

## Summer Garden Kalendar 2019

This Garden Kalendar is a chronological sequence of edited excerpts from garden journal entries I composed in July-September 2018. About 20% of those daily observations, typically hand-written late at night, have found their way into this blog posting. In selecting entries, I have included a few remarks on my flower garden at home and my landscaping projects and small vegetable/herb garden at Buffalo United Methodist, but most of the garden commentaries are in response to my work with the Alumni House Garden at Coe and my quarter-acre vegetable garden located on a small farm not far from the Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center. I have tried to keep the revising and editing of the journal passages to a minimum; however, my initial entries are often rather lax, and I often feel compelled to make these posted entries more focused and succinct. Occasionally I have inserted comments in brackets, observations based on later events and discoveries after the initial journal entry was written. The italicized quotations sprinkled through the Summer Kalendar are from Helen Perényi's *Green Thoughts: A Writer in the Garden* (Vintage Books, 1981), a collection of essays that provided me many hours of pleasurable reading throughout the year. Because of the excessive length of this Summer Kalendar, the complete text is posted as a pdf document. ~Bob

- *The Impressionists saw nature as color swimming in light, but in most of the world's great gardens color has counted for very little. Masses of brilliant shrubs and flowers are a modern idea and not necessarily a good one. Subtract the color from a garden and it can prove to be an ill-planned scramble. ~ Helen Perényi*

**2 July, 2018 (Monday).** Gardening all day; afternoon temp in the low 80s; humid but a decent breeze; I could keep working without too many breaks. Began the morning at 7 a.m. by spreading wood chips in the back yard. Drove to Ever-Green and got a load of shredded miscanthus for Wickiup, and then back to Coe for a meeting with Lisa S. to discuss a website project. In the garden, I weeded the "C" and "D" gravel walkways and killed a regiment of Japanese beetles. This year they are congregating on the flowering crab trees, which they have not bothered in previous summers. One explanation is that by the first week of July the last two years the trees have been defoliated by the scab. But this year the trees, having lost relatively few leaves, have become the beetles' preferred hangout. Many are up quite high, too far for me to reach. But the good news is that so far they have been ignoring the basil and meadow sweet, two favorites in previous years. I've also noticed how frequently we have had large families of beetles clumped together on rose buds, what a Comedy Central comedian might describe as a *clusterfuck*.

One other job that occupied my morning was trying to determine which daylilies are blooming. I'm having trouble convincing the map Kendra and I created last year to match with the reality. I took two dozen photos of the daylilies in the "C" and "L" beds, hoping those images would help me match photos with our map. But something is screwed up. For example, there are daylilies in "L" that look identical to the Frans Hals blooms in "C"—but there are not supposed to be any F.H.'s in "L". Not sure what happened. [A year later, I'm still trying to identify the names of several varieties in these two beds in front of the patio.]

In the afternoon to Wickiup. Did some weeding of the raspberries and two raised beds. Tried to open up breathing space for two rows of carrots [this effort was a total failure; most of

the carrots did not survive a hot/dry spell later in the month]. I spread mulch around watermelons in the SW keyhole bed and #3 strawberry bed, plants which have lost a lot of foliage due to deer grazing. Interesting to note the deer have only been eating the newest strawberry plants and have not touched the oldest bed. I finished the trip by harvesting a nice mess of Contender green beans, cukes (3 varieties, all producing well), zucchini (also 3 varieties). We had beans and fried zucchini for supper, with cukes and onions in a vinegar/sugar mix. After supper I worked in garden studio [a secluded office in our back yard at home] on web site photo slide show (May 19 photos) and composed first draft of today's Monday Morning Garden Report (MMGR)—which I hope to have finished and posted by Wednesday.

**3 July.** While driving out to Wickiup this afternoon, the clutch on the Chevy S-10 pickup failed again—third time in the past six weeks. I did manage to reach the Wickiup garden and could shift when the pickup was not moving. Driving back to C.R., I managed most of the trip in third gear. Since tomorrow is the 4<sup>th</sup>, not sure when I can get Clint to work on the clutch. Very frustrating.

Before Wickiup, I went to Home Depot, intending to buy more Millennium allium, but they were gone. I did end up buying almost \$200 worth of plants for the church landscape, Coe garden, vegetable garden, and home. Everything was significantly reduced in price, including 8 pots of coneflowers, 8 pots of lily turf (for Coe), Heavy Metal switch grass and two Mungo pines for home, 10 pots of Penn Sedge for the church, and two grape and three blackberry bushes for Wickiup.

This morning I finally planted several dozen flowers I had started in the greenhouse but never transplanted. I created one planter with small marigolds and calendulas and another pot with cape daisies [the latter proved a complete failure]. Planted two salvias in front of the new barrel pot in the “G” bed and another pot with a group of B\_\_\_\_\_ plants (can't recall name, but I know it begins with B). [They were *Browallia speciosa* and produced beautiful bluish/purple five-petal blooms, resembling over-sized forget-me-nots; continued blooming into October.]

