

Garden Kalendar: Spring 2022

The Spring 2022 Garden Kalendar is composed of edited excerpts from my daily, hand-written garden journal for April-June, 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 that we attend not far from Mount Mercy College;
- The gardens at my home on Elmhurst Drive in Cedar Rapids.

This Kalendar constitutes about 40% of my journal entries in the second quarter of 2021. In case someone would want to see the layout of the gardens, here are links to maps of the Elmhurst Drive back yard garden 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 are passages from Rebecca Solnit's marvelous book on George Orwell as a gardener. Because of the length of this document, most of the Spring 2022 Kalendar is posted as a pdf. ~Bob

In the year 1936, an Englishman planted roses. Doing so was part of making a garden, and gardens are one way that culture does nature. That is to say, a garden is an ideal version of nature filtered through a particular culture, whether it's as formal as a Japanese rock and sand garden or an Islamic paradise garden with a central fountain—or as haphazard as a lot of ordinary private gardens are, arising as they do from limited space, time, budget, and planning. A garden is what you want (and can manage and afford), and what you want is who you are, and who you are is always a political and cultural question.

~Rebecca Solnit

1 April (Thursday, April Fool's Day & Maundy Thursday). 6:30 p.m. At the moment life on Elmhurst Drive is quite noisy. The Tri-County construction crew is installing new shingles. They started this morning at 8:00 a.m. and have been at it all day. They have all the old shingles removed and are now installing the new. A team of 5 guys (plus a supervisor), Spanish-speaking, but they don't do much talking, steadily working, not even taking a lunch break. It appears they are determined to finish the job in one day. The house is now surrounded by all the stuff thrown down from the roof. Thankfully, not many flowers have emerged. We'll have a few trampled daffodils, but it's much better for the work to occur now, rather than a month from now.

It got cold last night, temp into low 20s. The water jug in the back of the pickup was frozen solid. Because of the cold weather (which didn't faze the roof team), I worked in the garden studio for the first two hours after breakfast. Focused on the spring issue of *The Garden Quarto*. Spent most of the morning assembling quotes for the Commonplace Garden page and messing with the layout, trying to carve out space for one more poem. I have not printed a copy or done any careful proofreading—and I need to add one more small illustration—but the issue is

basically done, assuming the spacing for the final poem looks okay. This is the first issue which has no Coe faculty, students, or alums—which was inevitable sooner or later. Overall, it's a good, solid issue with attractive, readable pieces. Should be ready for the printer on Monday.

At Coe, I concentrated on sowing tomato seeds in the greenhouse, 5 seed blocks per variety. Today I sowed a mix of old favorites--Gardeners' Delight and Kelloggs Breakfast (both from Pinetree)--with a bunch of new varieties: Djena Lee's Golden Girl (Southern Exposure Seeds), Dr. Wyche's Yellow (Victory Seeds), Galahad (Totally Tomatoes), Giant Belgium (Seeds 'n Such), Green Grape (Victory), Heartmaster Hybrid (Seeds n' Such), Livingston's 'Honor Bright,' (Victory), Hungarian Heart (J. Scheepers), and Juliet Hybrid (Totally Tomatoes). I've now sowed 20 varieties, and I have at least 15 more to go. Then on to the peppers (which should have already been sowed) and the eggplants. *[It's interesting to see the list of tomato varieties I tried for the first time in 2021. All produced a few tomatoes, but some varieties only produced a few tomatoes (e.g., Heartmaster Hybrid and Livingston's 'Honor Bright'); other varieties produced fruit that matured unevenly (e.g., Giant Belgium and Hungarian Heart); a few varieties produced many excellent tomatoes (e.g., Dr. Wyche's Yellow, Galahad, and the Juliet Hybrid). The Juliet vines were the most prolific small paste tomato I've ever planted, far outpacing Amish Paste, with steady production from late July to the first hard freeze in October.]*

2 April. Good Friday. Worked at Coe for four hours in the morning, preparing seed blocks (using Johnny's seed germination mix) and sowing vegetable seeds. I finished sowing three seed trays (50 blocks per tray) and prepared a germination mix for another tray tomorrow. I sowed 100 tomato blocks--18 different varieties, 5 blocks for each variety, except for 10 blocks for the Sungold and Wapsipinicon Peach tomato seeds. I then did 45 pepper blocks, for those I just sowed one seed/block, having more faith in the germination rates for the larger pepper seeds. For most peppers I did 5 blocks, but I did 10 blocks of Felicity & Leysa, my two favorite sweet peppers. Tomorrow I'll finish sowing the peppers and then deal with the eggplants and a few blocks for broccoli and cabbage.

After lunch I drove to Thiesen's and bought a roll of poultry wire, a 40 lb. bag of chicken grit, and a 6-outlet power strip for the greenhouse, enabling me to plug in more grow lights and heat pads. After my buying spree at Thiesen's, I continued on to the Wickiup garden. I took along the Mantis tiller and started tilling the potato rows in the West Field. After 30 minutes, the tiller kept dying on me. It would run fine for 10-15 seconds and then quit; probably a dirty carburetor. Frustrating. But the first two rows are tilled and ready for their seed spuds. I then switched to repairing the west fence, unrolling and stapling the poultry wire to the fence posts. This 3' tall poultry fence should create some challenges for the rabbits, which devastated several rows of beans last year. Because of my inept fence making skills, the installation was slow and the results quite ugly, but I managed to unroll and staple the fencing across the west side and around the corner to the north fence. Once the wire was stapled, I began moving a dozen logs (harvested from trees felled by the derecho) and wedging them

against the bottom of the poultry fence . With one more good afternoon, I should have the west and north fences finished.

3 April. Holy Saturday. Glorious day, perfect weather, temp into the 70s, sunshine, soil perfect for gardening. I worked all day at Wickiup. My primary job was tilling the West Field. Finished tilling all of the rows where we will plant potatoes. Should be able to start planting tomorrow. Missed Good Friday but darn close. This morning I mixed together Bob's special garden fertilizer recipe that I'll use for the potatoes: composted manure, chicken grit, commercial fertilizer (mixture of Ferti-lome pellets and Territorial organic), John & Bob's soil treatment additive, and bone meal.

Ran the tiller for perhaps four hours, working much better than it did yesterday. After the West Field, I used the tiller to rebuild the E1 & F1 raised beds. I didn't use the tiller once last year, but I felt I needed to get the soil in these beds loosened up and remixed with fresh compost. In the E1 bed, I spread some of my fertilizer mix and then sowed two rows of bush beans: Provider & Mascotte. Although it's probably too early to be planting beans, I planted both of these beans early in April last year, we lucked out with some warm weather, and they started producing beans at the end of May. Maybe I'll be lucky again. [*As it turned out, I was not lucky; had a very low germination rate and had to replant both beans four weeks later.*]

One non-gardening item: I read that a many couples were getting married today because the date is 4/3/21.

4 April. Easter Sunday. Lovely day, temp into the 70s, another great day for gardening. After sunrise church service and breakfast at the church (pancakes, sausage, fresh fruit), I came home, changed clothes, and drove to Wickiup. Spent the rest of the morning planting potatoes. Began with a row of red Pontiac, 32 hills in the West Field. I cut most of the seed potatoes in half, trying to make sure each section had at least two eyes. As I filed in each hole with soil, I worked in my fertilizer mix, using up all I had prepared yesterday morning.

After lunch, I purchased more Ferti-lome fertilizer and bone meal and assembled all the ingredients (except for the fresh manure) so I could continue planting. Back at Wickiup, I did a 32-hill row of Yukon Gold and 32 hills of Kennebec. I'm now half finished with planting potatoes in the West Field. I did take a break from the potato planting to work on the J8 bed in the main garden: sowed one 8' row of Ace beets, one row of Yellowstone carrots, and one row of Yaya carrots. The Yayas came from High Mowing, the first time I've ever used any of their seeds. I applied a mixture of vermiculite and home-grown humus to cover the seeds. The vermiculite helps me see where I've already sown my seeds. Since it has not rained for a few days and no rain in the forecast, I walked down to the creek and hauled creek water to the garden for both the newly planted seeds and the carrot and radish rows planted in March. So far no signs of any radish germination.

5 April. My left forearm has a bright red rectangular sunburn where my Swiss Army watch is usually located—but now it's in the watch repair shop, in need of several new parts. This was the third consecutive day when I worked at the Wickiup garden both morning and afternoon, six round trips in three days. This morning included a slight drizzle, just enough moisture that for 15 minutes I sat in the Chevy S-10, waiting for the rain clouds to move on to the southeast. No appreciable rain. By noon the sun was out and everything perfectly dry.

I continued to focus on planting potatoes: we now have seven rows, an average of 32 hills per row: Yukon Gold, Red Pontiac, Red Norland, Kennebec, Northkotch (a russet variety new to me), and Charlotte (a lovely blonde potato from Maine: more expensive than all the other seed potatoes combined). I stayed with my fertilizer/compost mix for all 225+ hills. Let's hope it works. The soil was in excellent condition, only one row with a few how-resistant clods. I tried to remove all the grass, but I'm sure the undetected rhizomes will come back to plague us. For now, the rows are planted and look quite neat and orderly.

I wrote down several notations for an essay on planting potatoes. I had not expected my commentaries would say more about birds than potatoes. Particularly notable today was the frequent singing of a lone eastern meadowlark, perched on a utility line that runs parallel with the east border of the garden. Such a beautiful, buoyant melody. An intriguing contrast to the turkey vultures, with their silent, brooding aerial ballet.

I finished the afternoon by clearing weeds from a bed where I intend to plant tomatoes in a few weeks. I sprayed the soil with a mixture supposedly loaded with good nematodes. I do wonder if this spray will do any good. It's not likely I'll ever know. Much easier to know if it doesn't work—if, for example, all the tomato seedlings are attacked by cutworms. The absence of a problem might simply be the result of an absence of cutworms. Similar conundrum with my compost/fertilizer recipe for the potatoes. I have no control group and it will be difficult to know what difference it all makes. I suppose extreme results—either a bonanza or a dismal crop—might tell me something but marginal differences would be difficult to detect.

