

The Summer 2018 Garden Kalendar is composed of edited excerpts from my 2017 Garden Journals for the months of July, August, and September 2017. The italicized quotations are from *The Meaning of Gardens*, an anthology of 30 essays edited by Mark Francis and Randolph T. Hester, Jr. (MIT Press), a book I was reading in 2017.

*A garden is like a wilderness area: what matters is not the intensity of human use, but the fact that it is there in the first place. Often the occasional, reaffirming glance while walking in or out of the house is enough. The underlying significance of my garden (or anyone's garden, for that matter) is that the personal, symbolic connections are deeper and more critical than the garden's mere epidermal appearance. ~Robert L. Thayer, Jr. "Personal Dreams and Pagan Rituals" []*

**5 July 2017.** It is too hot to type my notes in the garden shed so I've retreated to my basement office at home. I worked at the garden from 9 til noon. Oppressive heat index; temp in low 90s and high humidity, sunny, no breeze; tough working conditions—plus the knee in my old Cabela pants tore through. I began the morning by attacking Japanese beetles, convincing dozens to take a swim in my yogurt container half full of soapy water. They had done some serious damage to the big white rose bush in the NW corner; also many spread across the shrub rose bushes in beds "G" and "H." Fortunately, there were only a few stragglers in the hollyhocks.

A lot of tiny sedum appearing in the gravel walkways, particularly the west end. I did a lot of hoeing. The ground is hard but I'm hoping the hot, dry conditions will make it more difficult for them to rebound after the hoe goes through their area. Those sedum are remarkably resilient.

**11 July.** 11:30 am; 80F, 77% humidity; virtually no breeze; overcast (thank goodness—with the high humidity, any further rise in temp would make it difficult working conditions). Doing miscellaneous tasks since 8:00. Because of the soft lighting conditions due to the cloud cover, my Canon and I shot a lot of photographs, particularly concentrating on daylilies and flying insects. Took a series of photos of a Monarch and a green dragonfly from long distance. I hope some of them turn out.

I continued to work on the gravel walkways. The sedum/purslane is relentless. I hoe a stretch one day and two days later more baby plants appear. The walkways must have millions of seeds waiting to germinate, but for a moment the "B/L" and "M" walkways are fairly clean and raked. I also raked the "D/E/F" walkways and trimmed back several clumps of catmint along the "L" bed walkway. Hated to cut back the catmint because it provided such an attractive clump of blue, but the flowers were becoming sparse and the daylilies are now the dominant actor. It has taken two years, but the daylily beds are now a riot of blooms.

I noticed this morning that the big hydrangea in the "H" bed has started to bloom, as has the nearby red twig dogwood. In many respects the garden is at its prime right now. It is beginning to have the richness of diverse colors and plants that I associate with an English garden. Still many noticeable holes and empty areas, but we're making progress.

**12 July.** 10:55 am; 83F, 71% humidity; overcast (thank goodness), no breeze; no problem working up a sweat. Actually, I've only been working in the garden for about 45 minutes. Had a meeting at 9:30 with the Provost to discuss office space for retired faculty. My computer and

office stuff are now in Peterson, but we discussed possibility of having my office in the garden shed. For that to happen, the shed needs internet access and it must be insulated so it can be heated in the winter—though I must admit that on a day like today, it would also be nice to have air conditioning. I have the fan blowing on me, and I'm still sweating. I often wonder how I survived those summers in southern Kansas in the years before my Dad purchased that large box fan from Western Auto. But at least on our hill with our southern exposure, we usually had a breeze. I can remember lying in my bed at night, my head hanging over the side of the bed, right next to the window, trying to catch any hint of cooler air.

As happens on most July days, I started the morning with a walk around the garden, harvesting Japanese beetles. This morning produced several hundred. Yesterday I had thought we might be on the downhill slope, but this morning I discovered several large clusters of beetles on the rose bushes' buds, flowers, and foliage. One benefit of their clustering inclinations is that it makes it easier to capture a dozen or more with one sweep of the hand. There were just a couple of beetles on the basil plants (which have been attracting a steady stream of visitors the past week).

