

## Garden Kalendar: January-March 2017

As with previous Garden Kalendar postings, the 2018 Kalendar submissions will continue mixing excerpts from my previous year's garden journal with passages from a book read during the year. This year's quotations are from *The Meaning of Gardens*, an anthology of 30 essays edited by Mark Francis and Randolph T. Hester, Jr. (MIT Press, 1992). For this year's Kalendar, I have decided to include more excerpts from journal postings dealing with the three gardens other than the Alumni House Garden that I take care of, particularly my vegetable garden near the Wickiup Hill Learning Center (usually identified in the journal as the Wickiup Garden). Commentaries on 2017 journal entries are provided in brackets.

*The Hebrew word for garden is gan. The root for this word is the letters "GNN." The verb from this root is used in the description of the way the Lord will protect his city Jerusalem. "As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem, defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it" (Isaiah 31:5, King James Version). The two verbs "to defend" and "to deliver" have connections to garden and trees. The verb "to defend" comes from the same root as the word "garden" (GNN). The verb "to deliver" comes from the root "TZLL," meaning to shade, as in the passage "in the shadow of the hand hath he hid me" (Isaiah 49:2). The Lord's protection is analogous to the way a tree in the desert shelters people under its canopy and to the sense of security felt next to its trunk. The Hebrew origin of the word for garden therefore carries all those meanings and connotations to protect, to shelter, to save, or to be passed over and survive as one survives a storm in the desert. ~Achva Benzinberg Stein, "Thoughts Occasioned by the Old Testament"*

1 January 2017. Sunday afternoon; temp in low 30's, just above freezing; sunny but some clouds. No breeze. Most of the snow is gone. Did not go outside today, except for church. I've been reading the Carl Klaus journal on his 1995 summer garden in Iowa City. He sings the praise for Enchantment tomatoes, large vines, 75 fruit/vine. An online search unearthed only one supplier, Reimers Seeds—which receives terrible reviews on Dave's website. Enchantment tomatoes are not listed in Epic Tomatoes, which reviews over 250 tomato varieties.

2 January. Wrote up evaluations for all the vegetables planted at Wickiup Garden in 2016. Listed below are the varieties that did best, recipients of 4 stars; source of seeds is in parenthesis (all are mail order except for seeds and potatoes purchased at Frontier on Blairs Ferry); asterisks identify specific varieties I had not previously planted:

### Amaranth

\*Hopi Red Dye (J. Scheepers): beautiful, vigorous growth, and a prolific self-seeder. [I also discovered in the summer of 2017 that pigweed, a common weed the Wickiup deer love to eat, is in the amaranth family.]

### Beans, Bush

- Cherokee Yellow Bush (Vermont Bean): heavy production, continued into October.
- \*French Filet (Vermont Bean): an outstanding purple bean, long production, delicious to eat—even older beans remained edible.

### Beans, Pole

- Blue Lake (Vermont Bean): prolific, stringless, old standby, produced into October.

### Cabbage

- \* Ruby Ball Hybrid (Territorial): six plants, all grew lovely heads (though several eaten by deer); made attractive, excellent-tasting coleslaw.

### Cantaloupe

- Sarah's Choice F1 (Johnny's): did not do as well as in 2015, but still superb taste.

### Carrots

- \* Hokum Hybrid (Territorial): decent germination rate; good quality carrots.
- \* Sugarsnax 54 F1 (Johnny's): decent germination rate; excellent quality.
- Nelson's Hybrid Early (Johnny's): decent germination rate; good quality.
- \* Yaya (J. Scheeper's): decent germination rate; good quality.

### Cucumbers

- \* SV4719CS F1 Hybrid (Johnny's): held up very well despite my failure to keep them weeded; good blight resistance; still producing into October.

### Eggplant

- \* Galine Hybrid Italian (Johnny's): vigorous production; excellent quality.
- \* Listada de Gandia (J. Scheepers): vigorous production; excellent quality.
- \* Millionaire Hybrid (Territorial): vigorous production, large fruit; excellent quality.

### Kale

- Redbor (Territorial): big, handsome plants; tougher leaves than Italian but still good quality.

### Lettuce

- Black-Seeded Simpson (Jung): planted in my first garden over 65 years ago; excellent germination rate; did very well this year.
- Red Fire (Vermont Bean): good germination rate; did well; excellent flavor; much slower to bolt than BS Simpson.

### Peas

- Oregon Giant (Johnny's): heavy yield.

### Potatoes

- \* Fingerling (Territorial): wonderful potatoes for roasting, but they don't store well.
- Yukon Gold (Frontier): did great, as usual.