9 April. I was really tired last night, so I made no attempt to do a journal entry. It was another day dedicated to Wickiup. My major accomplishment was reconstructing the north grapevine bed. After removing the steel posts and the wire trellis, I dug post holes for the two 10 foot tall 4"x4" posts, ones that had previously been part of the Elmhurst Drive grape arbor destroyed by the derecho. These posts are perhaps 2' shorter than the posts installed for the three grape vines in the south bed. After the posts were secure in their new holes, I attached two green vinyl-covered steel wires between the posts and did some serious vine pruning while attaching them to the two wires. Later I'll add one more wire so the top of the trellis will be about 7' from the ground. I still need to weed the soil around the vines, add fresh compost and organic fertilizer, cover the soil with newspapers, and top off with the hay mulch.

After lunch I took photos of the black plant supports at the Coe garden, the supports that are always coming apart. Several of these supports I've never used because of their instability. I

sent the photos to Kevin, a welder who lives in Martelle. I was surprised to discover I have 19 of these supports in three models (and three sizes in the style I use most frequently). I finished the email for Kevin just in time to do a one-hour Zoom interview with the kids on family history and returned to Wickiup about 3:15. Spent two hours installing chicken wire along the fence on the north side, a project that is now 98% done. The remaining work is adding a few more logs at the base to hold the bottom of the chicken wire in place and stymie any attempt by the rabbits to create a new entry point. I have seen no evidence of recent rabbit activity inside the garden and feel reasonably confident the old rabbit entrances have been closed.

In my remaining hour I prepared cardboard panels for laying on the garden's pathways. This task mostly involved removing the staples and tape holding the larger boxes together. I did lay down cardboard between two "J" beds. Finished the day by digging out weeds and quack grass from the "B2" bed, where I intend to sow either bush beans or zucchini later this spring. The big challenge will be cleaning up the renegade red raspberries popping up in this area and invading the white currants in the "B1" bed. Some of the reds I will transplant to the Elmhurst Drive garden and the new raspberry bed I've built in the back yard. But that's a task for another day.

The Scottish artist and garden maker Ian Hamilton Finlay once wrote, "Certain gardens are described as retreats when they are really attacks."

12 April (Monday). This morning at Coe, I began the day by adding a small bucket of earthworm poop to my soil mix for transplants. The bottom of the earthworm factory smelled a bit too assertive for my taste, so I poured the rich earthworm juice onto a flower bed, rinsed out the bottom container with the hose, and reassembled everything. The earthworm poop was rather wet, but I eventually got it integrated into my transplant mix of topsoil, manure, coconut coir, B&J's soil additive, kelp meal, bone meal, and chicken grit. The rest of the morning was spent in the rain garden and its surrounding "beach." I cut back and dug up some river oats; also trimmed astilbe and swamp milkweed. The astilbe needs to be moved so it does not have to fight with the river oats (the latter will certainly prevail). While the astilbe must wait for another day, I did transplant some asters and trimmed the clematis, which has a lot of new growth.

While working in the garden this morning, I discovered my Swiss Army watch had died again, so my afternoon drive to Wickiup involved a stop at the watch repair shop. I then spent four hours at Wickiup. Largest chunk of time was dedicated to cleaning up two "J" raised strawberry beds, trimming unwanted runners, removing old strawberry and cottonwood leaves, and trying to weed out three varieties of grass, two with deep clumps of roots, impossible to get them all. I also dug out all the strawberry plants in a walkway between two raised beds; saved the best ones in a plastic bag that I will plant in a new strawberry bed at home.

Switching from strawberry maintenance to potatoes, I planted half of the banana fingerlings from Woods Prairie in the circular raised bed next to the compost bins. This is the first time I've planted this variety. Each small potato had eyes already sprouting. I planted them closer together than normal, and in the planting process added some compost/fertilizer mix—which was soggy because of the 0.8" rain at Wickiup the last two days. Once finished with the potatoes, I turned to the nearby grapes, weeding under the vines and preparing the bed so I could cover the soil with newspapers and mulch. I would like to have laid out the papers today, but it continues to be very windy. We are on the backside of a large low pressure north of here, producing a brisk and chilly western wind. High today was only into the low 50s, even with the bright sunshine. Although the wind is exhausting, I was able to keep putzing along.

While I was at Wickiup, Dale came by and gave me two free serviceberry trees, 3-4' tall, just beginning to leaf out and with a nice display of white flowers. I've set the pots in the front yard, experimenting with potential locations. MVM approved my recommendation for their permanent placement, a big step forward in determining the structure of the front yard.

A flower is also a promise. You look at a flower at one stage and know that other stages came before and will come after. The beauty of roses may also lie in the way they are appealing at every phase from bud to dried and dead, and that their fading is slow and graceful. Camelias in full bloom have a form close to roses, but they go briskly from hard bud to wide-open flower to a brown sodden mess that drops from the stem to rot on the ground, and a lot of other flowers also decline this way.

14 April. In the Eisenhower Room of the Glick B&B in Atchison, Ks. We arrived about 8:15, almost a six-hour drive, but good weather for driving. Saw many small trees and shrubs in bloom along the highway, mostly white blooms so they were probably dogwood or service berry or plum. A long string of nursery plums in full bloom along someone's driveway. Once we reached Missouri, we saw redbuds in bloom, a lovely magenta, but the real surprise was the acres and acres of purple flowers in fields, probably henbit, dominating some tilled fields. Quite lovely.

This morning before starting out trip to Kansas I had a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I took 19 metal plant supports to Kevin's Welding in Martelle. His shop is behind his house—no signage or anything to indicate there is a business in his large metal shed. I had assumed I would leave the supports for him to work on, but he was ready to do them right then, expecting me to assemble them and he would weld the pieces together. So I started assembling. From the beginning Kevin was having trouble keeping the supports together while welding. As he was working with the second support, all of the pieces fell apart, and in frustration he told me, "I can't do this." He said that at \$60 an hour, this was going to take at least three hours. I immediately indicated I was willing to pay \$200 for these supports to be welded. Would that be sufficient compensation? He said, "yes," and so we got back to work.

As it turned out, he could not permanently weld together four of the supports because of their dependence on plastic clips. There was not enough metal to weld and create a secure bond. So I ended up with 15 welded supports. Since my Honda CR-V was not big enough to transport all the supports once they were welded into their permanent shape, I took 10 of them with me and told Kevin I would pick up the remainder on Saturday morning after my trip to Kansas.

Although I didn't have time to set up any of the 10 steel cages in the Coe garden, my initial impression is they are going to be reasonably sturdy and much easier to work with. As for the four supports with the plastic clips, I try to find a cement/glue to help hold them together. But that's a challenge for another time. For today, my only concern was making sure the plants in the greenhouse were well-watered and would be okay until my return on Saturday. I did turn off a grow light that produces a very strong light and it does get rather hot. Although it froze last night and the forecast is for low 30s tonight, the greenhouse can get quite warm during the daytime, and the plants don't need any more intense heat. I did leave on the space heater to help maintain a minimum 50F at night, and several of the seedling trays are still on heating pads.

15 April. To my surprise, this turned out to be a gardening day. This morning after breakfast, we were talking with the owner about her home and some of the trees and flowers around the house. She admitted she was so busy it was hard to keep up with her landscape tasks. As we were looking at a flower bed still covered with autumn leaves, I volunteered to help clean it up—and so I spent the next three hours doing some simple yard work until MVM's sister and husband arrived.

My first task was the flower bed on the east side of the house. I began by raking up maple leaves and twigs from a large maple tree just beginning to bloom. The bed contains generic hostas, grape hyacinths (white and blue) at the end of their bloom cycle, many "ordinary" ferns (similar to the ones in our yard), some variegated Solomon's seal, a ground cover that I could not identify, a few lily-of-the-valley, a few wild violets. At the back of the bed were three evergreens of nice size and shape and two spirea (probably bridal wreath), both overgrown and looking rather wild, one much larger than the other. The owner asked about cutting them back. I suggested waiting until after they were finished blooming and then cut them back, the larger one to about half its current size so they looked in balance with each other. If properly trimmed, they could look quite nice in that space between the evergreens. I didn't remove all the leaves, but I did fill 2 large bags with leaves and small branches.

My final 30 minutes of gardening was focused on a border along the sidewalk entrance. The owner had sprayed the area with a weed herbicide—which had killed the tops of the dandelions and turned everything else brown, including a blooming bugleweed. Since the soil was quite hard, I used my pocket knife to cut around the dandelions and managed to extract the roots for a dozen or more. It appeared the dandelions that had been sprayed still had viable

roots. The bed was dominated by several iris that looked in good shape. One blue flag iris, planted on a steep south-facing slope, was already in bloom. The area also had a thriving colony of creeping Charlie. My Japanese hand hoe would have been a handy tool for digging up some of this ground ivy. Its roots were very dense and intimately woven throughout the iris, though still easier to remove than the quack grass growing around my flag iris at the Wickiup garden. Also in this bed I found a couple of young clematis, perhaps seedlings from a nearby clematis climbing up an arch over the sidewalk. I should mention that under a mature locust tree in a bed along the border of the property was a beautiful bleeding heart in full bloom, a bit larger than the one in the "M1" bed at Coe.

16 April. After returning home from Atchison, I went to the Coe garden for a couple hours. Watered seedlings and readjusted grow lights. The plants look good. A high percentage of the peppers have germinated in the last two days. Now the challenge is to keep them from getting too spindly. I prepared another tray with 50 seed germination blocks and sowed 40 blocks with four varieties of cabbage (two seeds per block, 10 blocks per variety): Bobcat F1 (from Territorial Seeds; did well last year, producing lovely medium-sized heads) and three new varieties-- Integro F1 (High Mowing; oblong red-head cabbage, 3-4 lbs/head), Tiara F1 (a Johnny's mid-season green cabbage), and Cuor di Blue Grosso (a mid-season cabbage from Annie's Heirloom Seeds; reputed to be very sweet). These should all have been sown by April 1, but we don't live in a perfect world. I discovered a minor disagreement over optimal soil temp for germinating cabbage seeds. The Territorial package says 55-75F (which would suggest a heat pad is not necessary) but Johnny's says the soil temp should be at 75F until germination occurs and then drop the temp to 60F. No temp recommendations on the other two packages. I did not put them on a heating pad tonight, but I will tomorrow after I sow 10 blocks with broccoli seeds.

