

26 November. A second day without much gardening. Yesterday was Thanksgiving, the day absorbed with meal prep, the meal, and post-meal cleanup. Theo and I did visit the back yard for about 15 minutes as the sun was setting. He pulled the red wagon around the paths and noted the discovery of two new paths (he was right in both instances). We had purchased the ingredients for s'mores, envisioning the use of the fire pit, but it was very cold, the 30F temp accompanied by a brisk wind. After a couple trips around the back yard, Mr. T and I were ready to come in the house.

Today was warmer, less breeze (and it had shifted to the south), mostly sunshine. After finishing, printing, and delivering the December church newsletter, I worked in the garden shed. Put up the three tool bars, hung up many garden tools, and realized I will need more shelves. I also started sorting the pots in the greenhouse, hoping I can get most of them stored under the two work benches. Once it had warmed up, I spread two wheelbarrow loads of mulch on the patio flower bed and in the astilbe pots where I had just planted tulips and daffodils. I needed to empty the pickup because this afternoon we drove to the Wickiup Hill Tree Farm and purchased a 7' white pine Xmas tree. Somehow we managed to haul it up onto the deck, move it into the sun room, and maneuver it into the plant stand without jeopardizing our marriage vows. I should have mentioned that this tree farm trip involved MVM's participation, which meant I had to clean the interior of the cab, which meant removing

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newspapers and magazines intended for mulching the Wickiup garden. And then I had to use my little straw hand broom to sweep out a year's worth of gravel and dirt and granola bar wrappers and all kinds of seeds and wads of papers and other important documents stored in my mobile office. I suppose it had not been cleaned since last November when we brought home our 2020 Xmas tree.

28 November. This morning I sorted and stored pots in the greenhouse. I didn't attempt a pot count, but it would be in the hundreds, with infinite variations in sizes and shapes. One could write a dissertation just on the different drainage hole designs. Alas, in most instances the plants have long since died but their plastic pots live on. Eventually I will cull the herd so they take up less space, but I did manage to get them semi-organized and stored under the west work bench. The space under the east work bench will be reserved for buckets, potting soil, watering cans, etc.

Today I unpacked my Dad's collection of old bottles, most which he found along creek that ran through our farm. The area had once served as a local dump, and I recall an old automobile buried in the bank, only its roof still uncovered. The bottles were wrapped in the Wichita Eagle newspaper, dated July 9, 1995, four days after Dad died. I placed the bottles on various shelves in the greenhouse frame. Perhaps when the spirit moves me, I'll give their insides a more thorough cleaning. In the box I also came across an old, yellow mixing bowl, with black human silhouettes on the sides, a bowl my mother often used in the kitchen when I was growing up.

29 November. All day at the Coe garden. It was chilly in the morning but above freezing and with occasional sunshine and a southerly breeze. It eventually warmed up into the mid 50s and became quite pleasant, ideal gardening weather. Today's tasks included:

- Fed the red wigglers.
- Rolled up the soaker hose from the B1 bed and stored it in the plastic greenhouse, where I encountered a black cat napping; it escaped through a convenient tear in the plastic.
- Emptied the NW gate garbage can and inserted a new garbage liner. Before putting the bin back in place, I dug out the "foundation:" and added two more pavers to provide a more stable base. Not perfect but better.
- Emptied the mulch in the wheelbarrow and spread three more loads of mulch in several beds. One load was spread over the "A1" bed where I planted the daffodils and replanted the crocosima and the "A2" bed where I planted the new anemones. I also covered the exposed soil around the Northwind switch grass.
- Planted about fifty "Top 40" daffodil bulbs behind the shrub rose in the "H" bed and covered that area with mulch; also spread mulch under the dwarf lilac.
- Unpacked three new sets of Christmas lights. Spread two nets over the standard hawthorn and one over the lilac. I hooked the hawthorn lights directly to the electrical outlet on the pergola. When the garden lights came on (about 4:45), the little golden lights immediately

began to glow—and they looked darn good. Unfortunately the plug on the lilac lights would not work with my extension cord. I need to purchase a new cord so those lights will work.