### Radish

- Cherry Belle (Frontier): remains my favorite radish; good germination rate, grows quickly, mild taste.

### Tomatoes [Failed to record source for tomato seeds.]

- \* Cherokee Purple: many of the fruit did not develop properly but the ones that did were outstanding quality; marvelous slicing tomato.
- Lemon Boy: the stars of the summer; lost leaves to wilt but heavy producers, started in early July and produced until October.
- \* Lillian's Yellow Heirloom: excellent yield; excellent slicing tomato
- \* Sungold: a small, yellow tomato; heavy production, divine taste; immediately became my favorite tomato for eating straight from the vine.

### Zucchini

- Dunja F1 OG (Johnny's): heavy yields of straight green squash; good disease resistance.
- Golden Glory F1 (Johnny's): heavy yields; easier to see than green zucchini.

Veggies that did not do well:

- Amiga F1 Seedless Cucumbers (Johnny’s): most of the vines died in mid-summer.
- Blue Wind Broccoli (Territorial): left them under green netting too long; plants needed more sun.
- Burpee Mammoth Dill (Burpees): zero germination.
- Dixie Speckled Butter Pea (Vermont Bean): good looking plants but minimal production.
- Lancer Parsnips (Johnny’s): low rate of germination. [Lancer has been discontinued by Johnny’s, replaced with White Spear parsnips.]
- Numex Suave Orange and King Arthur Hybrid Sweet Peppers (Johnny’s): neither produced many fruit; overall pepper yield was very low.
- Paramount Parsley (J. Scheepers): zero germination.
- Solstice Hybrid Melons (Jung): no harvestable fruit.
- King of Garden Lima Beans (Vermont Bean): great looking plants, many flowers, but very few beans.

10 January. Quite warm for middle of July (oops, wrote July when I intended January). It’s now raining on frozen ground, very slippery walking back to the garden studio—where I’m now writing this entry. We’ve had several days with temps above freezing in daytime, then back to 20 or so at night. Yesterday I walked from home to Coe and then downtown to the ARC (not far from new Federal Bldg) and then back home. Perhaps five miles round trip. It was chilly—particularly when walking into the wind—but I never got cold.

In Gazette this morning read an article advising gardeners to compose a “this is what I’ll try to do this year” list. Not necessarily New Year’s Resolutions—which often don’t stand the test of time. My list would include:

- Keep better records of what I sow and plant.
- Do better job of planning layout and spacing of vegetables at Wickiup.
- Create a more detailed design for the back yard.
- Construct detailed plans with schematic drawings for the three main gardening and landscape tasks at Buffalo Church: prairie restoration, plants in dry woodlands, and herb/vegetable garden.

[Commentary one year later: I improved on my record keeping and the Wickiup garden design was much improved; I totally failed on backyard work—nothing accomplished; the first two projects at Buffalo made little headway, but herb/vegetable garden was started and produced much better than I had expected.]

11 January. In backyard garden studio at home. Cloudy, temp in low 30s, cold and gray. Wind chimes occasionally playing a short tune so wind must be gusting to at least 20 mph. At the moment I see no activity in the backyard, no squirrels or birds. Usually an animated flock of sparrows are chattering in the neighbor’s evergreen shrubs around their swimming pool, but today nothing. Fortunately we have neither snow nor rain. Tomorrow I’ll get the Roadtrek van out of storage. Next Monday we leave for a ten-day trip to St. Augustine, by way of Nashville. I hope we can go canoeing at the state park while in Florida. [Alas, no canoeing. Too many signs warning about alligators.]

Yesterday I started scanning vegetable seed catalogs, marking possibilities. I’ll probably use Johnny’s, Vermont Seed, and J. Scheepers as my primary sources since so many of their seeds worked so well last summer. I have received more than a dozen catalogs in the mail,

including an interesting catalog (Victory Seeds) focusing on tomatoes. I'm sure I'll purchase more seeds than I can ever use. If I measured the rows accurately, I should have room for 48 tomato plants at Wickiup. My current plan is to experiment with 12 different varieties, four of each, and see which ones do the best.