**4 July.** My new Red Pig tools arrived yesterday: two trowels and a hand hoe. They are tough looking tools, should last forever. I plan to use one of the trowels for digging up dandelions. In the Coe garden this morning I did a little more planting. In the “G” bed planted two celosia, started from seeds in March, that have spent far too many weeks stuck in a corner of the greenhouse. They are about 2' tall, stalks straight up, not many leaves, golden seed heads. They won't last long but at least they are planted. [One did die shortly after transplanting, but the other took on a new life and produced multiple new seed heads still on display in October.] Also planted several Black Knight scabiosa in the barrel in the “G” bed that for the last two years had a vigorous crop of *Verbena bonariensis*. The latter did self-seed again, but all the

volunteers appeared around the barrel and not in the barrel. I also planted scabiosa in the raised “J” bed, close to where I planted the Black Knights last year.

After an afternoon doing research on the internet and revising (and finally posting) this week’s MMGR, I drove out to Wickiup (driving the CRV). It was about 6:30 when I arrived, large cloud bank to the NW. My plan was to plant the Niagara and Catawba grape vines and the three blackberry bushes in the SW corner of the garden—which means a lot of heavy weeding, including the removal of the wire fencing I had installed to protect the blackberries I planted last year. It was a slow, hot, difficult job—interrupted twice by small rain showers that made everything wet and mucky. Humidity shot up, and I was drenched in sweat—but I kept going til about 8:15. Didn’t get everything cleared, but we’re closer. One nasty problem: the weed control fabric I laid out two years ago is rotting—which meant that when I pulled up grass and weeds, I was also pulling up chunks of fabric I don’t want in the compost pile. A real mess.

- *No matter how skillfully carried out, I abhor the introduction of electricity into a garden. Lighted pools, false dawns among the shrubs are to me both ugly and vulgar. . . . A garden at night should be itself—a place at rest, a haven for creatures, and for me too when I want to lie in the hammock in the dark. ~ Helen Perényi*

**10 July.** No change in weather—hot and humid, though maybe a few degrees cooler than yesterday. This morning at Coe, ran the soaker hose for four hours in the “K” bed. Once the hose was functioning, focused on killing some Japanese beetles—though numbers continue to be down from last year. Did find a bunch on the mallow in the herb garden. Only other dense colony was a group on a wild primrose in the “H” bed and the shiny beetles that prefer the swamp milkweed. The rest of the morning was focused on cleaning up the front of the “G” bed—which meant digging up horsetail. When I dumped my first load of weeds and horsetail in the #1 compost bin, I discovered there was a raccoon in the live trap next to the bin. And then I discovered a second coon in the second trap. Since I didn’t have my pickup back from Clint, I sent an email to Chad, asking if one of his ground crew would take the two coons away, far away. Chad quickly responded, indicating he was on vacation, but he would convey my message to his deputy. In the meantime I received a call from Clint, indicating the S-10 clutch was now fixed. I immediately left Coe so I could get the pickup and drive out to Wickiup, assuming someone would take care of the coons while I was gone [which, indeed, is what happened].

On the drive to Wickiup, I was very self-conscious about using the clutch, fearful it might fail me again, but everything worked fine. At Wickiup I spent most of my time cleaning weeds from three raised beds, and in the process discovered that my effort to protect the beets by surrounding them with onions had not worked. I had read that voles stayed away from onions, and I had hopes the onions might help protect the beets—but such was not the case. I pulled up

several beets that had been partially eaten, I assume by voles, mice, or rats. A bit disheartening. On the bright side, picked my first sungold tomatoes. Had them for supper and they were delicious.

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*Perényi leaves no doubt about her dislike for Victorian carpet-bedding and labor-intensive gardens dependent on annuals: "A garden of store-bought annuals is as temporary as a plastic pool."*

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**15 July (Sunday).** Friday night we had a good rain, over an inch at Wickiup and 1.4" at home and Coe. Most welcome. I had spent a lot of time watering the Coe garden on Friday and would have had to keep watering different beds on a daily basis if it had not rained.

Most of my work yesterday was at Wickiup. Because of rain and wind, several tomato cages had blown over—top heavy with foliage and fruit. Spent an hour driving in steel stakes to keep cages erect. After weeding, I used the last minutes of daylight for harvesting green beans (good crop) and items for this morning's Buffalo congregation: onions, one kohlrabi, cukes, zucchini, potatoes (Yukon Gold), one eggplant, and several bags of basil. A. took the kohlrabi, telling me she liked them raw. I told her about serving kohlrabi several years ago to Joe, a friend from Texas, who said the last time he had eaten kohlrabi was when he was a German POW in WWII.