- Cleaned up one of the compost bins and set out three containers for the grounds crew to empty.
- Collected various pots and put them in the plastic greenhouse—which I hope will prove strong enough to deal with our winter weather.
- Wrote notes for a Monday Morning Garden Report, though I have not yet finished writing my last two MMGRs. I enjoy writing the reports, but with so many chores, I have trouble finding the time to get them drafted, revised, edited, and posted. And I haven't even begun to write this month's blog, which is due to be posted tomorrow night. :(

I am more than ready to take a break from gardening in winter, relieved to be forced by frozen soil and single-digit temperatures to call it quits. What a pleasure it is to read books without the weeds calling, to bake cakes and slow-cook stews, to daydream about flowers. I have time to scheme about gardens, to change my mind multiple times on how to improve their design, to plot what plants to add next spring, what seeds to order. Yes, here we have dreary days of freezing rain and the inevitable danger of lurking ice. Yaktrax on our boots are a winter necessity. But we still get excited, childlike, by snow in winter, willing to cope with its inconvenience in exchange for its silence and shadows.

4 December. Another good gardening day. I began my morning by picking up another load of mulch at Ever-Green, my 14th load since October 1. After parking at Coe, I cleaned up the “C” bed, cutting back the cranesbill, removing brown foliage from the daylilies, and covering the bed with fresh mulch. While working in the bed, I found one snowdrop in bloom, three months ahead of schedule. An unexpected joy.

Since there was a faculty/staff Christmas party in the Alumni House in the afternoon, I moved to the east end of the garden, cleaned up the front of the “G” bed, and planted three groups of Chionodoxa bulbs at the front of the bed. Unfortunately the northwest corner of that bed is now overrun with crown vetch. An admirable plant in many respects, but the vetch has created a real mess. I should dig everything up and remove the vetch roots, but that a long, time-consuming task will need to wait until next year. I did remove some of the vetch, but the dense underground roots won't hesitate to produce new plants in the spring.

I also worked at home in the Big Maple bed and the Long West bed in the back yard. In both cases I'm preparing them for sowing wildflower seeds. In the Big Maple bed, I dug up a lot of ground ivy and violets and cut to ground level most of the phlox, goldenrod, hostas, turtleheads, etc. Repeated the same process with the Long West bed, although there I also pulled up the zinnias and cosmos that had dominated the bed this summer and fall.

8 December. Another day of wintry weather, another day of computer gardening indoors. I loaded photos for a July Garden Walk on the Coe garden website, creating two slideshows,

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one focusing on daylilies. I revised a draft of the October Garden Kalendar blog post and the Derecho essay (after one more editing I'll post it). Concerning the fall issue of *The Garden Quarto*, I found an email address for Jim McKean and sent him a request to reprint two poems. As for working outside, I sorted through my pile of boards and identified lumber I can use for creating the three connected compost bins to be located north of the greenhouse. Tomorrow I'll start cutting the boards and attaching them to the structural posts.

13 December. Began the day by picking up a yard of mulch at Ever-Green. Once back home, I retreated to my basement office and spent an hour editing the photos for the Garden Kalendar, creating the front cover, inserting information on the website and camera, and transferring my files onto a flash drive. At CopyWorks I discovered they could not download my files, so I went to Coe, where I discovered the files had become corrupted and needed to be reloaded. So I turned home, redid the files, and saved them as pdf files. Then it was back to CopyWorks, where we were "good to go." The proof copy should be ready in two days. Now it's time to prepare *The Garden Quarto* for printing.

In the afternoon I worked at Coe for four hours, focusing on the "L" bed. Spent a long time cutting foliage, raking, and putting stuff on the big compost pile. I also took notes for a new MMGR, recording what I saw and smelled while working on the "L" bed. I moved a wheelbarrow load of mulch onto the bed and two wheelbarrow loads onto the "D" bed. The working conditions were quite pleasant, temp in low 50s, almost no wind.