[Commentary: I eventually planted 14 varieties, including two plants—a Rutgers and a Roma—that were a gift from a Wickiup neighbor. Despite a long dry spell through July and August, the majority of tomatoes did well. Most notable successes were two hybrids--Sungold (incredible production; gave hundreds away) and Better Boy (steady production over two-month period)—and six OP varieties: El Dorado (a golden roma type), Yellow Brandywine (many ugly, ill-formed tomatoes but they were delicious eating), Amish Paste (now my favorite paste tomato), Black Krim (the two planted in early May were heavy producers and the two planted at the end of May were duds), German Johnston (same pattern as with the Black Krim), Abe Lincoln, and two of the four Golden Bison. The Lemon Boys did okay but production levels far below 2006. Biggest disappointments were Cherokee Purple and Lillian's Yellow: both produced a lot of fruit, but most of the fruit did not develop properly.]

13 January. Today received a Richter's herb catalog. Fascinating to see so many herbs available for purchase. Also surprised to see so many plants I've been growing that Richter's classifies as a herb. For example, I had no idea balloon flowers (*Platycodon grandiflorus*) could be considered in the herb category. I was enamored with the diversity of basil. I may turn both of the raised "E" beds into herb gardens and reserve the west one for basil. Might also use annuals as fillers among the perennials (or position pots with annuals around the raised beds).

*The garden may express personal or cultural power or suppressed desire for it. It may exclude or promote self-confidence. It may represent a vital temporary refuge that restores personal power or a total withdrawal by the utterly powerless.* ~Francis and Hester (editors), "The Garden as Idea, Place and Action"

18 January. Tybee Island, Georgia. Sunny, temperature in the 60s. Arrived at the Tybee Campground last night about 8:30 pm. Fortunately the sign off Highway 20 was well lit. We found our reservation info without any problems, backed the van into the campsite, and had a long, restful sleep. After our usual yogurt/granola breakfast, we did a four-mile beach walk. My photos focused on capturing the patterns in the sand created by the waves. The sand "paintings" look like plant imprints, life forms in moist sand. They remind me of a passage in Walden where Thoreau celebrates the organic forms appearing as the ice melts on the side of the railroad embankments.

19 January. Arrived in St. Augustine. Sunny, temp in the 70s. The city is tourist-driven: shops, trinkets, restaurants, clothing, art galleries, trolley cars, plaques on buildings, etc. But some relief in the small gardens, such as a tiny garden next to a shop where MVM purchased a cotton blouse (our wardrobe is more appropriate for a thousand miles north). The modest garden had a functioning fountain surrounded by a ficus, some moss, several blooming vincas, and a few hibiscus and palms. It all looked a bit run down, likely a garden receiving minimal attention, and yet in this small, protected corner between two buildings, the plants appeared to be capably caring for themselves.

*[On the story of the Garden of Eden in Genesis] The myth is meant to explain the origins both of our human nature—sadly fallen from an ideal condition of enlightened virtue, grace, and oneness with the universe that we can imagine as the highest good of the life of consciousness and of the imperfect, frequently hostile and frightening world in which we find ourselves. In thus accounting for our experience of human frailty and our anxious yearnings for a better world, the myth makes of every garden an image, however pale in its reflection, of that lost paradise, the true home for which our hearts hunger. It suggests that we work through archetypal patterns in making gardens, clearing and shaping a place in which the ancient estrangement might finally be overcome. ~Catherine Howett, “Gardens Are Good Places for Dying”*

2 February (Thursday). A tough week. On Thursday night, shortly after we got back from Florida, I had some dizziness and by Friday afternoon I couldn't stand up. Vomited three times. In bed all day Saturday and Sunday with eyes closed to keep room from spinning. Able to sit up on Monday. On Tuesday afternoon MVM took me to the doctor, who claimed my ailment was probably caused by displaced crystal/calcium deposits in an inner ear. I saw a physical therapist today. After our session she admitted she was not sure what was the cause of my problem. I'm wondering if my vertigo was initiated by the stress of the long drive on Tuesday and Wednesday, over 1300 miles in two days. Whatever the responsible agent, I'm still uneasy on my legs, unable to do any serious walking or work. Not able to drive. Fortunately this happened when my gardening cycle is at low ebb.

My gardening tasks the last three days have been on vegetable, herb, and flower seed orders from Johnny's, Vermont Bean, J. Scheepers, Richter's, Territorial, Victory, and Seed 'n Such (the latter because of heirloom tomatoes). She S 'n S ordering was frustrating because the website kept crashing. I finally gave up and filled out the printed order form, wrote them a check, and handled the order the old-fashioned way via the postal service—which felt slow and archaic. What a remarkable change in habits and perspective in just a decade. Of course, I've ordered far more seeds than I could ever use—but it's hard to resist so many temptations. And I can blame my weakness on my dizziness.