This evening I worked at Coe for about three hours, until after sunset. Harvested a large crop of Japanese beetles, mostly on the roses. None tonight on the basil, and they have not yet found the hibiscus. As for "real" gardening, my major focus was on providing areas of clean, weed-free terrain around the base of the pergola's wisteria and clematis. Once an area is cleared, my plan is to cover the soil with a weed control fabric, followed by a thick layer of rocks, surrounded by the tan pavers. But first, the cleaning up. [This job was eventually finished, one year later.]

**18 July.** Beautiful day, low 80s, ok humidity. In morning at Coe. Began to lay down the weed control fabric to cover the four lawn sections. This will kill the grass, but I'm hoping it will also kill most of the unwanted weeds, particularly the dandelions, crabgrass, and nut sedge. I covered about 1/3 of the NW quad section. Still undecided what to use for holding fabric down. For this first section, I'll use boards from my garage. The trick will be making it look at least minimally civilized. After laying out the fabric, I finished the morning by pulling weeds in the "D" bed and cutting back several Stellas there are finished blooming (e.g., two big clumps in the "L" bed).

After lunch, I drove to Menard's and bought \$300 worth of garden supplies and plants, over half of the plants for the Coe garden. I purchased three 300' rolls of weed control fabric to lay over the lawn sections and 300' of polyester rope to provide plant supports/constraints around raspberries and currants recently planted at Wickiup. Also bought two large, discount-price wisteria, the same cultivar as the ones I purchased two years ago, and two bags of rocks for

covering the area around the wisteria. Also bought a pair of garden shears for trimming plants and a bag of fertilizer—plus an iced tea because I was getting very thirsty.

After the 4:00 church meeting and supper, I drove to Wickiup and planted a new white currant to go with the three purchased previously at Home Depot. They're all still alive but no signs of new growth. Most of my time focused on weeding and cleaning up the oldest row of tomatoes. Intended to give them a fresh shot of fertilizer—which didn't get done—but I did remove most of the low-hanging dead foliage and cut off unwanted limbs. For the moment the tomatoes look much cleaner and neater. While harvesting the fresh vegetables is important, I often find myself more committed to the aesthetics of the vegetable garden, more concerned with appearance than production. Perhaps this is evidence of how the Coe garden is affecting my priorities? Of course, the Coe garden is intended for public viewing while my vegetable garden is for my own pleasure. But the appearance is clearly important.

One task this evening was thinning the two rows of okra, my first extended experience with this vegetable. The plants look good and healthy—so far no sign of insect damage. Just before driving out to Wickiup, I consulted a garden book, which recommended 10-12" between plants. Parenthetical note: While writing this journal entry in the upstairs sun room, with the deck door open, I just heard the wind chimes for the first time this evening, indicating the wind has picked up and perhaps shifted, evidence of a front moving through. End of parenthetical note. I removed a third of the okra plants so they are now 5-8" apart—instead of the recommended 10-12".

While at Wickiup I enjoyed a stunningly beautiful sunset. Lovely mix of peach, lavender, and blues, the sunshine reflecting off the cumulus clouds in the west and north. What an incredibly beautiful world we live in—and how lucky I am to have evenings like tonight, to be graced with such beauty.

**19 July.** When I woke up this morning, it was raining—a soft, gentle drizzle followed later by a serious outburst. At the greenhouse, I discovered several leaks in the roof. Will need to apply more sealant and see if we can gain more control of the situation. In the afternoon I focused on killing grass. Started laying out the weed control fabric and unloaded a yard of mulch to cover the fabric. [Note: my Chevy S-10 pickup can handle one yard of mulch or wood chips, which I obtain from Ever-Green nursery.] I quickly discovered it's going to require more mulch than I had estimated. One yard covered about 1/3 of a lawn section—which means I will need 12-15 yards of mulch or wood chips for this project. And I'm not sure this experiment is going to work. This may be a lot of work for an undertaking that will prove a bust. The key issue now is to get the four lawn sections covered as quickly as possible, something that should have been done two weeks ago, but then the clutch on the pickup was not working. I did finish covering half of the NW section. Will get another load of mulch in the morning and aim for two loads on Saturday. Perhaps can have the two western lawn sections covered by Monday.

One other big job was planting the two new wisteria. I tried to take some time with this project. I dug the holes deep and wide, and in the base I put fresh compost. In turning over the compost in bin #3, I came across several areas with minimal decomposition, but the bottom layers were almost perfect. I dug the holes deep and wide, mixed in the compost with the existing soil, loosened the root balls of each plant, and covered each area with a soil/compost mix, weed fabric, and river rocks. So far, so good.