I just read in *The Meaning of Gardens* that "*Gardens provide food and sustenance, soothe and delight the senses, display the miraculous cycles of nature, and occasionally exhibit the power, aesthetic tastes and megalomania of the ruling class, the aristocracy, and the wealthy.*" (Arnold R. Alanen, "*Immigrant Gardens on a Mining Frontier*") I'm not sure that today, spending so much of my time trying to limit the impact of these invasive beetles, I feel the garden is delighting my senses or providing me much sustenance. But it certainly does confirm for me how little I understand about the mysterious "cycles of nature."

**13 July.** A College for Kids art class was in the garden this morning. The instructor asked me about a flying insect with black wings and white tips. After figuring out she was not describing a dragonfly, I suggested a grasshopper—and later caught and showed her the wings of the grasshopper in question. It is surprising to see those attractive black and white wings under a grayish-brown exterior when the wings are closed.

I did some weeding and cleaning up in the "C" and "L" beds. Some Stella d' Oro daylilies in "L" looked like a groundhog or cat had sat on them—and their blooms are now past--so I cut them to the ground. Although this pruning left a bare space, it still looks much tidier. I also dug up a sizable redbud that had sprung up behind one of the "iron ore red" benches. And there I discovered a problem. The back of the bench was broken—where the wood had become separated at a glue joint. Since I had already re-glued it twice, it was time for a different solution. I carried the bench to the shed, got it realigned, and glued together the two separated boards one more time. Later today I will go to Home Depot and purchase a small, flat metal plate that I can screw into the back.

I talked with Wayne last night about constructing a greenhouse and insulating the garden shed. I think he's interested. We might meet next week to look at the situation and see what can be done.

**17 July (Monday).** After collecting my Japanese beetles, I dug up ten purple coneflowers to give two Coe staffers. At least I hope they are coneflowers. It's hard for me to tell the difference between the purple coneflowers and the black-eyed susans when they are young. One

coneflower plant was blooming, and I surmised the others were coneflowers because of proximity. It's my impression the coneflowers seed themselves more freely, and it's more likely to see individual coneflowers separate from the pack. The young susans are more likely to emerge in close proximity to older susans. I also harvested three bags of basil—one bag of the cardinal basil and two bags of the dolce fresca—which was beginning to bloom. The basil have thrived in the raised bed, growing much larger and more vigorously than I had imagined. In fact, everything looks good in those beds. I am particularly pleased with the transfer of the creeping thyme, which is now covered with pink blossoms and looks great at the front of the bed.

**27 July.** 3:30 pm. 85F, 46% humidity; sunny, some breeze. 1.6" rain in the rain gauge from yesterday afternoon and last night. I didn't work in the garden yesterday and I worked at home this morning, so it had been about 40 hours since my last visit. Tons of Japanese beetles; I did two sweeps an hour apart, as many the second time as the first. Found them on many different plants: wisteria, viburnum, swamp milkweed, all the roses, meadowsweet, hibiscus, phlox, hyssop, basil (today on 4 different varieties, not just the Persian basil, previously misidentified as the cardinal basil). Although I cleaned up some overgrown stuff in the A1 bed, most of my 2 ½ hours were consumed with the beetles. Some good news, however: we now have internet connection in the garden shed. My first task was deleting old email. I also did a Google search on a beetle I found in the garden. Photos and description confirmed it was a grapevine beetle, *Pelidnota punctata*, also known as the spotted June beetle or the spotted pelidnota. Although a highly variable species, its basic pattern has three black spots running down each side.

