

## Garden Kalendar: Summer 2021

This Garden Kalendar is composed of edited excerpts from my daily, hand-written garden journal for July-September 2020--accompanied by occasional commentaries on those passages. This Kalendar reproduces about 1/3 of my journal entries in that three-month period, a journal which records work in four gardens: the Alumni House Garden at Coe, a 1/4 acre vegetable garden on a small farm adjacent to the Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center near Toddville (a garden identified as the Wickiup garden), the gardens and landscape at Buffalo United Methodist Church, and the gardens at my home on Elmhurst Drive in Cedar Rapids. While most Kalendar postings in the past have concentrated on journal entries dealing with the Coe and Wickiup gardens, the August 10<sup>th</sup> derecho upset my gardening priorities. Fortunately, the wind storm caused relatively minor long-term damage to the Alumni House Garden, but there was extensive damage to the trees and landscape at our home. In the weeks following the windstorm, I left the Coe garden to take care of itself and my gardening life shifted to the cleaning up and redesigning of our landscape and gardens on Elmhurst Drive. My August 2020 website blog post was an essay (based on journal entries) dealing with the immediate aftermath of the storm and no journal passages from those two weeks are contained in this Kalendar.. The italicized quotations inserted between some journal entries are copied from *Cultivating Delight: A Natural History of My Garden* by Diane Ackerman. Ackerman has long been one of my favorite nonfiction authors, and I had for several years been looking forward to reading her book on her gardening experiences. I was not disappointed.

*“ . . . summer days unfold like Charles Ives symphonies, full of the sprightly cacophony we cherish, the musical noise that reassures us nature is going on her inevitable green way and all's right with the world.” ~Diane Ackerman*

**1 July 2020.** World and national news.

- Pandemic rages on: 50,000 new COVID-19 cases in one day in the U.S. Huge spikes in southern states, from North Carolina through Florida and Texas and on to California.
- Black Lives Matter: turmoil over social justice for all.
- Economic catastrophe: millions of people (probably over 40 million) out of work in the U.S.
- Trump Administration: an appeal to the Supreme Court to end Obamacare and terminate provisions requiring insurance coverage for pre-existing conditions.
- Crackdown in Hong Kong: suspension of civil liberties; hundreds arrested.
- Efforts to remove monuments in honor of Confederate generals, symbols of the Lost Cause.

The list could go on and on: Middle East, Burma, Central America, Venezuela, Ethiopia, wild fires. And in the midst of all this turmoil, conflict, pain, etc., I quietly continue gardening. Given the few days or months or years left in my life, shouldn't I be contributing my energy to some larger cause? Is it okay to spend my days sowing seeds and weeding, harvesting a few peas and beans, tending to a few flowers in a perennial flower garden?

This morning at the Coe garden I began by cleaning up the area around the shrub rose in the “H” bed, digging up horsetail and ox-eye daisies. Killed dozens of Japanese beetles in my

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container of soapy water. They had done serious damage to the rose bush leaves, so I cut back the shrub, eliminating most of the skeletonized leaves. I also pulled up a lot of bindweed and cut out most of the clematis winding its way through the rose bush. That was an experiment that failed: the clematis swamped the rose, overwhelmed it. I also cleaned up the front of the border, cutting back the Husker Red penstemon, the top-heavy seed heads flopping over their neighbors.

Next was the area around the “G” bed’s rose bush, which was almost impossible to reach because of all the asters and fleabane and Queen Anne’s lace. Most of those recent arrivals I pulled up, but I left several Joy Pye weed, thinking I might transplant them to the garden at Buffalo. They are great plants, just too big for the space. But I don’t want to dig them up until I know precisely where they would be planted. As for the rose bush, it was in terrible shape, the leaves decimated by the beetles. Since I was wearing gloves when pruning the rose bush, I just started killing the beetles by hand. They showed no worries about my presence.