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*Nature's favorite color is a washed-out magenta, the original shade (and the one their hybrids will revert to if they go to seed) of petunias, garden phlox, sweet peas, nicotiana, foxgloves and so many others that Thalassa Cruso says it is known in her family as Garden-of-Eden, on the premise that all flowers must have started out that color. Some gardeners like Garden-of-Eden too, but the preferred color of the unsophisticated is firehouse red, the winner among tulips, zinnias, dahlias, salvia, impatiens, begonias, etc., by a wide margin. Orange and yellow come next, then pink, with blue and white, both comparatively rare in nature, last on the list—a spectrum that runs from hot to cold. It follows that blue and white are the choices of the discriminating, and your real garden snob will go as far as to cast whole gardens in one or the other. ~ Helen Perényi*

**20 July.** Beautiful day for working outside. I was at Wickiup from 8:30 til 1:30 and only had to stop once for a drink of water. Temp in low 70s, slight breeze, cloud cover. Only drawback is the ground was muddy (1.3" recorded in the rain gauge), and I spent most of the morning on my hands and knees—so my jeans, shirt, and shoes were covered in mud. But I got a lot done. Cleaned up around the pole beans, weeded the potatoes and asparagus; cleaned up strawberry bed #2; pulled up old pea plants in the row west of the raised beds. While pulling weeds in the potatoes, came across two small potato beetle larvae, first I've seen in weeks; they must have just hatched. [As it turned out I periodically discovered more larvae well into the fall, much later than I had ever seen them before.]

Another job this morning was putting rope supports around the long row of raspberries and currants I planted a couple weeks ago. Drove in twelve 5' tall metal stakes and wound three strands of rope around each row. I hope the rope will not only restrain the shrubs but also provide a significant challenge for any deer contemplating a leap over the garden's 5' fence. This morning I did discover two places where the "gate fence" is torn, leading me to think a deer had pushed its way underneath the gate—and in the process tearing up part of the gate. It's time to build a permanent garden gate.

I also discovered a large number of baby squash bugs on the zucchini leaves—and ten or so batches of eggs on the leaves. With the squash bugs, I cut off the leaves, placed them in a plastic bucket, and poured vinegar into the bucket—which appeared to "squash" the squash infestation. When I go back to the garden tomorrow, I'm planning to cover the zucchini "trunks" with paper or aluminum to try and protect the plants. The Asti zucchini are all gone, but the Golden

Globe are still producing. The Lebanese white zucchini, planted just a few weeks ago, are just beginning to bloom.

**23 July.** Spent four hours this morning at Buffalo, focused focused on cleaning up the herb garden. Removed a lot of crabgrass (many quite large) and planted two lavender, two parsley, and three dwarf raspberries [which did not survive the winter.] I added some mulch to the herb beds and moved the third compost bin so it is no longer next to the shed. This bin had some high-quality compost, most of which was used when I planted the lavender and raspberries. I harvested a nice batch of purple velour bush beans that I gave to Marlene [a long-time member of the church], one of five women who were pulling weeds around the church building. Also talked with a neighbor who was worried about volunteer trees (walnut and tree of heaven) growing on the edge of the church property. They do need to be thwarted, a job I'll tackle later this week.

In the afternoon to Coe. Unloaded mulch and spread over weed control fabric in the SW lawn section. One more load and half of the lawn quad will be covered with fabric and mulch. Then the waiting game begins. By middle September should know what does—and does not—get killed. I sure hope this strategy works.

After supper to Wickiup, where I planted five plants received in the mail from Stark Brothers Nursery: one red gooseberry (planted next to the four white currants), two Kowa blackberries (next to the gooseberry), and two honeyberries (two varieties to increase likelihood of fruit forming via cross-fertilization). One of the honeyberries was not in good shape: one branch was broken and the bush only had a few limp leaves, but the roots looked healthy and perhaps it will do okay [both survived the winter and are doing well in their second year.] After some weed pulling (cleaning up the row of potatoes that I'm now digging up—the Kennebecs), I turned over two hills of potatoes (total of 20 potatoes—a good harvest) and about 25 sungold tomatoes. Still waiting for the first full-sized tomatoes.

**28 July.** Beautiful day, high in upper 70s, evening temp in 50s. This was the first night when I was really aware of the locust chorus, signaling the summer is on the move and we'll soon start getting hints of fall. I just read that Britain is suffering from a month-long heat wave and drought—English gardens are turning a crisp, burnt brown. A reminder we all live on the edge, dependent on heat/moisture patterns that can quickly undergo dramatic shifts.

This morning I picked up a load of mulch at Ever-Green and then went to Wickiup, where I worked til 11:30. Found many potato beetle larvae—and one adult beetle. On some potatoes there are no leaves left to eat—though a few potatoes are generating a few new leaves. I discovered an animal had been digging into the potato hills and gnawing underground potatoes. Maybe a coon? I dug one hill of red potatoes, which produced 15 good-sized potatoes. Also dug two hills of Yukon Gold; one hill was very productive.