One last job: after the Tri Delts left the garden (the first social event in the garden for over a year), I pulled out the animal trap, threw in some kale, broccoli, and carrots, and set the trap near the big compost bin, thinking I might capture the rabbit that has been nibbling on the tulips. [*Never did capture the rabbit.*]

17 April. After supper MVM and I spent two hours at Buffalo laying out the labyrinth. Our first task was determining the center (where the tulip tree would be planted) and the location of the benches that would encircle the tree. Once we had settled on the location and dimensions of that central area, we tried to figure out the width of the paths and the outer circumference. To help with that task, we drove a stake in the center (symbolizing the tree) and tied a rope to the stake, with knots in the rope every 5' to represent the space between the center of each segment of the labyrinth's path. We decided the path will be 3' wide and the path's grass borders 2' wide. We had a difficult time with several aspects of the design, particularly in locating the key junctures where the path reverses directions. I never could understand why our first

calculations were so far off, but by trial and error, we eventually located the turning points so they were all in balance with the entrance. We then drove into the ground about 50 blue stakes to demarcate the paths. Despite recurrent frustrations, we eventually worked out a system using the knotted rope to synchronize the layout on the ground with our schematic drawing. We finished at 8:00 p.m., just as the sun was setting. Now, we'll hope the folks in the church approve of the labyrinth's location, layout, and dimensions. [*They did.*]

My day began by driving to Martelle to pick up the seven plant supports. Several were the largest ones, and it took some finagling before I managed to get them all into the CR-V. It was much faster taking them out and laying them out by the gazebo. Tomorrow I'll decide where they'll go. No question the welding has made them much sturdier.

In the afternoon I worked in K's front and back yard, another example of me working in a garden I don't own. After spreading mulch onto a flower bed with many blooming lungworts and emerging hostas, I focused on digging up dandelions and thistles in the lawn. The dandelions are occasionally satisfying when I manage to extract the roots, which leads me to believe this fellow's career is finished. But with the thistles, root segments are invariably left behind, insuring the thistles will soon be back. But for a few weeks the hillside will look better, and if one keeps attacking the thistles, it's possible to win that war. But it's much easier when you can use a shovel, dig everything up, and not worry about preserving the grass in the lawn. Overall, K. has made significant progress with her yard, which is in much better shape than at this time last year.

19 April. Flunk Day. This used to have a big impact on my life but not today. And because of COVID, I suspect this was a rather tame celebration as students (and faculty) enjoyed a brief freedom from the burdens of academia. I started the day by walking around the Coe garden with my root knife, digging up dandelions and taking mental notes for this week's MMGR. Attracted by several appealing flower compositions, I shot about 50 photos, particularly focusing on the dandelions and the "L" bed grape hyacinths—which have never looked better. Unfortunately, because of the overcast sky and light drizzle, the tulips and anemone blooms were all closed up.

After the garden walk, I worked on various projects in the garden shed and greenhouse. I installed on the ceiling the collage that Joan gave me, celebrating the completion of my doctoral dissertation almost 40 years ago. I hung up in the shed next to my coat rack the fish fossil (supposedly 140 million years old) that was a present while visiting China, and on the opposite wall I placed the French impressionist picture of a village, a painting in my parents' living room on the farm for many years. I concluded my morning chores by watering all the seedlings in the greenhouse.

22 April. Earth Day. After visiting the drivers license bureau and renewing my drivers license, I celebrated Earth Day by driving the Chevy S-10 to what used to be Squaw Creek Park (it now

has a new PC name that I can't remember) and picked up six trees, three of which were dry root serviceberry. In the pots were two 10' tall tulip trees and a 6' white oak. After lunch MVM and I planted one tulip tree in the middle of the NW triangle bed in our back yard. We then went to Buffalo and planted the second tulip tree in what will be the middle of the new Labyrinth. As for the white oak, we planted it at Buffalo east of where the old white oak had resided prior to the derecho. In digging the hole for the white oak, we encountered a few medium-sized roots, but overall the planting went smoothly. I'll plant the serviceberry trees tomorrow, two here at home in the front yard and the third on the outer boundary of the Labyrinth at Buffalo.

The gardens of the English aristocracy in the second half of the eighteenth century took on an aesthetic of naturalness—often of a carefully landscaped, designed, and laboriously executed naturalness that celebrated the aesthetics of the natural world while presuming to groom and improve it. . . . The new garden style constituted a revolution in aesthetics. If gardens looked more and more like the unmanipulated natural world, that natural world could be admired more and more as a site of aesthetic pleasure, and while the landscape gardens were for an elite, the natural world was far more open to all.

23 April. MVM just told me that according to the *Gazette*, this is to date the second driest April on record. If I recall correctly, it has rained twice this month a couple of weeks ago. There was a forecast for rain today, but those showers ended up going south of here. Fortunately, because of the cool weather, we're doing okay. The garden soil is perfect to work with, but we're going to need some moisture.

This morning at Coe, I brought out the lawnmower and managed to get it started after putting it in front of a space heater for ten minutes. I mowed all the lawn except for the east end of the lawn where the crocus Tommies are planted. After I finished mowing, a fellow from Physical Plant moved patio furniture onto the lawn and set up tables for an outdoor meal, perhaps this evening. Meanwhile I dedicated the rest of the morning to the west end of the "M" bed. I got out the leaf vacuum, but discovered it was not sucking up the leaves. Eventually I discovered the area around the spinning "turbine" was covered with hard, dried leaves/foilage. It took a long time to dig out everything, using my pen knife. Once I had most of the leaves vacuumed up, I concentrated on trimming the honeysuckle and removing all the runners, many over 10' long.

26 April. A good day for gardening—felt like summer with steady SW breeze and the temp reaching the low 80s. This morning at Coe I did a bunch of different tasks:

- Assembled a new support for the garden hose that delivers water to the greenhouse area. I also attached to the hose a new nozzle, which works much better and does not leak. The hose support was easy to assemble and is now attached to the fence for added stability. It looks okay.

- Did my usual dandelion scavenger hunt. Harvested about 25, most in bloom, some in gravel walkways, some in the lawn, a couple big ones in the flower beds.
- Removed the Little Gardener from the garden shed and set her up in her usual place in the fern bed, near the wind chimes. This year I dug out a hole for her base and placed three large decorative rocks around her base, hoping that would give her more stability. It's good to see her back at her post.
- Prepared two batches of pureed veggies for the red wigglers. An unusual number of worms were clinging to the underside of the lid. I'm not sure why so many were not in their manure pile. Perhaps they were just bored and needed to get some fresh air.
- I spent an hour pruning the big honeysuckle. Although I still have some cleaning up to do around the base, the pruning of the honeysuckle is done. I will now turn my attention to cutting back the wisteria, which is just beginning to leaf out.

27 April. Pleasant day, mix of sunshine and clouds, warm SW wind. After multiple church tasks (such as printing the monthly newsletter) and repair of pickup door handle (third replacement in recent years), I spent most of the afternoon at Wickiup, prepping beds and planting. With MVM's help, we got a lot of seeds in the ground:

Bed E1: Sowed Provider & Mascotte bush bean seeds on April 3; took a chance that we might luck out with a warm April but the gods decreed otherwise so today we sowed the same seed varieties in the same bed. In the process came across Provider beans that had recently germinated and were about to break through to sunshine. I tried to arrange this second sowing so it would not disturb any of these early birds.

Bed G1: Sowed two 10' rows of Red Swan bush beans (Baker Creek) and two 10' rows of Jade Green bush beans. The Red Swan are new to me; the package claims the beans tolerate cool soil and weather. As for the Jade, I've planted them several times in the past; excellent flavor and texture. [*The Red Swan plants produced a lot of beans but I was not enamored with their flavor or texture; after using them in several recipes, I quit picking and focused on harvesting other varieties.*]

Bed H1: Sugar Pea Carouby, 8' row, 2-3 deep on each side of the trellis; I hope these carouby do as well as they did last year: beautiful flowers on strong plants; a late variety with large pods; these are Franchi seeds, labeled as "Pisello Rampcante-Gigante Suizzero".

Bed \$2: Aunt Bea's Snap Pole Beans (Southern Exposure Seeds). [*These plants were very productive and beautiful beans, but the pods developed tough strings at an early stage; I foolishly did not find out what the dried beans were like because the vines were prolific, still producing in October.*]

Bed S3: Sowed 3 varieties of parsnips, each an 8' row:

- Halblank (High Mowing seeds): supposed to be white, wedge-shaped root; strong yield potential; can be slow to germinate.
- Harris Model (Baker Creek): the variety that has in the past been the parsnips with the best germination rate.
- Pacific (J. Scheepers): a new variety for me.

[As has been true in the past, I had problems with parsnip seed germination. The Harris did fine and produced some nice parsnips, but the Halblank was a complete blank—never saw a single seedling; the Pacific was uneven in its germination and the roots never developed properly.]

28 April. Beautiful day, bit cooler than yesterday, but quite comfortable. Four hours at Coe in the morning. Cleaned up tall miscanthus behind NE bench; revealed new spears coming up. Also dug up a big dock, a large thistle, and some nightshade—with its distinctive odor. The bleeding heart behind the bench has become a beauty, quite large, covered with blossoms, a real champion. While working in this area, I noticed bindweed appearing in the Siberian iris and the sundial in front of the gazebo. I got the small Roundup spray in the greenhouse and gave a few shots to the bindweed in the sundial. I hate to use the glysohate, but I don't know of any other option with the bindweed. In most areas, such as in the bed of Siberian Iris, I can't use the Roundup because other plants that I don't want to harm are intimately intertwined with the bindweed. A smart weed.