3 February. I made a list of the plants in the Alum Garden that could be classified as invasive weeds and then sorted them into two alphabetical columns. The first group identified the unwanted weeds I am trying to eradicate (with primary locations noted parenthetically): Bermuda Grass (lawn), Bindweed (Bed “H”); Bladder Campion (Bed “I”); Brown Nut Sedge (lawn), Burdock (Bed “H”), Clover (Beds “C” and “L”), Crabgrass (lawn), Creeping Charlie (throughout garden), Crown Vetch (Bed “G”), Dandelion (throughout garden), Foxtail (throughout garden), Garlic Mustard (Bed “I”), Henbit (throughout garden), Horsetail (Beds “G” & “H”), Prostrate Knotweed (gravel walkway), Lamb's Quarter (spotty, throughout garden), Nightshade (Bed “H”), Peruvian Daisy (spotty, throughout), Plantain (lawn and walkways), Pokeweed (Bed “K”), Purslane (gravel walkway), Ragweed (Beds “G” & “H”), Rose Mallow (several beds), Thistles (probably Canada Thistle, Beds “F,” “H,” “I” & “K”), Velvetleaf (Bed “I”), Wood sorrel (Beds “C” & “L”), Yellow Evening Primrose (Bed “J”), and several other weeds I have not yet been able to identify.

The second group is a list of plants that many gardeners (including myself at times) would view as weeds but I'm currently hoping to find ways to control them, believing they might make a civilized contribution to the garden: Buttercup, Fleabane, Lily-of-the-Valley, Ox-Eye Daisy, Queen Anne's Lace, St. John's Wort, Swamp Milkweed, Sweet Annie.

Verbena bonariensis, White Snakeroot. Several of these I planted—Buttercup, Lily-of-the-Valley, and St. John’s Wort—all decisions I may live to regret.

4 February. Earlier this afternoon I started thinking about land ownership and the fact that most of my gardening (both in the past and currently) has been on land owned by someone else. Only my front and back yard on Elmhurst Drive is owned by me—in joint ownership with MVM. But most of my gardening—in Washington, Kansas, Texas, and Iowa (Elisabeth’s garden near Franklin Middle School, Coe Alumni House, Wickiup Hill Garden, Buffalo UMC)—has been on property owned by other people or institutions. Ownership, however, appears to have had minimal impact on how I’ve gardened. What I have valued has been the personal engagement with the soil. Perhaps I feel that no one really “owns” the soil, we are only stewards. As I think about my gardening projects for the coming year, I feel most committed to the three gardens I don’t own. Of course, I have been gardening on Elmhurst Drive for almost 40 years. Perhaps I’ve become restless, eager to address new challenges.

*Until the end of the Renaissance, most cultures looked on untamed wilderness as threatening. As recently as when this country was settled, vegetation was seen as something to be conquered and tamed. However, in contemporary society the presence of vegetation, wild or planted, carries a positive connotation. Nature is now considered motherly, nurturant, supportive, and benign, while danger and capriciousness appear to come mostly from human beings. No longer a threat, vegetation is called to the service of people to restore physical landscape and human psyche.*  
~Charles A. Lewis, “Gardening as Healing Process”

8 February. In midstream, I made some major changes in my plans for my February “Garden Shed” blog post. I had started drafting an essay on gardeners in my hometown: Mr. Shipman, Doc Cortright’s mother, Guy Denton Jr., and a woman who sat behind our family pew at the Methodist Church (I’m embarrassed that I can’t remember her name). While drafting the essay, I decided to add two more Kansas gardeners: MVM’s Grandpa Wagner and a family friend, Cecilia Dahm. That gave me six gardeners. Then I thought about adding Judd Alexander and his potato field that I planted back in ‘62 and ‘63. Although the first draft still needs extensive revising, I sensed it was a good start and would prove usable. But then I began thinking about the gardening books I had read in 2016 and became attracted to the idea of creating an annotated bibliography of those books, providing a way to think reflect on what I had learned in 2016 while creating an entry quite different from my previous blog posts So I set aside the seven gardeners and started writing short annotations for the book list. I’ve done some modest cheating: listing a couple of books read at the end of 2015 while also including a couple of books I’m still reading (though both were begun last fall). It’s been fun looking back at the texts, trying to determine what was important about each one. Fortunately, I liked most of them; only one real dud.

11 February. I’m still having problems with my physical balance, two weeks after being laid low. I have trouble walking in a straight line, and I need to look at the ground while walking. If I’m looking around, I feel like I might fall over. This is going to make it hard to do any serious outdoors work. . . . Received an email from Cara with a design proposal for the four plant supports for the Japanese feather grass. Design looks good and at a reasonable price. I told her to continue, full steam ahead.