I finished my morning visit by completing the garlic harvest, providing a large bed for a fall planting—assuming I do get my act together [I didn't]. I also trimmed dead leaves off several tomato plants, including a couple of Early Girls loaded with green tomatoes. But so far few green tomatoes have demonstrated a desire to turn red.

**2 August.** I was in Chicago the last four days, helping care for T [4-month old grandson] while MVM and K were attending the international Alexander Technique conference. Got back last night just about 11 p.m. Lightning in the north as I was driving on I-380, but no significant rain either at Wickiup or Coe. Things are starting to get seriously dry. Worked at Coe this morning, mostly cleaning up area behind NW bench and the NE corner of the “L” bed. Removed a dozen baby rose bushes that had sprung up from those old, resilient, deeply buried rose roots. Also removed a bigger, well-established bush—plus a lot of weeds and grass in that corner. Trying to provide some breathing room for the hollyhocks. I also did some hoeing and raking of gravel walkway in that corner. And, of course, gathered a couple hundred J. Beetles. It's been six weeks and they keep coming—though none found today on any basil. Today their favorite place to hang out were the large red blooms on the two Hibiscus.

After lunch, drove to Wickiup. It was a lovely day, temp in low 80s, low humidity. Had no trouble working through afternoon til 7:00. Killed a couple dozen potato beetle larvae—but did not see an adult. Disheartening to deal with this second larva cycle; on the other hand, virtually no J. Beetles—and two years ago they were a major problem for the pole beans. Even better news: today, finally, harvested some real, full-size tomatoes. The largest was a red brandywine that was just beginning to split. Had to cut away a couple of chunks, but there was still a lot of tomato, enough so I only ate half for supper.

Some cucumber vines look bad, but they are still producing: harvested six nice cukes this evening. While walking around the Loyola campus in Chicago, I saw a wonderful design for growing cukes vertically. They had rows of 8' poles, two feet apart, with plastic netting stretched between each set of poles and the cukes climbing vertically. The curved metal arch I have used the last 2 years does not work—not sufficient verticality.

Tonight saw evidence that a varmint (coon?) had gnawed on two of Sarah's Choice cantaloupe. Tomorrow I'm setting out two live traps with fresh apple bait. We'll see if we can catch anything worth catching. I need to fix the end of one trap with a new wire mesh.

I was pleasantly shocked to discover that one of the honeyberry plants from Stark's not only survived but is producing new leaves. Last Saturday I thought for sure it was a lost cause. The Seychelles pole beans and red noodle pole beans have been very productive. Some of the red noodles were over-ripe so after I got home I cut open the pods and saved the bean seeds. I fixed the Seychelles for supper: they were delicious—simply cooked in boiling water for 8 minutes, drained, and seasoned with salt, pepper, and olive oil. They were great with the freshly harvested brandywine tomato.



**26 August.** I recently read that I have been waiting too late to harvest the orange cap Turkish eggplants because the mature fruit becomes seedy and bitter tasting. So today I picked several fruit that were green and prepared them in a corn meal and batter mix fried in oil. They were quite bitter, so I poured maple syrup on them, and they were still bitter. This will be the end of my effort to prepare these guys. We've got plenty of eggplants without them.

- *Wild flowers are never vulgar. One and all they have an elegance and restraint to their design that ought to give the hybridists pause as they go about their work.~ Helen Perényi*

**27 August.** A busy day. At Coe this morning. We're leaving tomorrow for a six-day trip to Spring Green to see eight APT plays so I was trying to get some areas cleaned up. Most of my focus was on the "D" bed and the gravel walkway in that area. Also I tried to de-clutter the area around the garden hose, though I left a volunteer marigold and a small *Asclepias tuberosa* that recently appeared. Then I concentrated on the "C" bed—cutting back most of the daylilies. The ones I pruned a couple weeks ago have new growth and look rather attractive. Also a few new blooms. In the process pulled up several unwanted New England asters. The bed now looks much better.

Meanwhile in the greenhouse, I have been running the fan for the last three days, trying to dry out the wall and floor under the work bench. I moved the box with the 1,000 peat pots back under the bench, but set it on metal braces so there is some potential air flow in case the area gets wet again. Another task was cleaning up a bunch of seed starter trays and rearranging a few plants still in the greenhouse: basil, chives, a petunia, and five Christmas cactus started in the spring. I'll replant most of these folks when I return from Wisconsin.

About 3:00 I drove to Wickiup. Harvested a bunch of Jenny cantaloupes (the vines are dying) and two Skin of the Toad melons (the vines are dying). When I cut open the Skin of the Toad, I discovered they had not fully ripened so that planting was a bust. But I did harvest three nice Sarah's Choice cantaloup (two of them just beginning to split) and two watermelon. I didn't think the melons were quite ripe, but since we'll be gone for six days, I thought I'd take a chance. Also harvested two eggplant, four cukes (those vines will soon be done for the year), and about 10 tomatoes. The aubergine plants were covered with potato beetles, a third wave of the pest this summer. I killed a dozen or so. Quite disheartening to see so many so late in the year.