During a 15-minute break, I got out my Canon camera and took another set of April photos. The tulips are at their peak. I love the Blushing Lady tulips in the "E" bed, so beautiful even when closed, but the vibrant red and yellow tulips in the J" bed are impossible to ignore. The other big attraction is the flowering crab trees, now in their full glory, with their huge spheres of white blossoms. Also a splendid display of pink blossoms on the espalier and the two standards in the "H" bed. Another notable flower in front of the terrace is the patch of grape hyacinths, which still look remarkably fresh. They've held up marvelously this spring.

1 May. Began the morning at home by unloading mulch from Chevy S-10. Since it's graduation weekend, I drove to Coe to make sure the garden was open. During my quick "police call" I didn't find any major trash, but I did find a pair of my good work gloves lying on a walkway, which I laid there yesterday as I prepared to trim foliage from a zebra miscanthus.

My next task was driving to Collins to pick up five trees I had purchased from Trees Forever: two traditional redbuds, two golden redbuds with yellow foliage, and an American linden. A long, slow-moving line of vehicles. It took an hour to get my trees, but they were all good-sized trees with foliage and appeared to be healthy. I left two redbuds at Buffalo, where I met up with a landscape crew that was just packing up after spreading some fresh soil and sowing grass seed in the area round the Hahn Memorial sculpture. If it doesn't rain shortly, I'll need to set up a sprinkler system and start serious watering.

At home I unloaded the three remaining trees and drove to Ever-Green for my third load of mulch this spring. After lunch I planted the linden in the front yard. The soil in that area is terrible, a dense clay, but I dug a large hole and spread the roots out, mixing the soil with fresh compost so the tree might have a reasonable transition from its lovely pottingl to the Elmhurst soil.

My next gardening task involved driving to Iowa City. While MVM taught several AT lessons, I helped K with yard issues. We laid down weed control fabric for a trail she had carved out in the rear of her back yard. Fortunately we had the “assistance” of Theo evaluating the drive ability of the trail’s path with his Tonka dump truck. In preparation for this trail, K has removed many generic hostas, daylilies, and a vast network of Virginia creeper. But we got most of the route cleared and the fabric stapled down. Theo clearly approved of this new path, perfect for his toy truck. This next week I’ll drive to Iowa City with a load of wood chips to cover the fabric. I should mention that the flower bed we created in her front yard is looking pretty good. The peonies and Siberian iris are growing, and the cranesbill, the Husker Red penstemon, and most of the Baptisia look alert.

My last job in Iowa City was to install weed control fabric and mulch under a large yew next to the driveway. This evergreen harbors a lot of determined thistles. I’m hoping that by covering the area with the fabric we might starve the thistles. I did get the fabric laid out and most of it covered with wood mulch. One potential problem is that the mulch is on a steep incline, and in a heavy rain the mulch might slide down the hill. K has some limestone blocks that we might install under the evergreen to slow the potential erosion.

2 May. While today’s graduation ceremony for the ‘21 (and ‘20) grads was being held on the football field, I was inspecting the Coe garden. No major problems, just minor issues. I moved a table back into the gazebo, re-arranged chairs around a metal table on the lawn, picked up bits of trash, emptied the trash container in the gazebo—which included a pair of new bobby sox. I watered the plants in the greenhouse, and, as usual, I found a few dandelions to dig up.

While I was preparing to leave Coe, a young man appeared in the garden, placed a Wendy’s bag on the NW bench, and asked me if it would be okay if he left his meal there while he went to get his Bible. I responded that it depended on which translation he was planning to read. I informed him that “this was a King James garden.” He didn’t catch the intended humor, but politely responded that he was “new to the Bible.” I assured him I was just kidding about the translation, and it was no “no problem” for him to sit in the garden, eat his lunch, and read the Bible.

3 May. Beautiful afternoon. Lovely gentle shower, lasting about an hour, 1/4" of rain. I spent an hour sitting in the gazebo during the rain, taking notes for an MMGR. It’s been a month since posting my last garden report. A wonderful hour, relaxing in the gazebo, watching and listening to the rain, smelling the rain, a petrichor experience. Before it began to rain, I was trimming the pergola’s wisteria. All six wisteria are thriving and have new growth.

At 9:30 I went to Buffalo and dug up about 20 strawberry plants for Becky. In exchange she gave me a loaf of spiced pumpkin bread. A darn good deal for me. After sampling the pumpkin bread, I planted the two red buds on opposite sides of what will become the

Labyrinth. The soil was very hard to dig into, but eventually the redbuds were in the ground and watered. Progress.

6 May. Birthday #76. My heart seems to be doing okay but my breathing is not good, easily out of breath even when doing something as simple as walking across the Coe campus or going up a flight of stairs. I keep reminding myself to slow down, relax, breathe smoothly, it's just another stage in getting old.

Today was a beautiful day, though temp was only into the 50s and a chilly NNW wind. After a trip to Ever-Green for another load of hardwood chips, I worked at Coe the rest of the morning. My first task was trimming the wisteria and hoeing/raking the gravel walkway between the fountain and the patio. Killed a bunch of weeds, including several dandelions, and smoothed out the gravel. Slow, tedious work, but the walkway looks darn good.

In the afternoon to Wickiup. I cleaned up the round bed near the gate (where I will plant my peppers in a couple of weeks) and the J bed with the scorzera. Replanted the O4 bed where I had sown the English Champion peas. Since they failed to germinate, this time I sowed Little Marvel peas, which have done well in the past. While sprucing up the long C1 bed where I will plant tomatoes, Marty came by and I learned she had broken her right leg, immediately above her ankle. This will seriously restrict her ability to do anything on her property for the next six weeks.

After Marty left, MVM arrived and we drove to Cedar River Garden Center in Palo. Walked around for over an hour, checking out their plants. We eventually purchased two ninebarks for the front yard, two clematis for the back yard, and five cranesbill (including two Rozannes) for the two new oval beds. After supper I planted the two 'Kilian Donahue' clematis in the small flower bed with the wooden tower we bought in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. They should grow to about 8' tall and their tag claims they should eventually bloom all summer. The flowers are supposed to be ruby-red in the center, fading to a fuchsia and then an orchid at the edge of each petal; the anthers are white with burgundy tips. No pruning required. One plant had enough free vine so I could begin to attach it to the wooden tower. Since clematis like to have cool feet during the summer, I covered the soil with broken shards of limestone, one resource for which, thanks to the derecho, we have an ample supply.

. . . the yearning to be more rugged, more rustic, more rough, more scruffy, is often a white and a white-collar yearning, and that those who have only recently escaped agricultural work, maybe sharecropping or slavery or migrant labor, who have survived being treated as dirty or backward, are often glad to be polished and elegant. You have to feel securely high to want to go low, urban to yearn for the rural, smooth to desire roughness, anxious about artificiality to seek this version of authenticity. And if you see the countryside as a place of rest and respite you're probably not a farmworker.

8 May. On this day I always think of the one-day celebration at Wazzu: “Hurray, hurray, for the 8th of May; outdoor intercourse begins today.” The campus would be covered with stencils of four feet: two facing one direction surrounded by two feet facing the other direction. As for gardening, after a morning at Coe, I packed a lunch, picked up a load of hardwood chips at Ever-Green, and drove on to Wickiup. Worked at the garden for about two hours, mostly cultivating potatoes in the West Field. I also did some planting. Prepped the J5 bed and sowed two varieties of bush beans: a yellow bean variety and dragon tongue. I also prepared the salsify bed and planted a dozen leeks and a dozen Giant Zitou onions that I started from the seed in early March. The Jeane de Poitou leeks looked rather limp, but I think they are just yearning for more sunlight. They’ll do fine, once they are in this nutrient rich soil with ample sunshine.

In the middle of the afternoon I took a break and drove to Cedar River Garden Center, my third visit in a week. I’m now a certified addict of this nursery—and this time I went crazy buying plants for Coe, my garden at home, and K’s garden in Iowa City (her purchases we’ll classify as Mother’s Day gifts):

- Two small containers of Coleus for the large planters at Coe (the only annuals in this buying spree).
- Three red-blooming yarrow for the corner of the “L” bed at Coe, to complement the established yellow yarrows in the opposite corner of the “C” bed.
- Three *Amsonia hubrechtii* to go with the lone amsonia in the “K” bed; that Arkansas native has not expanded in the past five years but at least it has survived; my plan is to dig up that area and see if a major dose of compost will help; the species supposedly prefers a moist soil, similar to the astilbe. [*A curious problem arose with the Amsonia. When I originally planted the first two Amsonia, probably in 2016, on several occasions later that summer I found the plants had been yanked out of the ground by some animal. I never saw any evidence the animal attempted to eat or gnaw on any branches, leaves, or roots. The plants were simply left on the ground—and in one instance, the plant had dried out and died before I found it. The same pattern occurred in 2021 with these three new Amsonia. For a couple of months I would find one or more plants having been pulled out of the ground. Fortunately, I was able to replant them quickly enough that they all survived until their root systems developed a more intense connection to the surrounding soil.*]
- Two Prairie Petiite dwarf lilacs (*Syringa vulgaris*); both are covered with flower buds ready to open; maximum height should be about 3'; I'll place one in the long East bed in the back yard and give the other to K.
- Black Lace Elderberry. I've wanted one ever since we saw several dark-leaved elderberry in Scotland in the summer of 2019; this variety is a Z5 cultivar which might end up being 6-10' tall; they should offer a three-season foliage interest with fall fruit; we would need another elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) to produce edible fruit.
- A Rhododendron 'Karen': a dwarf Z4 rhododendron/azalea; maximum of 4' high; classic dark pink/magenta blooms; the shrub was in full bloom today and looked quite stunning.

- A “porcupine” miscanthus; looks like the zebra miscanthus at Coe, but this one grows much taller, perhaps 8'; I will plant it in the “L” bed at Coe, as a partner the miscanthus in the “C” bed.
- Two Roxanne cranesbill for K’s garden; these have been a great success at Coe; gorgeous blue blooms and they keep blooming from early summer until October.
- Six allium: two Millennial, two Serendipity, and two whose cultivar name I can’t recall; these will all go in the corners of the two triangle beds in the back yard, to match with the ones I planted last fall.