After lunch, I drove to Wickiup. After a small rain shower that kept me in the pickup for 15 minutes, I worked on the south end of the garden, trying to clean up the oval raised bed between the grapes and the rhubarb. Task was complicated by my decision to save three volunteer tomato plants that appeared near the trellis (an old livestock panel). I gave the plants the full treatment: weeding, fertilizing, surrounding each plant with compost, covering the compost/soil with newspapers and mulch. I also trimmed each plant so there would be no leaves in contact with the soil. Since I don’t know what kind of tomatoes these are, I don’t know what to expect.

As for the rest of the bed, the ground worked nicely. I got it smoothed out and sowed a dozen Lebanese white zucchini, a variety that has been consistently productive the last two years. As I was finishing the sowing about 5:30 p.m., it began to rain hard. The sky, a uniform gray, looked like it would continue raining so I left the garden. Since I was soaked from sweat when I got home, I enjoyed a refreshing shower before fixing supper.

*“I don’t mind Japanese beetles having sex on the roses.  
I just wish they wouldn’t eat at the same time.”*

**2 July.** In yesterday’s *Sunday Gazette* I read a piece by Veronica Larson Fowler, “Keep Watch for Invasive Plants.” She lists plants she was attracted to as a beginning gardener short of funds, plants that were cheap and spread quickly: yellow and gooseneck loosestrife, ox-eye daisies, morning glory, pampas grass, “ditch” daylilies, blackberry lilies, columbine, Missouri primrose, honeysuckle, trumpet vine, larkspur, silver artemisia, mint, purple coneflower, creeping jenny, abba rose, Zebrina hollyhock mallow, ostrich ferns, creeping periwinkle. She has since spent innumerable hours attempting to get rid of these plants and adopting more civilized varieties—such as replacing the ox-eyes with the Snow Lady hybrid and the ditch lilies with Autumn Red *Hemerocallis*.

Her commentary led me to reflect on the role of many flowers in the Coe garden. Some plants on her list we do not have (pampas grass, alba rose). Some are present but I don't see as a problem and I really like (blackberry lilies, columbine, purple coneflowers, creeping jenny, Zebrina mallow). Some do create occasional problems, but it's been possible to limit their spread through the garden (gooseneck, ox-eye daisies). And there are a few I'm periodically trying to eliminate from the garden (bindweed, perennial artemisia). I'm still of a mixed mind with regard to the Hall's honeysuckle: although it sends out innumerable runners, I've kept it close to the fence and it has produced marvelous bouquets of fragrant blooms the last two years. The situation is complicated by other plants in the Coe garden that are invasive and difficult to deal with: horsetail, Queen Anne's lace, swamp milkweed, New England asters, Canada goldenrod, crown vetch, purslane, and other weeds in the gravel walkways and lawn (such as the brown nut sedge). Gardening in the Alumni House Garden is a constant challenge, seeking adjustments in the balance of these various plants, all of which are aggressive expansionists eager to spread their progeny across the landscape.

*"It's time for daylilies, and the yard suddenly has height and architecture as the brilliant flowers wave in the breeze like regatta flags. The daylily hedgerow at the brink of the woods is blooming with dozens of shapes, smells, and colors. I planted Franz Hals daylilies today, each one a tall duet of yellow and ochre. The six petals alternate: yellow, orange with a thin yellow stripe down the middle, then yellow again. Many of the lilies are startling because of their contrasts: brilliant scarlet with golden throats, yellow petals branded with a garnet six-pointed star. Pandora's Box, one of my favorites, is a small cream-petaled lily with a magenta Rorschach in its throat."*

**6 July.** Another day when I drove out to Wickiup soon after breakfast, hoping to beat the heat. While it was cooler at 7:45 a.m. than 3:45 p.m., it was still hot and humid, a cloudless day and zero breeze—occasionally interrupted by a whiff of air movement. Overall, tough working conditions for an old man, though I did take a break every 20-30 minutes. Today's jobs included:

- Worked on the southern grape bed. After weeding and removing many suckers, I tightened the ropes supporting the vines, while realizing I need to replace these sagging ropes with steel wires. I did fertilize the grapes, but I have not yet covered the soil with fresh compost, newspapers, and mulch.
- Planted in the W2 bed two parallel 10' roses of Vermont Cranberry dry bush beans. Supposedly they take 85 days to reach maturity—which would be about October 1. Let's hope we don't have a freeze in September. [*This sowing turned out to be a failure. After rabbits got through a hole in the fence and ate off many of the plants, the derecho covered the remaining beans in debris from the nearby cottonwood trees. Total harvest was perhaps a pint of beans.*]