**4 September.** Yesterday afternoon we returned from the Spring Green trip. We did manage to see eight APT plays: *As You Like It* (by far the least effective production, a flat and uninspired interpretation with an unconvincing Rosalind), *Born Yesterday* (Garson Kanin play, relevant to contemporary politics, David Daniel playing a Trump-like businessman), *Our Country's Good* (in the Touchstone theater; superb production portraying a group of Australian prisoners

preparing to perform *The Recruiting Officer*; great movement by the actors, like watching a modern, choreographed dance), *Measure for Measure* (young Hispanic immigrant to be executed for impregnating fiancé; Shakespeare play transformed into a commentary on current immigration policies), Ionesco's *Exit the King* (outstanding interpretation; very funny and absorbing), *The Recruiting Officer* (good, solid production; unfortunately our performance was interrupted by a passing thunderstorm), Shaw's *Heartbreak Hotel* (not one of Shaw's best plays but marvelous performance by Jonathan Smoots), and Fugard's *Blood Knot* (indoor, two-person play, with Jim DeVita). Overall, a wonderful week of theater.

But today it was back to the gardens. Discovered that while we were gone, we had 5" of rain as recorded in rain gauges at home, at Coe, and at Wickiup. At Coe, a lot of wood chips had washed onto the gravel walks, and it was evident the rain garden had been flooded. But all things considered, the garden looked good. In afternoon to Wickiup. As always after a week being gone, the initial impression is a garden over run by weeds. I spent most of my time weeding the Kennebec potatoes and along the berry bed. All the yellow and green zucchini are now dead, so I pulled up all those desiccated plants. Did some harvesting. Dug one hill of Kennebecs and got eight large potatoes. Tonight for supper we cut one in half and microwaved it—and it was still too big for MVM and me to eat it all. Also harvested a few onions, one watermelon, two Sarah's Choice cantaloupes, about 25 tomatoes (most were Amish Paste and El Dorado), four eggplants (still finding Colorado potato beetles on the leaves), a nice bag of green Seychelles pole beans, and two cukes (the Jade cucumber plants look awful but they are still producing).

**6 September.** A cool day (high of about 70), dry, perfect for gardening, but I was in Iowa City most of the day hanging out with my buddy Theo. For two hours while he was napping I focused on fall bulb order. I'm planning to use two catalogs, supposedly selling at wholesale prices. Many of their items require minimum of 100 bulbs, which fits with my needs. One catalog is *Colorblends*, an outfit I had never heard of until their catalog appeared in my mail. A little research revealed they have good reviews on Dave's website, and their prices are quite appealing. I also like their catalog information and photos, though the catalogue has no index, making it difficult to find anything quickly. They sell a lot of tulip blends, but all my orders will be single cultivar blocks. I would have sent the order tonight, but our internet is down.

I did go to Coe this afternoon about 3:30 and tried to install the new wind chimes in the "G" bed. I got the anchor screw into the apple tree limb, but the chimes are too heavy for me to lift while getting them hooked properly. I sent an email to Gabe [my student assistant], asking if he could help me in the next couple of days. These chimes were expensive, over \$500, so I hope they are not stolen—but there are several items in the garden that I reckon are susceptible to theft.

**10 September.** Beautiful working conditions: temp in the 70s, low humidity, wonderful not to be fighting the high humidity. This morning's four hours were at the Coe garden. After mixing up some chopped veggies for the red wigglers, most of my morning was focused on the "I" bed. I trimmed several large apple limbs hanging over the NE bench. Always hard for me to judge how far to go with the cuts. I still need to cut away the remainder of the two lowest limbs, perhaps improving air flow and reducing scab problems. For whatever reason, the flowering crab trees look the best they've looked in years: full foliage, minimal leaf loss.

Next job was cleaning out volunteer trees behind the yews and pruning the tops of the "I" bed yews so they have clean, neat tops, a job that should have been done much earlier this summer. I then started cleaning up the "I" bed itself, which was looking very messy, a brass band of flowers randomly thrown together, without design or order. No major improvement made this morning, but at least it's a neater-looking mess. Dug out and removed several volunteer trees. Cut back four daylilies, leaving alone two daylilies that have decided to re-bloom—a Stella and a Purple Stella. Pulled up grass and in the middle of the bed trimmed back the Baptisia, which had become rather floppy. Ironically, problems with the appearance were caused by the vigorous growth of an aromatic aster and a Russian sage: both are toward the front of the bed and too large for their assigned places. I'm curious why the large perennial sunflowers at the east end of the bed are still blooming—much later than in previous years. And this year, I have not seen the red aphids on the sunflower, which have been prominent visitors in previous years. [That dramatically changed in 2019 when this patch of sunflower was hosted thousands of red aphids.]