Total bill was almost \$500, a lot of money for plants, but we should get a lot of bang for these bucks. These plants will play significant roles filling in blank areas at Coe and in our back yard

11 May. Yesterday was an unusual gardening day. Lois and Lisa came to the Coe garden at 1:00, and we talked about gardens for almost four hours, the longest garden conversation I’ve ever had. Although I spend many hours every day either gardening or reading about gardens or writing about gardens, I don’t spend much time talking with other people about the subject. But yesterday was an exception. L & L were hoping to recruit me to become involved in reviving the Shakespeare Garden in Ellis Park. The desired restoration is still in the early discussion stage, and it’s my impression there’s not yet any real gardening on site: folks are just trying to figure out what’s doable and how to proceed and what the end results might be and how to raise the money to make it all possible. Lisa provided me with a large packet of fascinating materials on the garden’s history, and then we spent more than an hour walking around the Coe garden, discussing its structure, evolution, choice of plants etc. Although the meeting consumed the entire afternoon, it was fun. Super nice people, and since I’ve read multiple histories of English gardens and visited a few in our trips to England, I could offer a few insights and issues for them to think about. Although I don’t have the time to add another garden to my repertoire, it was a great pleasure having an opportunity to reflect on the Coe garden and consider some factors that might be relevant as they consider the revival of this famous garden across the river.

At home this evening I planted a bunch of bloody cranesbill I dug up yesterday from the “L” bed so I could plant the yarrow I purchased at Cedar River. As I was digging out the cranesbill, I found a small remnant of a yarrow I planted 4-5 years ago. Although swamped by the geranium, it had somehow managed to survive. I planted 15-20 cranesbill fragments here at home: many were quite limp, but most will survive.

I forgot to mention that yesterday I salvaged one of the old reddish-orange park benches that I had placed behind the “I” bed yew last year. Because both benches had some rotten wood, neither was usable for people to sit on. Earlier this year I had placed one by the garden shed; the other bench was trapped between the yew and the garden fence, which had been shoved into the yews by the force of the August 2020 wind storm. Although it wasn’t easy, I managed to pry the bench away from the yews without any major damage to the yews or the

bench. After placing this second bench with its partner outside the garden shed, I am using both as plant stands for plants that had been growing in the greenhouse. This evening, about 30 minutes before midnight, I drove to Coe and moved all the plants into the greenhouse. The weather forecast was for temperatures into the low 30s and I couldn't bear the thought that the meteorologists might fail to foresee a hard freeze, thus freezing a number of cold-sensitive seedlings. The temp in the greenhouse was 57F so I'm sure they will now all be fine. It was a pleasure to visit the garden at night; all but two of the garden lights were working and the garden was beautifully lit. I suspect few people at Coe know how lovely the garden is after the sun goes down.

13 May. Another beautiful day, perfect for gardening. I started the morning with two hours working in the back yard, cleaning up a flower bed near the garden studio. I moved two hostas and in the middle of the bed planted the new yellowleaf redbud. I then cleaned up part of the gooseberry bed, which involved pulling up hundreds of garlic mustard. I could have kept pulling up these invaders for another hour, but I quit that job and drove to Coe, where I watered plants in the greenhouse and sorted out eight tomato plants for Wickiup. While preparing the tomatoes for their trip, Sakinah and her four-year old daughter came by to say hello. We talked about gardening and children, and I gave her a couple of Sungold tomatoes—the same gift I gave her the last time we visited two years ago.

After lunch I headed to Wickiup, where Jane soon appeared. After a tour of the garden, I gave her some rhubarb and a couple of leeks. I then returned to weeding a raised bed. MVM called and said she could come and help lay out papers and mulch on the walkways. I prepared several walkways so that when she arrived we could immediately begin laying down the walkway materials. After she left, I planted my eight tomato plants to finish out the "C" beds: total of 24 tomato plants, 22 varieties, including two Wapsipinicon Peach I planted today.

15 May. This morning I unloaded a yard of wood chips at Coe, drove to the post office and mailed copies of *The Garden Quarto* to several contributors, and stopped at my barber in Marion for my first haircut in over a year—not counting MVM's occasional trimming efforts. After lunch I returned to Coe and assembled my new potting soil mixture: top soil, manure compost, John & Bob's soil supplement, chicken grit, blood meal, kelp meal, earthworm poop (a product of my red wiggler colony that lives in the garden shed), and coco noir. I like the coconut bricks: they make the soil light and easy to work with.

16 May. Another cool, overcast day, very pleasant, temp in 60s, light breeze. After church I spent two hours at Wickiup, greeted by a beautiful oriole in the middle of the garden. The oriole's orange feathers are so dramatic, a dramatic addition to the garden. Meanwhile I focused on preparing and planting two raised beds. In "J15" I planted the German Rose Fingerling potatoes I received from High Mowing. I've had them for almost three weeks,

uncertain where to plant them, but with only five weeks to the solstice, I needed to get underground. The garden received 0.3" rain two nights ago, and the soil worked up beautifully. In the round steel raised bed next to the "scaredeer" I planted ten cabbages (one red, the rest green). Before driving home, I harvested a few small Cherry Belle radishes and three varieties of leaf lettuce. K & Theo came to lunch, and they took all the lettuce home with them after we washed the lettuce and dried the leaves using the old diapers we purchased in '76. Amazing all the water absorption tasks those diapers have helped with in the past 45 years, and they're still in good shape, perfect for drying lettuce.

After lunch, I did 101 miscellaneous chores in the back yard, including:

- Attached the clothesline between the garage and the pole with the weather station; that line has been missing for several years, much to MVM's annoyance.
- Repotted airplane plants that we'll donate to the Buffalo rummage sale.
- Weeded the planters with the astilbe.
- Trimmed the porcupine miscanthus that will be planted at Coe.
- Repaired the wooden pallet so it can be used as an extension on a compost bin at Wickiup.
- Weeded raised bed at the end of the long east bed while watching Theo play with limestone blocks and saucers for flower pots. For a long time he played by himself, accompanied by his vocal monologue.
- Transplanted five basil to a rectangular bed on the patio.
- Theo and I watered potted plants; somehow his pants and shoes got rather wet.
- Stretched out the big, black cloth raised bed and determined there's sufficient room for this circular bed to fit behind the garage. I'll secure the sides tomorrow with steel stakes and start filling it with turf from other beds and the wood chips in the bed of the Chevy.
- Much to my surprise, there's still no evidence of new black raspberries in the raspberry bed. I thought their root systems would generate new growth this spring, but nothing so far. I'm also surprised that I've not seen a single lemon balm. There were dozens in the back yard before the derecho. On the other hand, several of the Baptisia I transplanted this spring are growing, including the one whose leaves all dried up right after I transplanted it. And most of the cranesbill I planted in the long east bed have revived.

18 May. It never rained hard but a soft drizzle this morning and occasional showers in the afternoon. Felt like a cool, drizzly spring day in the Lake District. When I was doing my "police call" this morning, I discovered a man sleeping in the gazebo. I thought about waking him, but decided to call Security and give someone else the pleasure. Apparently the young man departed without an incident. Meanwhile I worked in the garden shed, attached three metal sleeves to the wall for storing papers (recycled metal sleeves that long ago were on my Writing Center office door), fed the red wigglers, and for Dana assembled a tray of plants (tomatoes, peppers, basil, eggplants).

In the garden I pulled up unwanted asters in the “L” bed and hoed weeds and grass growing in the gravel walkway in front of the patio. Despite the drizzle, I put a recharged battery in the camera and finished my mid-May photo shoot. At the moment the garden is dominated by the waves of white daisies under the pergola and the round puffs of purple alliums that pop up above other plants green foliage. The allium appear all over the garden and often create appealing combinations—such as the allium balls with the dark red peony blossoms in the “M” bed. The allium blooms make the peonies look more vibrant. I noted the Elegant Lady tulips are still in good shape, though they were all closed up tight today because of the weather. The Blushing Lady tulips are long gone, but the Elegant Ladies should have several more days. Their white petals show up well from a distance, nicely framed by the dark greens that surround them in the perennial beds.

20 May. After lunch Anja and I went to Coe, and we moved all the plants from Third floor Peterson to the Coe garden. That annual ritual went much faster with two of us moving plants, operating the elevator, carrying plants across the street. After she left, I met with another student assistant, showed her the weeds to remove in the “G” bed (vetch, horsetail, gooseneck), and I then started removing tulips from the “J” bed. We had great tulips this year, and most of them I will replant at home, hoping they might bloom again next year. While cleaning up the “J” bed, I tried to leave undisturbed the four plants that self-seed in that bed: *Nigella*, *Cleome*, *Verbena bonariensis*, and *Plains Coreopsis*. Tomorrow I should be able to apply the biochar in that bed and plant the dahlias and peacock orchids. The biochar was a gift from Ever-Green Nursery. The owner is providing it free of charge, hoping gardeners will experiment with this soil additive and see what impact it has on their results. *[I used the biochar in two flower beds at Coe and several raised vegetable beds at Wickiup. I saw dramatic results with two beds where I sowed beets and peas: vigorous growth and probably the best, nicely developed beets I’ve ever grown. As for the dahlia bed, the plants grew well, but a disappointing number of blooms, and I saw no evidence the biochar made any significant difference. Of course, the biochar is still in the soil, and there’s a possibility that because of other factors, it may take time for the biochar to have a noticeable impact on the soil. It certainly is the case that after the biochar has been added, the soil is less compacted, drains better, and is easier to work with, even after a recent rain.]*

21 May. Another overcast day with light drizzle this morning and into the afternoon. While I needed to wear a raincoat, not enough rain to drive me indoors. This morning at home, my primary task was planting the two ninebark shrubs (the larger one labeled ‘Diablo’) purchased at Cedar River. Both shrubs were placed in the middle of the large mounds of wood chips left when the stumps of the pin oak and silver maple were ground up. In each case I dug a hole in the wood chips and filled it with the root ball of the shrub and a mixture of vermiculite and compost from the black plastic compost bin in the back yard. Both shrubs had dense root systems that I managed to spread across their new home. The key issue for this summer will be

to keep them watered. They are both blooming now—attractive small white blossoms partially hidden within the thick, dark red foliage. [*My suspicion about the necessity for recurrent watering proved accurate. The small ninebark did not survive a stretch of hot, dry July weather; the ‘Diablo’ showed signs of wilting on several occasions, but I did a better job of keeping it watered and it did survive.*]

My other task at home was filling the large, black fabric raised bed behind the garage. As I was filling the bag with compost, I discovered two items in the compost bin that had unintentionally been thrown away: a plastic sheath for a kitchen knife and a Japanese hand hoe. The latter was badly rusted and the wooden handle had rotted away in several areas. I may try to repair it, but it will take a lot of scraping and sharpening and sanding. It must have been in the bottom of the compost bin for several years.