*Nature has its own architecture, one far more complicated and diverse than human architecture. The architecture of nature is ecology. Garden ecology is the application of this to gardens. ~Kerry J. Dawson, "Nature in the Urban Garden"*

**3 August.** 10:00 am; 72F, 90% humidity. It's raining, a real rain at the moment. Very welcome; I hope it's raining at the Wickiup Garden, which has missed a couple of big rains the past month and is getting quite dry. I arrived at the garden a few minutes before 9:00 and got in an hour before the shower arrived: half of that time was harvesting Japanese beetles, which were particularly bad in several of the hibiscus blossoms. Many were inside the blossoms and virtually comatose, as if they were drugged on the blossom juices. Only problem is that the petals begin rotting and the beetles are wrapped in these soggy, deteriorating petals. It's a messy job scrapping or squeezing them out of the blossoms. I keep hoping we are nearing the end.

**4 August.** Beautiful day; cool this morning—I even wore a fleece when going to Coe at 8:00 am. I continue to drown J. Beetles, but the numbers are diminishing. Only major infestation was on the "H" bed hibiscus. I hope we've turned a corner. After hoeing and raking two stretches of the gavel walkway, I began a drastic pruning of the white rose bush in the NW corner, reducing it from 10' to 6'. In contrast, I have been encouraging the honeysuckle on the NW fence to keep growing, and it is now stretched almost all the way across the fence. [Alas, most

of the honeysuckle vines exposed on the fence did not survive the winter, and this spring most of the vine had to start all over.]

In the afternoon I went to the Wickiup Garden. I removed three sick eggplants, victims of flea beetles. After weeding the watermelons and blackberries [none of which survived the winter], I harvested two hills of potatoes (producing 25+ nice taters) and a bag of tomatoes (mostly sungolds), cleaned up area around the white zucchini (while killing many gray squash bugs), and tilled 5 raised beds with the tiller. In my new strawberry bed, I transplanted 10 strawberry volunteers. Some didn't have much soil attached to the roots, but with luck and regular watering they will survive. Tomorrow I'll start planting fall veggies: peas, lettuce, spinach, etc. I'll also do some mulching, using the old hay that Marty gave me. Just like in the old days when Dad brought rotten hay from Kansas for my garden at Elizabeth's.

*Plants communicate universal life qualities to those who tend them, displaying rhythms different from those of the man-built environment. The garden is fundamentally not architecture. Plant growth is steady, not erratic and bizarre. The gardener sees a predictable, continuous flow of change from seedling to mature plant and learns that change need not be disruptive but can be part of a dynamic stability. How different from our technological society, where the flow of life is constructed by schedule and regulation and must change rapidly to accommodate fads or other distractions, where people are under constant threat by new man-made terrors. To become involved in the microcosm of the garden, one must leave the outer world at the garden gate. Joseph Wood Krutch suggests that the garden is not only an escape from the perplexities of the world, but also an escape into beauty, wonder, mysticism. ~Charles A. Lewis, "Gardening as Healing Process"*

**9 August.** Sunny, temp in low 80s. Another lovely day—though we need rain. Somehow the Wickiup Garden is still producing, the plants' root system continuing to extract water from unsuspected reservoirs. We did lose our last pattypan squash. In the final weeks many of the fruit had a grayish/black fungus or mold on them, not apparent on any other veggies. As for the zucchini, they are beginning to fail but they are still producing, particularly the golden globe. The Lebanese squash are now bigger plants, very healthy looking, and manufacturing a lot of white zucchini.

Today I finished mulching the tomato plants. I weeded the onions and a small patch of sweet potatoes running in the bed between tomatoes and onions. The onions continue to look great—and perhaps because of the dry weather they seem to have entered a storage phase. I did some watering and picked about ten tomatoes, including one Mortgage Lifter weighing 1.14 lbs. We'll can tomatoes and spaghetti sauce Friday night after MVM returns from her AT trip to Illinois.

**13 August (Sunday).** Lovely August day. Took a lot of produce to Buffalo Church and set out on back pew: all of it gone by noon. After church, briefly checked out the Coe garden. Everything doing okay; herb garden looks really good. Spent the rest of the morning and most of the afternoon cleaning up raspberry patch in our back yard. That project is now 90% done. Then back to Coe to put together a bouquet for Joan. I picked tansy, black-eyed susan, a Bishop dahlia, several white hostas blossoms (which have a marvelous fragrance), one big bright red zinnia, a few late-blooming spider plants, some stonecrop, and two clumps of sunflowers.