In the afternoon out to Wickiup. A deer had been in the garden but mostly eating the native amaranth and Peruvian daisies. I saw no evidence of munching on the strawberries, usually the deer's first choice. The Lebanese zucchini are now dying; the zucchini I picked tonight might be the last of the year. These Lebanese were planted too close together, I never thinned them, and I made no attempt to protect them from the squash bugs. I did pick about 20 tomatoes, some nice Lemon Boys and Amish Paste. I intended to clean up a raised bed and prepare it for lettuce and radishes, but I got a call from MVM about supper, and I volunteered to stop at the Mediterranean restaurant and pick up some items for supper—which meant leaving the garden much earlier than I expected. Before I left I could hear the locust strumming in the cottonwoods and black walnuts along the creek. This lovely summer orchestra bringing back nostalgic summer memories.

**11 September.** Today at Coe began peeling back the weed fabric and mulch covering the NW corner of the lawn, the first area to be covered. It certainly appears that all the grass was killed. The only exceptions were a few "shrubs" with deep roots still struggling to break through the cover. One unexpected development was how the lifting of the cover revealed hundreds of white grubs—which can be quickly exterminated. The ground was quite wet and soft. I need to

get the rest of the section uncovered and ready for sowing. But I still must purchase the grass seed mix, and I need to do more research on how to prepare the soil before throwing around the seed.

**14 September.** Both morning and afternoon at Coe (same as yesterday), spreading mulch removed from the NW lawn area, nearly all of it going onto the “C” bed. I dug up the stepping stones, cleared the path, dumped several buckets of mulch on the area, and replaced the colored stones. Cleared out weeds behind the hostas and covered that area with mulch. A big chunk of the afternoon involved two trips to Pace Supply in Fairfax to buy their “sunshine” grass seed mix and seed matting for spreading over the seeds (to encourage germination, stabilize moisture level, reduce erosion, and protect seeds from birds and squirrels). Initially I drove the CRV, only to discover the seed matting cylinders are too long for the Honda. So I drove back home, drove the Chevy S-10 to Fairfax, and then loaded the nine rolls. Took more time than I had expected, but it all worked out okay.

**16 September.** Another day at Coe. In the last six days, I’ve only been to Wickiup once –and that only for an hour. If we are going to harvest any more beans, I must get there tomorrow. As for Coe, the challenge continues to be preparing the NW lawn area for seeding. I spent most of the afternoon weeding in the “H” bed so there was somewhere to put the mulch that has been covering the lawn area. I finally did get all the NW section uncovered.

This afternoon noticed that most of the lupine in the raised “J” bed had died. The likely cause is the hot, dry weather. On the plus side, the columbine has a few newbies and the snow-in-summer looks good. I did cut back the Little Bluestem at the back of the raised “J” bed. That grass should be moved, and I need to introduce a different backdrop for those two raised “J” beds. The use of the native grass is a failed experiment. [One year later, the bluestem is still there, and I still have not settled on a solution for the back of these raised beds.]

- *On the English herbaceous border (what Americans call the perennial bed): With its infinite variety of flowers planted in great billows of color, those at the back rising to six-foot-spire, those in front lapping like wavelets at the shore. ~ Helen Perényi*

**17 September.** An unusual bump in my schedule: today I met with 13 students in an FYS class to talk about the garden. I suppose it went okay, though I feel like an alien talking about this kind of gardening to a group of first-year college students. It’s impossible for me to imagine that the dynamics of such a garden would have much appeal. I talked for 15 minutes about my gardening background and the evolution of English garden design—and how Coe’s garden fits into that evolution. Also mentioned some of the challenges in maintaining an English garden in Iowa’s climate. I gave the students 15 minutes to walk around the garden, write down a few

observations/ questions, but we didn't have time to talk about their comments.

After lunch, I got a haircut at Carol's, ran a few errands (picked up a prescription for MVM, deposited checks in bank, got a new battery installed in MVM's wristwatch), and then drove out to Wickiup. It was hot, very humid, no breeze—plus a lot of gnats and mosquitoes. Not pleasant conditions, but I did manage to fill a plastic bag with beans. Also harvested six eggplants, three small cukes, three watermelon, four acorn squash, and a hill of sweet potatoes which produced several nice tubers—and no evidence of vole damage. A deer had been in the garden—eaten a lot of sweet potato leaves and a few pole bean and strawberry leaves—but no major damage.