After lunch, I met with Jim at Wickiup and we spent the afternoon sowing watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, winter squash, and pumpkin seeds in the north half of the West Field. Jim hoed weeds and built the hills and raised beds, using my short handle Japanese hoe. It has a big, sharp blade that neatly cuts through roots and compacted soil—plus its big blade works well in moving soil into mounds. My primary job was preparing our fertilizer mix (compost, vermiculite, bone meal, and Ferti-lome organic fertilizer pellets), mixing the fertilizer mixture into each mound, sowing the seeds (typically 4-5 seeds/hill), and preparing the blue wooden signs so we know what’s planted where. Here’s a summary of what we planted today:

Row #2. Watermelons: Ali Baba (from Turtle Tree Seeds; our best performer last year); Crimson Sweet; Virginia Select (from Southern Exposure); and Strawberry (Bake Creek).

Row #3. Melons: Sarah’s Choice F1 cantaloupe (Johnny’s), Moonstruck Honeydew (Territorial), Honeydew Sweet Delight (Botanical Interests), and Athena F1 (Territorial).

Row #5. Winter squash: Autumn Frost F1 (Territorial), Thelma Sanders Sweet Potato (Southern Exposure), spaghetti squash (Johnny’s).

Row #6. Pumpkins: New England Pie, Long Island Cheese, and a couple more varieties that I don’t remember.

[*It was a great year for winter squash and pumpkins. The watermelons also did well; the Ali Baba again proved to be the most productive with many delicious, medium-sized melons. We did not harvest many sweet melons, losing many plants to squash bugs, but Sarah’s Choice F1 cantaloupe was again our top producer.*]

22 May. The spring crop of lettuce has been marvelous, and we’re now at the season’s high point; should have good lettuce for another 2-3 weeks. Some of the sugar peas are now blooming, and we’re perhaps a week away from harvesting the first tender snow peas. I just heard on the radio that areas in Kenya are being devastated by swarms of locusts and grasshoppers, eating everything in their path. Thank goodness we have no such plague at the moment, but one must keep in mind that we’re always on the edge of disaster. One hail storm or tornado could wipe away my whole garden. The Colorado potato beetle is an annoying pest,

but their damage pales in comparison to what a farmer in Kenya is facing. I finished my trip to Wickiup this afternoon by hoeing a row of Kennebec potatoes and terminated the life of three beetles. Fortunately they never fly away or sting or create any problems. They are quite passive and stoic in their final seconds.

23 May. After lunch, I stopped by the Coe greenhouse and picked up a tray of peppers and tomato plants for the Wickiup garden. After giving six pepper plants to Jim, I concentrated on my own layout. I planted a dozen tomato plants in the long "L" bed, including an Abe Lincoln, two Kellogg Breakfast, two Wapsipinicon Peach, an oxheart from Hudson Valley, two Mikados, and two Croatian tomatoes. I dug up a Green Grape tomato vine I had planted over a week ago and replaced it with a much healthier White Currant Grape tomato. The rest of the early plants all look in good shape. A complete contrast with last year when the first round of tomato plants was devastated by cutworm.

24 May. It's five minutes before midnight. The sun room door is open, the ceiling fan turned on. I can hear the train engine warning drivers the engine is about to go through an intersection: two longs, a short, and a long. It's beginning to feel and sound like summer. This morning after a small shower early, it quickly turned hot (low 80's) and sultry. By 9:00 I had no trouble generating perspiration. I worked at home for the first two hours, cleaning out grass, weeds, and unwanted flowers (mostly violets) from the big NW triangle in the back yard. I attempted to remove unwanted vegetation surrounding and woven through the clumps of ornamental grasses. Although the area still doesn't look great, the bed is now about 2/3 cleared, and I can use the turf/grass/weeds as material for the new fabric raised bed installed behind the garage. That huge bed is now about 2/3 filled.

At 10:30, or thereabouts, I went to Coe, did a little watering, and opened the greenhouse windows for air flow and to reduce the temperature. After feeding the red wigglers, I mowed the lawn, so I can fertilize it—once I purchase a couple more bags of Milorganite.

After lunch, I drove to Wickiup. Spent two hours hoeing the potato field. The potatoes in row #6 had never been tilled, so they had a lot of weeds and no mounds of soil around the plants. I also cleaned up the walkways so it will be easier to bury the pathways with paper and mulch. While hoeing, I found about 15 adult potato beetles and several of their orange egg clusters. After Jim arrived, we re-covered one walkway with weed control fabric; with the second walkway I laid out the newspapers and Jim covered them with the hay mulch. We now have two pathways ready for the summer.

25 May. Nice day, bit sultry, temp in low 80s, but cloud cover for most of the day, westerly breeze, occasionally vigorous. I started my gardening day at Coe, moving a clematis I planted next to the shrub rose in the "H" bed. That experiment was a success and a mistake: the clematis thrived, but it totally swamped the rose bush. So I moved it to a spot under the new

Briggs-Farmer arch sculpture behind the shrub rose in the "G" bed. It's a tight fit, but I could carve out space in front of the sculpture for the clematis. While digging up the mother clematis, I found a baby clematis not far away and planted it under the small iron tower at the east end of the "D" bed, not far from the gazing ball. [*Neither transplanted clematis thrived. The larger clematis in the "G" bed did not produce any new leaves or blossoms and at the end of the summer it had completely died back; however, this spring a new stem with several leaves appeared, and it may yet prove a successful transferral.*]

The "G" bed is now full of foliage from bow to stern, nearly all the plants at their peak. Particularly notable are the peonies, all rescued from under the shady yews. It took a couple of years for them to rebound, but they are now in full, mature display. One white/pink combo bloom is particularly attractive. I took several dozen photos of flowers throughout the garden this morning. It was a bit windy for capturing the blooms in clear images, but it felt good to see them so exuberantly healthy. The peonies in the "I" bed are also enjoying a rebirth, ones with lovely white petals and pink centers.

At home after supper, I finished putting some fresh soil/compost mix around the rootball of the Diablo Ninebark in the front yard. It has started to grow and looks good in its elevated position. The next step is to surround it with hardwood mulch and thin down the Solomon's Seal to 2-3 clumps. In the back yard, I did some weeding in the NW triangle. I removed the grass and weeds surrounding the 7-8 clumps of North Wind Panicum Switch Grass that I moved there last spring. That area was really torn up the derecho tree debris and the heavy equipment used to remove tree parts, but all the clumps have survived. As I was weeding around the switch grass, I found two more small clumps of purple coneflowers.

I'm finishing this journal entry at 15 minutes after midnight. A thunderstorm arrived about ten minutes ago and it's now raining. We've now had something like ten consecutive days with recordable rain, though most of these showers have been quite small, but this one sounds like a real rain.

27 May. We arrived at the Weston Bend State Park (in Missouri) at about 7:30 (a solid six-hour drive). After making sure we had a camping spot, we drove into Weston and had an excellent pizza at the '619" (or some such name) in downtown Weston—which strikes me as similar to a Galena or Mineral Point. After our hamburger pizza with dill pickles, we returned to the campsite, and then struggled to get the electricity hooked up to the van, eventually discovering that the 110 outlets were not working. We are now fully functional and just like Lewis and Clark on their journey up the Missouri, I'm writing in my journal—though I know I'll never earn a special scholarly edition of my modest ruminations.

As for gardening, yesterday was a big day. I began by spending \$150 at Theisen's. Purchases include two bags of pebbles for my oval rock garden in the back yard, four bags of humus, two blueberry bushes, and about twenty flowering plants, including a delphinium, several coneflowers, several black-eyed susans, three bee balms, a couple of gayfeathers, a

lupin. I then visited Frontier Garden Center and bought two bags of Milorganite (for the lawn at Coe) and their entire stock (eight) of Jewel black raspberry bushes. All these plants will need to wait until we return from our two-day camping trip.

30 May. *[At the top of journal page is a flattened tick with the note that while writing the day's journal entry, I found a tick crawling on my arm. My tick ID skills are quite limited, but I don't think this is a lyme-disease carrier.]*

Interesting experience with tools. I've been intending to write a couple of blog pieces on my favorite gardening tools. Yesterday in the mail I received from Garret-Wade a new right-handed Japanese hand hoe, similar to ones I've used for several years. I discovered today that this light-weight hand hoe is very sharp but it has almost no neck, and thus the ground clearance is not quite right. It's a tool I can use for surface hoeing, but it's not quite the tool I was expecting. Such small details make such telling differences.

Another tool issue is how often I misplace or forget where I have left a hand tool. This recently happened with my "root-slayer"—a tool I purchased earlier this summer—and a tool that I've found quite effective for several jobs. But then I lost it and for the past week had no idea where I had left it. Yesterday, while in Ace Hardware, I saw a Japanese digger/trowel/knife similar to one I use at Coe. So I bought it—and then today I found the root-slayer lying in a compost pile in the back yard. So now I have three similar tools in the tool bag I keep in the Chevy S-10. Each one has its advantages, but I don't want to lug around all three all the time. Which one do I choose to keep in my garden bag?

2 June. Fifteen minutes past midnight. I was dog tired at 7 p.m., but I went back outside for an hour after supper and the fresh air revived me. But the rhythms of writing in this journal, hypnotized by the iambs of my prose, often induce a loss of consciousness—even with a writer as unskilled as I am.