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- Harvested peas, green bush beans, and three zucchini, each of the zucchini a different variety. The Carouby peas from Seeds from Italy (a mail order firm located in Lawrence, Kansas) have been very impressive: high germination rate, some plants now over 7' tall and still producing. I was picking them at the snow pea stage, but now I'm letting them mature to snap peas. Despite the unfriendly weather, no evidence they are feeling the stress. The Mexicana zucchini are also new for me and so far have done very well. On the zucchini leaves I found five sets of squash bug eggs and six adult squash bugs hiding under low-lying leaves. The bugs are now dead, their eggs crushed beyond recognition. Overall, the plants look good: erect, dark green leaves, thick stalks, no sign of wilting. . . so far. [*For whatever reason, I had a very low germination rate from the Carouby peas I sowed in the spring of 2021 and a negligible harvest, a notable contrast with the great production in 2020. As for the Mexicana zucchini, they have been the stars of the garden in 2021, producing a marvelous crop of thin-skinned fruit with virtually no seeds when picked young.*]

In the evening after supper I worked at the Coe garden for a couple hours. Watered plants and walked around the garden taking notes for the Monday Morning Garden Report (MMGR). Daylilies are now the #1 show, 13 different varieties in bloom, accompanied by multiple groups of purple coneflowers in several beds and the banks of perennial sunflowers with the burgundy leaves in the "F" and "I" beds. Overall, another exciting stage in the garden's annual bloom cycle. After my walk, I focused on cleaning out the "C" and "L" beds. I cut back the goatsbeard and meadowsweet so the stepping stones footpath in the "C" bed was navigable. Pulled up grass in the yarrow, trimmed several cranesbill, and cut back spiderwort, nepeta, and Husker Red penstemon. In the "L" bed I pulled up many ox-eye daisies, leaving one patch for next spring's garden.

*"Gardens offer opportunities for diversion or display.  
How large a plot of earth would one need to fulfill such yearnings?  
Would a square foot be enough?"*

**8 July.** Woke up at 6:00 and was hoping to be at Wickiup by 7:00, but I didn't leave home until after 7:30. Not sure why it took so long for me to become fully functional. I planned to sow Swiss chard, but I first visited the West Field and ended up doing some weeding and looking for cucumber and squash bugs. I weeded almost all of row #1 and found relatively few bugs, so I quickly surveyed the other rows looking for egg cases. Just as I was about finished, I found a summer squash plant with at least 15 leaves that had squash bug eggs, and several leaves with multiple egg groups. I cut off these leaves (or portions of leaves) and stuffed them into a plastic bag. Several leaves had recently hatched nymphs, and I managed to stuff most of them into the bag—with one notable exception. The little buggers were scattered on the ground, and I was busy squishing them while they were scurrying around, trying to evade my fingers. I also killed four adults hiding under the squash leaves. The Magda zucchini plant now looks rather

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naked with the loss of so many leaves, but overall the plant's in good shape and producing healthy-looking leaves. There's no question the squash bugs are more attracted to the summer squash than to the winter squash.

Back in the main garden, I dug up three varieties of carrots, all from the same raised bed: St. Valery, Amarillo, and Shin Kurod. All three rows have produced good-looking, full-sized carrots, consistently straight and nicely shaped. This evening MVM did a taste test. She said all were "sweet" and tasted good. The Amarillo was, in her opinion, a bit "stringy." She had a slight preference for the old heirloom St. Valery, which immediately conveyed a sweet flavor. I'll ask K to conduct a similar taste test. [*She did. She liked all three but voted for the Amarillo as her favorite.*]