13 February. Sunny, temp in the 40's. First day when I have been able to work outside. The huge broken limb that's been hanging from the big sugar maple in the back yard finally came down last night. Amazingly, it missed everything, landing along side the gooseberries, the end just short of the grape vine. I went out this morning and using my hand saw started cutting it into manageable pieces. Got it all cut up except the primary limb, probably 20' long and quite thick. In the afternoon went to Buffalo and paced off the dimensions (second time) for the north field (which I had earlier thought was east of the church until I noticed where the sun comes up in the morning). Results matched with my memory: 50 yards wide by 120 yards long. I then paced off an area for the herb and vegetable garden. I'm planning to install six 8' x 3' raised beds for the veggies, the same design and dimensions as the raised beds I've constructed at Wickiup. Also paced off the ornamental grass beds. I'm still hoping to mimic comparable beds at Kew Gardens, and our choice of grasses will be similar. Here at Buffalo we will probably rely on switch grass, indian grass, big and little bluestem, and Karl Foerster (the one non-native). In the front of the beds we'll use native flowers, mostly from the aster/sunflower family. I'm still not sure what to plant in the NE corner where the ground begins to slope down under a tree canopy. I'm hoping that a service berry variety might work in that location.

*Weeds in a city lot convey the same lessons as the redwoods. ~Aldo Leopold*

14 February. Sunny, temp in the 40s. Another nice day, though windy. I walked over to Buffalo, re-measured the north field one more time because my notes from yesterday were confusing. After correcting my figures, I worked with the garden studio computer and figured out how to create a schematic drawing (though not precisely to scale) of the north field, including info on plants to be planted in different areas. Identified potential location for six raised vegetable beds, herb garden layout, and four ornamental grass plots, each 20' long and 4-6' deep. At tomorrow's church board meeting I will present my drawing and see what they think. I was pleased with the schematic: looks more "professional" than anything I would have done by hand. I should produce similar schematics for each flower bed at the Alum Garden.

16 February. Mix of sun and clouds, temp in the 40s. This afternoon went to Alum Garden to work for the first time since December. Brought a cover for the chipper/shredder and began to clean up the "L" bed—removing dead foliage of catmints, daylilies, yarrow, Siberian iris. I only worked for 45 minutes, but it was great to be outside, doing something.

*In our research on garden meanings, we found few differences between the personal values attached by Californians and Norwegians to their gardens. In separate cultures with unique environmental values, gardeners report similar benefits from their gardens. The major difference we found is that Norwegians place greatest value on sun in their garden while Californians rate shade as one of the most valued parts of their garden. ~Mark Francis*

18 February. Another beautiful day: sunny, temp in the 60s. I was able to work in the Alum Garden for over four hours without a jacket. I experienced a bout (long delay in writing this word since I couldn't remember how to spell it) of lightheadness, but overall it was the best gardening day of the year—by far. So wonderful to be able to work, cutting out dead vegetation, raking up old daylily and geranium foliage. I pulled up all the old baptisia in M1, producing a huge pile of plant material to run thru the chipper/shredder.

19 February. Another beautiful day: just like yesterday, sunny, temp in the 60s (almost reached 70). After lunch drove out to Wickiup, first trip of the year. Garden looked good. MVM helped me restaple several of the weed suppressant carpets—one had completely blown off. Some spinach had survived the winter and is beginning to turn green again. We redid the netting over two rows. I resowed spinach seeds spinach at the end of one row and sowed a new row of lettuce, mostly black-seeded simpson seed left over from last year. Spread a lot of seed. Beds are quite damp and muddy, but I had some dry dirt for covering the seeds.

*I believe ornamental garden plants should be tended like young children—cared for, but given plenty of room to experience life, grow, and thrive on their own. In my garden, weeds are sometimes rationalized away from than actually pulled out. My solution to them is to mulch heavily, and most of them don't survive. For covering the ground, a good organic mulch rates higher on my list of possible landscape materials than nine-tenths of the nursery stock available. Anyway, gardens are great places for fantasy, rationalization, and symbolic attribution, and I have developed sophisticated techniques for excusing my lack of interest in frequent maintenance. ~Robert L. Thayer, Jr. "Personal Dreams and Pagan Rituals"*