The last two days have followed the same pattern: working in the back yard in the morning and at Wickiup in the afternoon. The Coe garden can function reasonably well on automatic pilot at this time of year, and I'm using this time for attending to the gardens that require my daily attention. At home I concentrated on the NW triangle bed. I placed three black-eyed Susans (Goldsturm cultivars) in one corner, and I weeded the ornamental grasses (not perfect, but much better). Two short phlox, both blooming, and three bee balm are now in their assigned locations. Two of the three cranesbill for the front of the border have been planted, as has an allium at the apex of the triangle. I moved a bunch of Solomon's Seal—they look ragged and unkempt but they will sort themselves out. *[As it turned, they did not "sort themselves out," and most did not survive the summer.]* The switch grass in the center of the bed has been cleaned up and mulched. Once I plant the remaining cranesbill and several daylilies, this large triangular bed can be covered with paper and mulch, giving the impression of order and design—simplistic but still

The workers have a slogan, "The lovers get the roses, but we workers get the thorns." A rose is beautiful, but a greenhouse with thousands upon thousands of roses, a place producing millions per year, with stems and leaves and petals all strewn on the floor and heaped together in bins as byproduct, was not. Insofar as these roses were beautiful, their beauty was meant to occur somewhere else.

3 June. After lunch and an hour nap, I headed for Wickiup, where I discovered more peas had been cut down at the ankles. I originally suspected cutworms, but now I think the enemy is mice. All the damage was confined to the Opal Creek Yellow snap peas in the W3 bed. Those plants have grown beautifully, but I'm not sure how to protect the remaining plants.

4 June. After picking up a load of shredded, hard wood mulch at Ever-Green, I drove to Coe, where I discovered some minor mischief: the sundial in the "L" flower bed had been moved to the middle of a gravel walkway and several benches had been moved around but no real damage. Probably kids had climbed over the fence last night and were messing around.

In the evening after supper I drove to Wickiup. Watered tomatoes in the L2 bed and emerging melons and squash in the West Field. My primary achievement was applying fertilizer and a soil conditioner to the long H2 bed and sowing five varieties of seeds:

- Painted Serpent Armenian Cucumbers (Hudson Valley)
- Christmas Lima Pole Beans (J. Scheepers)
- General Lee Cucumbers (Pinetree Seeds)
- King of Garden Lima Pole Beans (Botanical Interests)
- Poinsett 76 Cucumbers (Botanical Interests)

[As usual, the General Lee cucumbers did very well, a consistently strong producer with good disease resistance, and the Poinsett 76 vines did okay, as did both of the lima pole beans. The Armenian cucumber was hit hard by the wilt, and the 4' row only produced one harvestable cucumber.]

5 June. An odd day with an unusual rhythm. I was our church's lay delegate to the Annual Conference, an all-day Zoom meeting. Since my computer at home was experiencing a series of service interruptions, I moved to my garden shed office at Coe, which meant that I missed most of the Bishop's worship service and her opening remarks. The Zoom connection was working better on my Coe computer, but I don't have separate speakers at Coe. Unable to boost the volume, I had difficulties hearing what was being said—and I don't know how to interpret the signing for the hearing impaired. After lunch the Coe system became very slow, so I rebooted the computer, which then proceeded through a long updating, which meant that I missed another 30 minutes of the conference. There were, however, a few advantages to being at Coe because I could complete several tasks in the green house:

- Put the green sunshade over the greenhouse (it was getting quite hot, well over 90F).
- I turned on the shed's air conditioner for the first time this year and confirmed it was working.

Garden Kalendar: Spring 2022

- Reattached some art work on walls and the world map on the ceiling.
- Collected miscellaneous junk in shed and greenhouse in a large garbage bag and deposited it in the nearby dumpster.
- Stored the seed germination heating pads and grow lights that I will not be needing for the next eight months.
- Sharpened knife and garden hoe.
- Watered plants in the greenhouse.

Although I missed well over half of today's conference proceedings, it turned out to be a surprisingly productive session.

6 June. Went to Buffalo before the church service to set up sprinkler and start watering the area with new grass. I found the hoses but could not locate a sprinkler. I ended up attending the worship service in my work clothes. After the service, I went to the Coe garden and brought two sprinklers back to the church. The area with the new grass looks awful—full of dandelions and other weeds. Impossible for it to look good by the time of our outdoor hymn sing in August, but the watering should encourage the grass to grow and begin to fill in some of the bare spots.

Using my line trimmer, I worked on carving out the Labyrinth path. It was frustrating because I had more difficulties than I had expected following the blue stakes we had used for marking the path. I could not decide precisely where the entrance should be, and I may have made an error in locating one of the 180 degree turns in the path. I need to use the lawnmower and carefully re-mow the internal path.

After supper to Wickiup for three hours. It had been a warm day, but it was lovely at Wickiup, with a stunning orange/purple sunset. My first task was planting a bed of lima beans in the J12 bed—an 8' row of butter beans (Southern Exposure) and an 8' row of Fordhook limas (which have dark brown spots).

Because of deer damage two nights ago, I brought a half dozen rags to tie to the fence and soak with deer repellent and apple cider. The deer repellent has been in the garage for at least two years, so I have no idea if it has any potency. One other job tonight was walking the potato patch in the West Field. I did three rows and killed dozens of Colorado potato larvae. Awful infestations on several plants. I also killed several adults (one pair copulating) and found four sets of eggs on the undersides of leaves.

7 June. Significant work in all four gardens today. Began with three hours in the back yard. In the Long Oval Rock Garden, I planted four lavenders from Richters. Covered the area around each plant with fresh pebbles and thorough watering. Also planted a Cedar River cranesbill in the NW triangle bed and spread papers and mulch around several plants previously planted. Gave everyone a good watering.

Next stop was Buffalo and mowing the Labyrinth path. Made one error (actually an error made yesterday where I missed a turning point in the path) but overall it came out okay and looks kind of cool. I did some measurements for the benches that will go around the tulip tree. I also repositioned the sprinkler for the new grass and ran the sprinkler all day. After supper I drove to the church and repositioned it so it can run through the night. We had a threat of a shower this evening, coming from the east, but the cell disintegrated as it crossed the Jones/Linn County line.

After lunch to Coe, where I planted the last of the dahlias—which should have been planted several weeks ago. I also planted most of the Peacock Orchid corms. Did some watering, including the new red yarrow in the “L” bed, across from the yellow yarrow in the “C” bed. Finished the day by jotting down notes for an MMGR.

After supper to Wickiup. It was nice to get into the countryside. The temp was in the low 80s, quite comfortable as the sun was setting. I planned to sow zucchini seeds in the O1 bed (which I’m sure has some volunteer German butterball potatoes), but I was distracted by potato beetles (both larvae and adults) in the O3 fingerling bed so I focused on that invasion, killing a horde of beetles and destroying seven orange egg groups on leaves. After that killing spree, I weeded and thinned the three carrot rows in the O2 bed and watered the remaining seedlings with the local creek water. My last job was chasing after flea beetles on the eggplant leaves, circling around the bed three times in pursuit of the little devils.

11 June. Began the day at Buffalo. Set up the water sprinkler for the lawn and let it run all day. I planted three coreopsis (from Home Depot) with bright yellow and red blooms in the planter under the Little Free Library and three flowering stonecrop with large bloom clusters in the planter under the church bell. The *Cerastium* in that large planter are finished blooming so I cut them back. Spent the rest of my time at Buffalo talking with Cara. We settled on a design for the Labyrinth entrance—similar to what we had previously brainstormed—and she agreed to do a support for the wind chimes. The breakthrough was when we looked at the enormous posts that Gary has been digging up, posts that once held up the old softball field backstop. We can save a lot of money by using these posts to hold an arch (with a slight curve, Asian style) for the wind chimes. So now it’s full steam ahead. I also heard from Todd that he will submit a proposal (with a cost estimate) for the four benches to go with the Labyrinth.

13 June. One major accomplishment at Wickiup today is that with MVM’s assistance, I was able to move to the garden three of Marty’s 16’ long, 4’ tall livestock panels. We hoisted them on top of the Chevy’s cab and bed and tied them down with rope. Driving at about 3 mph, we ferried them down the hill and into the garden without incident. We positioned two panels along the H2 bed, matching perfectly with the length of the bed. The third panel was placed along the black raspberry patch. BTW, those raspberries look really good at the moment. Despite the dry

weather, the berries are of good size and beginning to ripen. Also many new, thick canes already over 6' tall.

After the panel-moving adventure, my remaining time at Wickiup focused on weeding. I cleaned up about ten tomato plants, removing suckers and weeds, mixing into the soil fresh fertilizer, and surrounding the plants with fresh mulch. This evening I received a second bale of hay that I will use for mulch. The bale was delivered early because the binder was not working properly and the bale was already starting to fall apart. Overall the tomato plants are looking good. A deer has been in the garden twice this past week: eaten pea tops, pole beans, strawberry plants, cucumbers, lettuce, and a few weeds (the deer love the wild amaranth)—but so far no tomatoes, eggplants, or potatoes.

One garden mystery concerning the O4 trellis bed. Twice I sowed pea seeds in that bed this spring and the result has been a total of seven plants. Two weeks ago, I sowed the bed a third time with cucumber seeds. So far, zero germination. I am puzzled why I've had such a low germination rate in this bed. Last year this bed was home to a wonderful pea crop, but so far dismal results this year.

15 June. No water pressure in the Coe garden. I messed around with the valve for turning the water on and off, but my tool has rusted and it's not engaging properly. I'll try again tomorrow morning before seeking assistance from the physical plant. The garden is really hurting because of the unseasonably hot and dry weather. Even the sunflowers are wilting, as is the purple leaf loosestrife under the SE apple tree. The loosestrife in the back yard here at home looks fine but not the ones at Coe. One theory is that at Coe the roots of the flowering crab tree are hogging the water, a competition the loosestrife in the backyard don't have. On the other hand, the loosestrife at Coe are in the shade through most of the day, while the loosestrife at home are in the sun from sunrise to sunset. Since there's a wedding in the garden in four days, I'm hoping we can get the water flowing tomorrow. A couple days/nights of serious watering would make a big difference.