This evening after supper I once again revised and edited the MMGR for 15 November. I've been working on this draft for three weeks and still felt the need to make dozens of changes. It's rather depressing to have labored on this draft for so many hours and continue to encounter so many awkward passages. But I finally called it finished and deposited it on the website, accompanied by a photo of New England asters with light, fluffy seedheads.

14 December. At Wickiup this afternoon I harvested the Trail of Tears pole beans. I suspected they had been degraded by so many nights with temps below freezing, but I broke open a couple of pods and the beans seemed in decent shape. I ended up with a good harvest. I also dug around in the bed with the volunteer German butter balls and harvested twenty nice-sized potatoes. A few potatoes close to the surface were soft, but the ones below the top 2" had not frozen and were hunky-dory. This is the latest I've ever harvested potatoes.

15 December. An unusual day. At 3:15 p.m. the thermometer in the gazebo at Coe indicated it was 75F, surely a record for this date in December. I knew it was warm because I was working with no jacket and was sweating. Tomorrow the forecast is for a return to seasonal temps, with a high in the 30s.

All my work today was at Coe, and when I finished I felt it was possible to see notable improvements. One of those rare days when garden work progress was measurable. I cleaned

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up several flower beds and spread a yard of mulch on those areas. I cut back the asters, goldenrod, gooseneck and hyssop in the "H" bed, leaving the tall miscanthus—which now shows up much better. I trimmed the honeysuckle and several limbs of the flowering crabtree hanging over the wood chip walkway. I cleared out the grass, Queen Anne's lace, and ox-eye daisies under the dwarf lilac and covered the area with mulch. In the "M1" bed, I cut to the ground all the peonies, cranesbill, and Joe Pye weeds. Most of the garden is now freshly mulched and looks reasonably clean, though I've left many seedheads for visiting birds, particularly coneflower and rudbeckia seedheads in the "I" and "K" beds.

While working in the garden I had two breaks. The first was when Lisa came by the garden and we harvested seeds for a pasture where she is planting wild flowers. She took seeds of purple coneflower, black-eyed Susan, Kansas gayfeather, hyssop, goldenrod, New England aster, aromatic aster, river oats, and tall verbena (the one non-native). It was fun going around the garden, harvesting and sharing these seeds. It's nice to think the garden can have utilitarian benefits, that it's not just a "pretty face." The other interlude came in the afternoon when we had storm sirens and a powerful thunderstorm rumbling through with winds over 50 mph. Fortunately we did not lose electricity, and the storm was short-lived.

20 December. Yesterday afternoon I used the new greenhouse for the first time as a real greenhouse—and not just a storage site for gardening equipment. I took three house plants that MVM had started in water and introduced them to potting soil in their own individual pots. They all had extensive roots and the potting soil was already prepared so the transplanting went rather quickly. After the potting task, I spent two hours in the garden studio, drafting a new MMGR and transcribing passage from my journal for the Fall Kalendar posting—now almost two months overdue. Of course, I got sleepy and had to take a nap on the old sofa. I wonder how many hours I've spent in the last 40 years sleeping on that sofa. :)

This morning I worked on last week's MMGR and this afternoon put in four hours at the Coe garden. It was a bit chilly, temp in the 30s. By the time I left the garden at 5:00 p.m. my fingers and toes were no longer functional, but most of the afternoon I had sunshine with minimal wind so I really have no grounds for complaint. The garden soil was frozen in a few areas, but I had no trouble digging up the two potted rosemary in the herb garden and moving them into the greenhouse. They've both survived temps into the mid-teens—which is forecast for tonight's low—but I would hate to lose either one.