**17 August.** Notes on tomato plants at Wickiup:

- Amish Paste: Mid-size fruit; tall plants, moderate leaf loss; fruit are good, even maturation, solid consistency; will plant again.
- Abe Lincoln: A lot of moderate-sized fruit, even maturation, minimal splitting; have already harvested 25 tomatoes from one vine; will plant again.
- Better Boy: My single plant (a gift from a friend) is almost leafless, but it has produced well-formed, nice-sized fruit; will plant again.
- Black Krim: One of the first to produce mature fruit; many fruit have been uneven in maturation and because of color pattern, can be hard to tell when they're fully ripe; some good, big fruit for sliced tomatoes; probably will plant again.
- Cherokee Purple: One of my favorite tomatoes in flavor but many tomatoes have spoiled before they were ready to harvest; so far have only picked 2-3 fruit per vine.
- Cuore de Toro: Very frustrating; they have produced many large fruits but uneven maturation (bottom half is ripe but top is yellow and not ripe); many covered with a black fungus have turned rotten.
- Earliana: Supposed to be an early producer but my two vines were both a bust, each producing just a few small, undistinguished tomatoes; would not plant again.
- El Dorado: A lot of nicely formed yellow fruit; some came early and the plants are still producing; moderate leaf loss; will plant again.
- German Johnston: A lot of good-sized fruit; on one plant none of the fruit ripened properly but I will probably replant next year.
- Golden Bison: The GB I planted in the Buffalo garden were remarkably prolific; the Wickiup Golden Bison have been okay but not great.
- Lemon Boy: Last year's crop was incredible, perhaps 25+ good-sized fruit per vine; this year's production not quite as impressive, but dependable, well-formed, good-tasting fruit.
- Lillian's Yellow: Two plants produced a lot of tomatoes; marvelous taste, remains one of my favorite tomatoes, but many were very irregular in shape and uneven in their development.
- Mortgage Lifter: Produced several nice, large tomatoes.
- Siletz: Despite strong reviews, it was a dud last year and again this year; will not plant again.
- Sungold: Remains in a class by itself; even though the fruit are quite small, an unbeatable taste, the only tomato I readily eat right off the vine; this year's production has been amazing, 5 plants producing hundreds of tomatoes; only problem is their tendency to crack as they become fully ripe.
- Yellow Brandywine: Potato leaf variety; minimal leaf loss; good-sized, delicious fruit.

**21 August.** A lovely day, temp in the 70s; felt like mid September, not mid August. Worked in garden studio in the morning, composing and editing church newsletter. After lunch, spent two hours at Coe. The artemisia in the "K" bed was looking quite straggly and woebegone, so I cut it back to the ground. Perhaps I should replace it with Helene von Stein lamb's ear, which has been quite effective as a front-of-border foliage plant. The grass behind the artemisia I moved to a bare spot at the front of the "L" bed. I also dug up some coneflowers and potted them for a giveaway. Another job was dead heading balloon flowers. Even if they don't re-bloom, they look much better without the dead bloom remains. One other job was cleaning up area around the baptisia in the "I" bed, trying to provide more room and sunlight for the

daylily I planted at the back of the bed. I cut back the desiccated hollyhocks, which have new plant growth emerging at their base; also removed some asters (I'm always removing asters), goldenrod, and hyssop. Area looks much better, and perhaps this additional space/sunlight will be good for the new daylilies. On the other side of the baptisia, there was a lot of bee and wasp activity so I left them to do their own thing and will return early in the morning, when these fellows are not so fully awake. After Coe, I drove to Wickiup. The rain gauge had recorded 0.8" rain overnight: most welcome. I picked a large bag of sweet peppers. Remarkable how well they have continued producing, despite the long stretch of hot, dry weather.