22 February. Sunny, no breeze, temp in the 70s, record high temp for this date in February. I worked at Coe all day, perfect conditions for gardening. Cara delivered the four new plant supports for the Japanese silver grass. They look marvelous, perfect size, lovely lines, a major addition to the garden. Before she left we talked about possibility of installing a large mobile under flowering crab in SE corner, something that might help "balance" the weight of the gazebo in the NE corner. Later in the morning Katie came by and we talked about jobs for her to tackle while I'm in England and Guernsey: repairing and painting benches in front of the patio; putting cut branches and sticks into the dumpster (which I emptied today—and in the process spotted several potential garden limestone blocks), clean leaves from rock and crevice gardens, rebuild supports for goldenrod, clean up dead foliage in several beds, clean furniture in gazebo. In the afternoon I harvested plants in the "F" bed and ran two more loads thru chipper/shredder. Reduced size of pile by 1/3, but then it was quickly rebuilt by new crop. :) Tomorrow is supposed to be much cooler, overcast, perhaps with snow on the way, but I should be able to get in some work in the morning.

23 February. Overcast in the morning, raining in the afternoon. It felt like a spring day in England: a gray drizzle, but not raining hard enough to keep me inside. Focused on cleaning up the "D" bed, removing last year's asters, golden rod, balloon flowers. I cut back many of the blue fescue clumps—which had become a mix of brown and blue.

[On 26 February, MVM and I left Iowa for a trip to England and a week-long hike around the Isle of Guernsey. The following excerpts from my travel journey..]

27 Feb. We arrived in London shortly after 7:00 and were in Kensington by 9:30. Sat in a Costa coffee shop near Earl's Court Tube for an hour, then walked to Holland Park, where we saw the Dutch and Japanese (Kyoto) Gardens—both exquisitely done. The Dutch Garden has a high brick wall on the north side, protecting a series of espalier fruit trees. Some superb parterres in the center of the garden with bedding plants already in place. On the east bank, many daffodils and crocus in bloom—though the latter had been beaten down by a recent rain. I photographed a lovely sun dial on a pedestal, cherry blossoms just opening in the background. Passed a row of



bleached trees (hornbeam?), the leaves mostly gone so it was easy to see the wooden frames that give the trees their rectangular form.

Equally enticing was the Kyoto Garden, though it was beginning to drizzle again, so our stay was abbreviated. And because of the gravel walkways, it was difficult to move our suitcases. So we split our time in the garden, one of us staying with the luggage while the other did a quick garden tour. The center of the garden is raised above the entrance--with a large central pond, home to enormous koi. Since the Japanese Garden relies on elemental design and forms (such as stones and water), it probably looks as beautiful in February as in the middle of the summer. What particularly caught my attention was a bridge across a constructed, natural-looking "mountain" stream and water fall. The bridge matched the design I saw last summer at the Chicago Botanical Garden—a bridge in rectangular blocks that could not be crossed in a straight line. Walking across the bridge would require some alertness, stepping to the right midway in the crossing. Other elements in the garden included three stone pillars at the entrance, a small fountain, a bamboo raft, a few isolated trees (a few beginning to bloom) surrounded by grass—with signs admonishing me to stay off of the grass.

6 March. Yesterday, the day was consumed by a day trip to Hampton Court—which we have not visited since we taught the ACM London course 23 years ago. Took the #9 bus to Charing Cross, then walked to Waterloo and caught a train to Hampton. We could use our Oyster Cards because Hampton Court is in Z6. We reached the grounds with no problem, entry cost £15 per person, but it was worth the high price. We spent most the day walking outside, through a series of gardens. We started with the fountain garden and the canals and carefully manicured yews, looking like large green umbrellas. We then went to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century gardens with the parterres, some bedding flowers recently planted. Along one side of this garden is a marvelous loop pergola with hornbeam. Also a superb knot garden. We ate our sandwiches under an apple tree near the sunken gardens, protected from the winter wind by a brick wall.

Eventually we made it to the kitchen garden, easily triple the size of my Wickiup garden. While too early to see many vegetables growing, there were still some interesting items we discovered:

- One gimmick I loved. They wrote the title of an herb and information about how it was used on an inverted, clay flower pot. The upside-down pots are perfect mediums: they won't tip over and perfectly fit the context.
- Another idea I liked: herbs (e.g., chives, lavender, sage, strawberries) as borders for their vegetable beds (which were slightly raised—though not as high as the Wickiup beds).
- Garlic was up and covered by black netting, rather haphazardly laid over the plants. The netting was partially supported by a few sticks in the ground and small clay pots over the sticks and netting. They had placed bricks to hold down the netting at the end of a row—the same system I use at Wickiup.
- Saw some Swiss Chard, Brussel Sprouts, and Tuscano Kale, all surviving the winter in excellent shape. Also came across a new crop of 6' tall peas.
- They had on display an old gardener's shed with tools and gardening supplies typical of what might have been used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the morning we had seen a modern reproduction of a gardener's horse-drawn wagon/shed with comparable tools and materials.
- Of course while at Hampton Court we saw the Great Vine, planted by 'Capability Brown' in 1768. All of the above-ground Black Hamburg grapevine lives in its own

green house, but most of the vine's roots are in a plot of carefully nurtured soil outside the green house. They still harvest the grapes, averaging about 600 lbs annually.