**18 September.** It rained hard several times today, probably close to 2" here at home and at Coe. I spent most of the day on the computer in the garden shed. This morning I wrote an MMGR using the observations and questions posed by the FYS students who visited the garden yesterday. Followed a tactic I often used when responding to questions in my own classes: just copy the question and dash off a quick response. It was fun writing in that vein, far more enjoyable creating that kind of dialogue than when I'm struggling to organize my observations into a coherent form.

I did a little trimming of the elderberry at the SW gate, but it was so wet from the rain that I didn't try to do anything major. As for sowing the grass seed, I've now decided not to do any tilling, an activity that might simply be re-sowing weed seeds already in the soil. Perhaps it's best to let the grass seed deal with the soil as is—plus that approach should save me a lot of time and labor.

**19 September.** Another day with thunderstorms. Too wet to plant grass seed, so at 8:00 am when I arrived at Coe I chose to focus on cleaning up several flower beds. Worked a long time on the "A1" bed south of the patio. Cut back all the goldenrod, which was flowering but had flopped over. The bed looked a mess. I removed a full kangaroo bag of foliage, stems, etc. I also dug up the gooseberry in A2 and dumped it in the yardy. Not worth salvaging. I decided to redo the wild strawberry bed—since they aren't producing any strawberries—though I may let them continue as a groundcover around the crocosima and hostas. The strawberries really got burned up by this summer's hot weather, and the only plants that look healthy are the ones in the shade of taller plants.

My next focus was on the "L" bed. I took out the last remaining rose bush in the bed—with the exception of a couple at the north edge of the bed under the flowering crab. [While I managed to remove all those rose bushes above ground, the bed still has dozens of underground chunks of rose bush roots that through the spring and summer of 2019 continued to send up new bushes eager to replace their predecessors.] I also dug up several volunteer rosebuds, including a large one in the "C" bed.

**20 September.** Only worked at Coe for 90 minutes before driving down to Iowa City to take care of T. for the afternoon. I started attacking the gooseneck, horsetail, daylilies, goldenrod, snakeroot, spiderwort, Queen Anne's lace, foxtail, swamp milkweed, and other weeds growing on the berm in the "G" bed. The roots of the gooseneck were particularly thick. It's going to be a slow, laborious exercise cleaning up that bed. I did try to save two daylilies and a purple coneflower, and there's some penstemon worth saving. While working in that area, it was wonderful to hear the cool, resonant hum of the wind chimes, exactly the sound I was hoping for.

**23 September (Sunday).** Another beautiful day, but til 1:00 I was inside, either at Buffalo or in the kitchen, assembling a big pot of veggie soup with Italian sausage. Except for the carrots (which this year have been a total failure), all the vegetables are from the garden: head of red cabbage, Chinese pencil pole beans, onions, peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, garlic, okra. This is the first time I've ever cooked with okra. When I tasted the soup, I thought it came out pretty good. I've got plenty more ingredients so I may do this all over again.

Finally got to Wickiup about 4:00. Spent first two hours weeding. I hate to see portions of the garden over run with weeds and grass. Very depressing. Even though it's late in the year, I'm determined to get the place looking neater. After weeding the paths, I need to get newspapers down and then cover with the straw. That tactic really does defeat the weeds, and I like using the paper mulch better than the weed control fabric which is not biodegradable.

**25 September.** Got back to the Coe garden about 3:00 and focused on drafting this week's MMGR. Since the FYS class I met with yesterday is studying travel around the world, I thought it might be interesting to create a list of the garden's flowers/grasses/ shrubs sorted by geographical area of origin. The garden is a kind of library with a collection of texts that come from all over the world: an international, multi-cultural fair, with representatives from the equator to the arctic, western and eastern hemispheres, a remarkable collaborative effort. Unfortunately, this approach requires me to do some research, more than I expected, but my goal is a simple list with quite brief annotations for 50-60 plants in the garden.

**27 September.** It took me six hours to sow grass seed on 1/3 of NW lawn section—a long, slow project. During those six hours I did some minor tilling (to eliminate large clods of dirt) and cut a small trench around the area, separating soil from bricks. I then raked the area and spread Milorganite fertilizer and grass seed. Used two cardboard boxes to level out area and ensure seeds have good contact with soil. Watered the area, covered it with the erosion control material, and then watered again. I need to find a more efficient system.

At 3:15 I left Coe, drove to Marion, and picked up the "scaredeer" that Cara designed for the Wickiup garden. The head is made of an old gas can, the body a live animal trap full of steel

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wires. It is rather silly looking, but it should inspire a smile or two. I need to write a note to Marty [owner of the farm where the vegetable garden is located] so she's not totally surprised by this addition to the neighborhood. As a bonus, Cara gave me a steel sculpture that looks like a series of large, unfolding silver leaves. I installed it behind the rhubarb, a great addition to the garden.

*Whatever you do, insects of some sort are going to visit you sooner or later.*

*Deciding what constitutes an infestation is then the beginning of wisdom. ~ Helen Perényi*