*Every garden . . . is an act of deference or defiance. ~Francis and Hester, "The Garden as Idea, Place and Action"*

**4 September.** Lovely day but hazy from smoke caused by fires in Montana and Canada. There was some breeze, making it feel like a fall day. Tomorrow the high is supposed to be in the 60s. This morning I worked in back yard, removing weeds, creeping charlie, artemisia, unwanted asters & phlox. Found several pokeweeds and a small maple tree that needed to be removed from bed with lilac bushes. In afternoon to Wickiup: dug 6-7 hills of fingerling potatoes (which are not producing comparable to last year's bumper crop) and 1 hill of Yukon Gold. Harvested 30-35 cukes: the plants are dying but amazing how much production they still have, particularly for those plants growing onto the trellis. Harvested a big watermelon, but when I got it home, I discovered it was rotten inside. Fortunately I was cutting it up on the porch because its innards spilled out and created a foul-smelling mess. The small dark green melon that I brought home was okay. As for the 4 cantaloupes, I eventually threw three away: they didn't smell right when I cut them open.

**7 September.** Began the day with a short trip to Wickiup; harvested green beans, a few tomatoes, 3 watermelon, 3 cantaloups, 6-7 cukes (which are almost done for the year), 4 zucchini, some peppers (which are still blooming), and 2 radishes for MVM. Then to Coe for a few minutes, where I feel like I've made a mental breakthrough. For several years I've resisted doing much to attack the remaining wild areas in the east end beds ("G" and "H"). But a couple of days ago I began digging out the crown vetch, gooseneck, and horsetail in the "G" bed—and that small skirmish seems to have become a turning point. I have acquired a clearer vision of what the "G" bed peninsula should look like—perhaps with a Japanese maple in the center. And because I can envision that small tree as a focal point, it helps to conceive what else needs to be done. I also, finally, feel committed to cleaning up the south berm. The red twig dogwood have become too large, and I miss the row of persicaria that did so well there last year. It's time for the Queen Anne's lace, horsetail, gooseneck, asters, goldenrod to be removed and replaced with more disciplined plants in a space that is cleaner, neater, more orderly.

**22 September.** First journal entry in two weeks. I've been gone a lot: one weekend (involving September 9) to Mineral Point where MVM and I celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and today we are heading back to Spring Green for two more plays: *The Maids* [Genet's play proved a disappointment in many different ways] and *Midsummer Night's Dream* [marvelous interpretation, great fun). The last few days have been hot and sultry: temp into low 90s.

Fortunately we have had some breeze and a couple of small showers a week ago. At Coe, I moved the portable greenhouse away from the shed and filled it with stuff from the shed. Then I trimmed the apple tree, removing two large limbs, so Wayne would have clearance for building the greenhouse. He was hoping to have the foundation poured today, but when I left Coe this morning nothing had been done. I did some spot watering for potted plants, dahlias, and herbs, but most of the flower beds are on their own. This last week I have done a lot of clearing out of of gooseneck, grass, Queen Anne's lace, and goldenrod in "H" around the standard tree with needles (a tree that I have never identified). Next spring that area will look dramatically different. [One prediction that has proven to be true; unfortunately the south berm in the "G" bed has not yet been cleaned up, but I intend to get the project started this fall.]

*The ambition to make a garden that will seem to us and to others a perfect Eden also reinforces the illusion that nature's role is simply to provide the materials that the designer of the garden then artfully manipulates, orders, and forms. In fact, the nature that we encounter in making a garden reveals itself not simply as material but . . . as dynamic process, a whole force field of continual transformations wheeling between order and entropy, between generative life, expansion, and growth, and erosion, death, and decay. The art of the garden ought not to conceal from us the truth that our own lives participate in these processes; rather, the garden that gives expressive form to the mysteries of time, change, and morality may itself effect a potent transformation, reconciling us to nature, offering us again the possibility of loving surrender and an assent to what is beyond our understanding. ~Catherine Howett, "Gardens Are Good Places for Dying"*