7 March. On Saturday we spent the day at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. As always, the plant collections (over 13,000 plant species) in this 300-acre research institution (over 700 employees) were overwhelming. Fortunately, we had excellent weather, the nicest day of the trip so far. Kew was more alive with blooms than I had expected. We saw thousands and thousands of crocus, now in their prime. Also fields of naturalized daffodils, though they won't reach their peak for a couple more weeks. Walked past a few small patches of snowdrops, a few scilla and anemones, and many hellebores, most blooms pale green or mauve.

One high point of the day was seeing the orchid show. The conservatory was packed with people, impossible to move at times, and nearly everyone (including myself) shooting photo after photo. The diversity of coloration patterns was incredible, making the resident begonias and impatiens in the greenhouse look insipid and impoverished. This was probably the most intense display of blooms I've ever seen at one time. Beyond words.

Another high point was the vegetable garden—though few veggies were on display. It was instructive to see how they lay out their beds and utilize various home-made, ad hoc plant supports. At Kew you have this incredibly sophisticated institution using the latest technological techniques (as evident in their new Alpine House) combined with old “folk” gardening practices that adopt whatever materials are at hand. One technique that caught my attention was how they planted apple trees to define borders for walkways and planting beds. The trees were close together—about every 5'—and severely pruned, each tree a different variety, with one main branch harnessed to a wire, running parallel to the ground, about 3' high. Saw a similar arrangement last year when visiting the gardens at Mt. Vernon and Monticello in Virginia.

As always, the Alpine House at Kew was marvelous. Many small, alpine plants in bloom, most of them in pots. We also enjoyed the herb garden located behind Kew Palace—where George III lived. Many of the herbs had signs with short quotes from old herbals, such as Gerard or Parkinson.

9 March. We're now in the La Trelade Hotel on the Isle of Guernsey after seven hours of rigorous walking. Fortunately the temp was in the 40's—so I didn't need my down jacket, but we did have a heavy fog all day and occasional mist. Only once did we have a real drizzle and it was short-lived. The guidebook said this was a 3-4 hour walk, but we didn't come close to that speed. In fact, we had to cut off the last two miles of the walk so we could get to the hotel before dark. The first three hours of hiking were very slow along the eastern cliffs south of St. Peter Port. The trail was wet and muddy, with a lot of up and down hiking. Some of the seashore was stunning--though we discovered the rugged south shore to be even more impressive. Blooming yellow daffodils accompanied us throughout the day. I suspect we're here at their maximum display. Also saw hillsides covered with yellow gorse in bloom, particularly on the steep southern cliffs. Mix the gorse with the brambles and bracken and you have substantial areas of impenetrable vegetation. On the eastern side of the island we saw many large, impressive houses facing out to the sea, including a couple of new homes with thatched roofs. The island must have a high percentage of millionaires—though we didn't meet any of them today. As it turned out, we hiked five hours before we encountered our first walkers, two locals who said they walk this route once a week.

11 March. Yesterday morning we left the hotel at 9:00 and headed south toward Petit Bot Bay. The walk was fairly straight, mostly on muddy walking trails through the woods. Saw no one. Arriving at the Bay, we found an old British military tower and a closed restaurant. We soon headed west, following the cliff path, periodically confirmed with arrows and place names on stone markers. The fog was very thick. We could hear the waves but only caught rare glimpses of the sea. We suspected we were walking above steep cliffs, several hundred feet above the sea. The walking was slow, frequent up and down climbing. Some places there were cement steps, but they were always uneven in width and height, making it tough on the legs.

At 11:00 we arrived at Le Gouffre. There was a small tourist shop—with many nice gifts, including a few by local artists—and a restaurant, where we bought a Coke and a bottle of water for £3.50. Then it was back onto the trail and the fog. The next hour was more slow, “roller coaster” walking, with occasional moments when we could see the beach and rocks along the shoreline. We stopped for a brief lunch at a German observation tower, an area called La Prevote. Shortly after eating our apple and a granola bar, our luck began to change. The trail became flatter and about 2:00 in the afternoon—when we were near Les Tielles (confirmed by a local we talked with in a parking lot)—the fog began to lift. For the first time since our arrival on Guernsey, we were walking in the sun. Our speed of walking quickly picked up—though now we were slowed by the frequent stops to enjoy this impressive coast line.