Most of today's gardening focused on the "G" bed wood chip path. I weeded it with some care, getting most of it cleaned up along the pergola. Some weeding involved digging up the river oats, and I cut back all the phlox, lobelia, hyssop, ironweed, and iris. I need to move the astilbe that is being overrun by the river oats, but I will leave that challenge for another day. [*A year later, the astilbe are still there, a job that I keep postponing.*]

27 December. Not much gardening the last four days. Everyone, including AWM & MJT from D.C., were here at Elmhurst Drive for Christmas. We had a big Christmas dinner followed by several hours of opening presents followed by dessert (my homemade crustless pumpkin pie) followed by our kazoo band performance. It was great fun. I thought Theo handled everything quite well. We were all exhausted by the end of the day, though I had to stay up late to finish assembling the January church newsletter. AWM helped me install a new computer and software for the church's electronic sign—a major accomplishment—and he spent many hours helping us prepare photos to be digitalized. It was a productive four-day visit. Over Christmas I finished reading Rebecca Solnit's *Orwell's Roses*, her book on George Orwell and gardening. As always, Solnit was superb, and I highlighted dozens of passages.

But all good times come to an end, and I'm now living in an empty house. AWM & bride have returned to D.C. and MVM is with K & T in Urbana/Champagne for a week of Alexander Technique. So I returned to gardening. Today I went to Coe, where I discovered the space heaters in the greenhouse and garden shed were still working and my red wigglers were okay. I fed them some peeled carrot skins, coffee grounds, and shredded newspaper—and I did a little garden work. I emptied a wheelbarrow load of wood chips to finish covering the "G" and "H" wood chip trails. I put the hippo in the plastic greenhouse and moved the Adirondack chairs into the gazebo, providing them modest protection from snow and ice.

I ended my fall gardening season by leaving the Chevy pickup in storage, the termination of any Chevy S-10 tasks for the next two months. It's supposed to get brutally cold—below zero—by the weekend and snow might arrive tomorrow night. Winter is coming, though I'm still hoping to make some progress on a couple of outdoor projects—such as constructing the wood fence around the compost bins in the back yard. But today my gardening consisted of transcribing journal passages for the Kalendar.

31 December. It's a few minutes before midnight, and I'm celebrating the arrival of the new year by eating a few cheese curds with crackers, drinking a glass of orange juice, and composing an end-of-the-year entry in my garden journal. Nearly all outdoor work has stopped. The pickup is in storage, temp in the 20s, several inches of snow on the ground, and a major snow storm arriving tomorrow morning with temps falling below zero. But today I did complete several garden tasks. I mailed copies of the Fall *Garden Quarto* to all the contributors—though I was devastated to discover I had misspelled Betsy Herrman's last name—missing the double "r", comparable to missing the double "r" in my last name. But Shakespeare spelled his name in different ways so Betsy is now surrounded by impressive company. I can at least correct the copy on the website.

Another task was completing this month's Garden Shed Almanac, which became a two-page chart of garden tasks, something I intend to print out and use this coming year. I've also been working on the two overdue Kalendar blog posts for July & October. It has taken me forever to finish transcribing the October-December '20 journal entries. There was so much

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going on in my gardening life because of the Derecho and I found it interesting how last fall, despite all the challenges of the situation, I just kept plugging along, determined to create some semblance of order in the back yard and the Wickiup garden. And I wanted to record a reasonably complete record of that effort—even if no else cares to read it. I've been pleased to discover that the absence of readers doesn't bother me. In fact, the absence of an audience has provided a refreshing freedom, similar to my work in the garden. I do the gardening for my own pleasure, and it doesn't diminish the pleasure if I'm the only person who enjoys it. Both the gardening and the writing about gardening have given me the illusion of a purpose in my life: to create several healthy, life-sustaining garden environments and to create a detailed and accurate historical record of that gardening and what I learned along the way. Maybe some day, some one, forever unknown to me, will find my garden history of some value. Maybe a future gardener will benefit from the soil and plants and observations I leave behind. Who knows? I don't. There's no guarantee that any of this will survive. But that's okay. The gardening and writing brought immeasurable joy in the present. An ample reward for one lifetime.

Our barred owls are not so shy and call to each other in the morning and afternoon throughout the year: who-cooks-for-you-all they'll hoot from our low east woods as I go about my work in the garden, and it always makes me smile.