Yesterday afternoon some people involved with the resurrection of the Shakespeare Garden in Ellis Park met at the Coe garden for two hours. I had been given the impression this would be a small group of 4-5 people, and we would be discussing our efforts at Coe to maintain an English-style garden in Iowa. The meeting, however, focused on organizing a Shakespeare Garden committee and agreeing on initial steps for turning this dream into a reality. That's an excellent reason for gathering, and I would love to be involved in such a project, but I'm unable to fulfill the gardening tasks that I already have. I don't have the time or physical strength to be involved in such a worthy, large-scale project. So I sat and listened—and it was an interesting discussion on critically important issues. A dozen people attended the meeting and I met several folks new to me, including Al Pierson, whose family has had a floral business in C.R. for over 90 years. After the business meeting, I did walk around the inner rectangle with a couple visitors, answering questions on plant ID (e.g., fleabane, hibiscus,

perennial sunflowers, lambs ear). It was a painful walk because the garden is hurting at the moment, many plants in need of serious watering. The garden was so rich and vibrant three weeks ago. Even with the orange and yellow daylilies in full display today, the garden looked gaunt, dusty, worn down.

16 June. This morning at Coe while I was tinkering with the water valve, John arrived and within minutes he had the water turned on. I immediately began running two sprinklers—the soaker hose in the “A” and “B” beds and an arc sprinkler on the “C,” “L,” “I,” and “G” beds. I paid a Physics summer research student, who lives in the student apartment next to the garden, two Cokes if he would turn off the sprinkler before going to bed, saving me a trip back to Coe at midnight. We still have several beds to water, but the garden should be in much better shape by Saturday’s wedding. We have gone over two weeks in June with only a trace of rain. Of course, we also had a long dry stretch last year in July, but a later drought is easier for many plants to deal with because they have developed their root systems and are more resilient.

17 June. Drove home from Wickiup in the dark, arriving at home about 9:30. On the S-10 radio, I listened to Alfred Deller singing Purcell’s “Music for Awhile.” A wonderful accompaniment to the journey home. As for my gardening work, I shifted my tactics for killing potato beetles. I had noticed that their default escape tactic is usually to fall toward the ground, similar to Japanese beetles. So I decided to adopt the same technique I use for harvesting Japanese beetles. I poured a cup of water into a yogurt container and added a few drops of dishwashing detergent. I then moved through the field of potatoes, sweeping the beetles into this simple brew. The process went much faster than I had expected, and I was able to de-beetle six rows in less than an hour. I’m sure I missed some beetles along the way but no system will be perfect.

19 June. Another hot, dry day. This evening, driving back from the Wickiup garden, I could see Thunderheads and lightning to the south, but I have no faith they will reach us. It feels best not to hope: just hunker down and assume the summer’s gardening will depend on manual watering.

I spent most of the morning and afternoon at Coe, trying to prepare the garden for Saturday’s wedding. Here are the tasks that occupied most of my day:

- Ran sprinklers on the garden’s east end, watering the hellebores, the wisteria, and most of the “H” bed.
- Removed dead foliage (mostly daffodils and daisies) from the front of the “C” and “H” beds. Pulled up horsetail, vetch, asters, sorrel, etc.
- Weeded and watered the two dahlia beds.

- Pruned dead blooms on the “H” rose bush—which was covered with red roses this spring, probably the best it has ever looked.
- Pulled up grass from inside Cara’s two iron spheres (Ringo and Sisyphus) and trimmed the grass next to the cement blocks that surround the spheres.

19 June. About 9:30 this morning a group of young girls came into the garden. They told me they had been instructed to weed the rain garden. I told their leader that the rain garden did not need any weeding—which was not quite accurate: I didn’t want a group of ten girls tramping around in that small space. I did indicate, however, that we had weeds in the gravel walkways that deserved some attention. None of these young ladies (whom I eventually figured out were girl scouts on a service project) demonstrated much enthusiasm for weeding, but when you have ten girls—even with a lackadaisical attitude—all pulling an occasional weed, it is possible to make progress. In the 15 minutes they were in the garden, they did cleanup the walkways in front of the “E” and “F” beds. Their leader informed me two more groups were coming an hour later, but they never appeared. I assume the head honcho eventually located the intended rain garden.

One little incident. One of the girl scouts told me she was not going into any flower bed and “catch poison ivy.” I assured her and her scout leader that there was no poison ivy in that bed, and it had been several years since someone had been killed by contact with poison ivy in this garden. The girl did not find my remark amusing, but the leader chuckled.

20 June. Finally, rain. Light showers this morning, 0.3" at home and 0.5" at Wickiup. Won’t put a dent in the drought but a welcome respite. And this evening an intense rain shower moved through. Rained hard for ten minutes; we probably received another 0.2" I drove to Wickiup after supper and watched as low lying, dark blue clouds sped to the north, to the south, to the east. About 8:00 p;.m. I heard thunder and saw yellowish-green clouds on the horizon. I decided it was time to skedaddle, and I raced home with the storm on my heels. It started raining hard as I pulled into our driveway. I brought into the house several bunches of Red Sail lettuce. The shell peas I harvested are still in the pickup. At lunch we had our first wilted lettuce of the summer. Darn good. Here are a few tasks I did at Wickiup before the thunderstorm arrived:

- Weeded cantaloup in R1 bed and cucumbers in R4.
- Installed nylon netting around cucumbers in R4.
- Weeded and fertilized eight tomato plants in the C2 bed. The tomatoes look good; several have green fruit. Perhaps first harvest in three weeks?
- Uncovered cabbage from under insect cloth. Alas, ample signs of cabbage worms, their holes in foliage, piles of tiny black turds. Tomorrow I’ll spray them with my home brew of water, soap, and vinegar.

- Re-sowed three cucumber varieties in the "H2" bed. Covered the bed with fresh hay, hoping this light mulch might cool the soil temp, help retain moisture, and improve germination rate and survival of baby seedlings. Also added mulch to the bed with the Southern Exposure butter beans.

21 June. What a glorious day: (1) an inch of rain last night, both at Coe and Wickiup; (2) cool temp with low humidity. It was so cool this afternoon at Coe I felt chilly. Great way to start the summer with such wonderful gardening weather. A day to dream for—and to recall later this summer when the heat and humidity return.

22 June. Another darn near perfect gardening day. Arrived at Wickiup around 8:00 a.m., temp 45F; felt chilly when the sun went behind an occasional cloud. Tasks for the day included:

- Weeded the black raspberries. Pulled up tons of creeping Charlie and fleabane. Weeded around eggplant bed and walkways past the raspberries, which should be ready for picking by the end of this week. Recent rain should help fruit fill out.
- Planted three tomatoes along the panel closest to the Baptisia on the south side of the garden. Most of the peas are dead, killed by either cutworm or mice. I planted the tomato transplants deep with compost, a soil enhancer, fertilizer, and biochar. I read last night in *Fine Gardening* of a professional gardener growing tomatoes on a fence (which I have) and spreading the vines out like an espalier fruit tree. I might give that a try.
- Trimmed the grapevines. I don't know what I'm doing other than trying to keep new vines from reaching the ground. This is the first year when the vines are covered with small green grapes. I'm looking forward to September and discovering what they taste like. One issue is that two large volunteer blackberries have emerged under one of the grapes in the south bed. I will move it, but I've not had 100% success in my previous attempts to transplant blackberries. They have a deep tap root, and it appears they don't like being shoved into a new home.
- I cleaned up both ends of the "M2" bed. I made a mistake a couple days ago, hoeing the north end without first removing the weeds, particularly the purslane. Today I had to go through the area again, removing by hand all these clumps of purslane, quack grass, and Peruvian daisies—which are quite adept at creating new root systems when their stems come in contact with the soil. It was a slow process, but the bed has not been cleaned up, smoothed out, fertilized, and sowed with Burmese okra (Southern Exposure). I repeated the same process with the south end, although that area also had several bunches of small garlic that had popped up. On the south end of the bed I sowed seeds of a red okra (Territorial).
- Weeded the bed where I had sown the onion and scallion seeds. I was surprised how difficult it was to distinguish the allium spears from the grass.
- Finished the day by hoeing the south end of the B2 bed. Proceeded smoothly until I reached the south end, where there are many volunteer red raspberries. About a dozen of the ones out in the open I dug up, placed in a cardboard box, brought home, and after supper transplanted

them into the new red raspberry bed in the back yard. Now the challenge is to keep them mulched and watered.

25 June. After weeding the Mexicana & Cocozelle zucchini in the F1 bed (at Wickiup), I inspected each plant, searching for squash bug eggs, often on the underside of the leaves at a meeting point for two veins. I averaged finding 4-5 egg clusters per plant, over 15 plants. That translated into hundreds of eggs. In one instance a group of nymphs had just hatched. I think I got them all. I only came across two adults. One escaped before I could smash him, but I squished his friend.

As the clouds were gathering and preparing for a late afternoon shower, I did some quick seed sowing. In the B2 bed, I sowed three varieties of summer squash: Bolognese Zucchini (Franchi seeds from Seeds of Italy), Desert F1 (High Mowing), and Palestinian Kusa Squash (Truelove). I also sowed four hills of white Lebanese zucchini among the volunteer butterball potatoes in the O1 bed.

On the bean front, some unexpected good news. The germination rate of the Cherokee Trail of Tears beans in H1 was initially very uneven, but today several new plants had emerged, activated by the recent rains. Same pattern with the Whipporwill southern peas in the D2 ben. On the other hand, no sign of life with the pole beans sown on June 1 in the D1 bed. I re-sowed that bed with more Black & White Goose beans and Littleton Half Runner Dry Beans.

*On May 22 . . . [George Orwell] stopped to tend Eileen's grave near Newcastle:
"Polyantha roses on E's grave have all rooted well. Planted aubretia, miniature phlox, saxifrage, a kind of dwarf broom, a house-leek of some kind, & miniature dianthus. Plants not in very good condition, but it was rainy weather, so they should strike." This might be one of the most poignant images of Orwell: a widower stooped over his young wife's grave, in a place where he had few connections, digging and planting on a gray, damp day.*