On our walk we had seen several signs pointing toward Pleinmont, the western end of the island. For most of the day, Pleinmont seemed an impossible goal, but when we reached Mount Herault (a deserted stone observation tower) by 4:00, we could see a German fortress near Pleinmont and decided to push on. Within 40 minutes we had reached Pleinmont. After sitting for a few minutes on a bench (where we ate a peanut log, drank some water, and took a selfie), we headed northeast, looking for the Imperial Hotel parking lot where we could catch a bus that could get us close to our next hotel.

14 March. Yesterday was a relaxed day, our last hours in Guernsey. Spent the morning at the Cornet Castle. Before the museum opened we walked out to the lighthouse for a few minutes. Saw a fisherman catch a gar—a long, thin, silver fish. Later on TV, we heard that the fish is quite tasty, but it has green bones and is not a popular fish with consumers. Because of dramatic declines in most fish populations, the gar has thrived and become a predominant fish in the area.

When the museum opened, we went through the historical rooms, all nicely laid out, with informative signs that combined extensive details with brief summaries in English and French. The fortress has had a long and complicated history, dating back over 800 years. After our self-guided castle tour, we concentrated on the small gardens distributed around the fortress. One garden was cultivated by General Sir John Lambert, imprisoned here for ten years (1661-1671) during the reign of Charles II. Walled in on four sides, the garden has an inner square with a large elevated planter in the center and four garden beds around it—all quite neat and symmetrical.

We later came upon another garden where a man was transplanting various vegetables, everything carefully arranged so no two plants would be touching. He had just transplanted carrots, which I asked about, since I’ve read that carrots don’t like to be transplanted. He said “this is an experiment.”

*A garden is a construct that evokes an ideal of nature. Whether real or imaginary, a garden is the meeting of man and nature orchestrated by a set of moral, aesthetic, and philosophical principles. Gardens are closely tied to the civilizations that produce them. Yosemite was created*

*as an American garden so that every citizen could experience a particular relationship with nature that was fundamental to the society. Olmsted believed that it was the right of every man to lose himself in the contemplation of the scenery of Yosemite. The protection of that scenery for all time preserves a set of values that is uniquely American. Yosemite, then, must take its place as an American contribution to the history of the garden, along with the imperial Chinese garden, the Persian paradise garden, the Japanese tea garden, the English landscape garden, and other great gardens that represent a cultural distillation of man's relationship to nature.*

~Heath Schenker

16 March. Back in London, living for the remainder of our trip in a flat just a short walk from Gloucester Tube Station. It's quite pleasant and comfortable, with a lovely view of a private garden outside our bay window. We walked thru the garden after a trip to our old Sainsbury's on Cromwell, a short walk from our flat on Queen's Gate in '93. The garden has been nicely cared for, hydrangeas pruned, many standard trees/shrubs. A few flowers and trees in bloom: primroses, viburnum (with marvelous fragrance), a tree with yellow poofy blossoms, a few daffodils, several lovely terra cotta pots, including some half-hemisphere pots that look like they have been sliced in half so they can be placed flush with a wall. In the center is a small gazebo where we did a selfie. Clean gravel walkways, with just a few weeds—much cleaner than our gravel walkways at the Alum Garden. Also a few hellebores in bloom. The hellebores have been the real discovery on this trip: I had no idea they were so widespread. Also today we walked to the Athenaeum Hotel and took some photos of the vertical garden—photos which don't do justice to this remarkable ten-story tall garden.

27 March. My first garden journal entry after the three-week trip to England and Guernsey. Since coming back I've planted seven flats of seeds—a mix of veggies, herbs, and flowers. I bought two new heating pads and plan to buy two more. Today we drove out to Wickiup. Overall, things looked good. The daffs and garlic I planted last fall are emerging, and the three blueberry bushes have leaf buds beginning to open. The lettuce and spinach we planted in February have germinated, most of the bed is under a cloth dome—though the cloth has several rips that need repairing—and the lettuce needs thinning. The rhubarb was emerging, though the rhubarb at home is much further along. No evidence of any asparagus, but I did dig up five parsnips, all in good shape, each over one foot long. I'll roast them tomorrow night with carrots and potatoes in olive oil and fresh rosemary. One other major development: the sungold tomato seeds finally arrived in the mail (on back order). Twenty precious seeds. I'll plant them tomorrow.