**9 July.** It's 4:35 pm, sitting in the Sun Room. It's raining hard at the moment. We had a few sprinkles earlier in the afternoon, and then it really let loose about 45 minutes ago—while I was in Hy-Vee on our bi-weekly grocery trip. Fortunately it was a light drizzle when I drove into our driveway, allowing me to transport the groceries into the house before the heavens let loose again. Just received a call from MVM that she's pulled off the Interstate in North Liberty, waiting for the rain to abate. Fortunately, there is not much wind, no lightning, no hail, just a driving rain, what my folks would have called a "toad strangler." When I was a kid, folks would say it was raining "cats and dogs" or "pitch forks and nigger babies." I don't recall how old I was when I first heard the racism in that little phrase. I felt a similar shock when I realized that for all those years we had been saying "Eeny, meeny, miny, mo; Catch a nigger by the toe; If he hollers let him go; Eeny, meeny, miny, mo." It's disheartening to discover the racism so deeply embedded in my Kansas heritage.

**11 July.** I didn't finish lunch until 2:00 p.m., and I should have stayed home, working in the garden studio on one of several unfinished writing projects. But a thunderstorm was forecast for later in the afternoon. Though not as dramatic as the thunderheads rising over the Flint Hills, heading toward our farm in southern Kansas, I still enjoy being at Wickiup and watching the approach of a rain storm. So I drove out to Wickiup and spent two hours working in the hot sun. Fortunately the humidity was not ghastly and on occasion a hint of a breeze. I took it easy, with periodic breaks. I focused on weeding, beginning with the garlic bed (dominated by Peruvian daisies) and two raised strawberry beds (an eclectic mixture of grass and weed invaders, mostly notably several large purslane). By the time I finished the weeding projects, the clouds had begun to move in, lowering the temperature a few degrees. Since it was evident that rain was on the way, I finished my visit by harvesting Provider and Mascotte green beans and the summer's first crop of Seychelles pole beans, which are a week or more ahead of the other pole bean varieties. I also harvested several zucchini. Shortly after I arrived at home, we were hit with a serious storm, with 70 mph winds, the storm bringing down a large branch

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from the maple tree next to the patio. By some miracle the branch fell at the perfect location, missing our deck, the screened-in porch, and MVM's studio.

**12 July.** Arrived at the Coe garden about 2 pm. Stuff there is wildly overgrown and out of control, evidence that for the last few weeks, I've been absorbed with the vegetable garden. The lawn grass looked green and healthy, particularly the two eastern quad sections, but the grass was much too tall. So my first task was bringing out the mower. For this round of mowing I would need the grass catcher, which really slowed down the process. And given the heat and humidity, I needed to take several breaks, so it took almost three hours to mow the four lawn sections, a task I usually do in less than an hour. I then ran the line trimmer around the Ringo and Sisyphus metal sculptures and pulled weeds and grass out of the mulch under Sisyphus. I did, however, leave several volunteer Joe Pye weeds inside Sisyphus. One other last-minute task was killing a family of Japanese beetles on the rose bushes. They were the only beetles I could find: none on the M1 roses or the basil in the herb garden. They love the hibiscus blooms, but those have not yet opened. *[For whatever reason, there has been a notable decline in the numbers of the Japanese beetles the last two years. Several years ago, I would find them all over the garden, and would average several hours a week in July killing these beetles, usually by dropping them into a container with soapy water. This year, moderate numbers appeared early in July, but their damage was minor.]*

**14 July.** In the morning MVM drove out to the Wickiup garden and helped me put a short fence around the four varieties of beans planted in the B1 raised bed. The beans were badly beaten down by the wind and heavy rain a few days ago, but they have bounced back fairly well; nonetheless, several were beginning to sprawl and I decided the best solution was to install a "private" fence around the plants. With this support the plants remain erect and the beans will remain cleaner and easier to harvest. We then walked over to the West Field and hunted for squash bug eggs. Found a few, plus several instances where the nymphs were hanging on the underside of a leaf. In one case the light green critters were very tiny, having just hatched.

After MVM left, I pulled weeds and grass from the watermelon patch in the West Field. Did not come across any squash bugs or eggs, just a couple of cucumber bugs. Several areas overgrown with weeds, so the weeding was rather slow. At 11:00, I returned to the East Garden and checked on cucumbers. Under several wilted leaves were cucumber bugs or squash bug nymphs but never came upon an adult squash bug. With the cucumber plants, I removed any wilted leaf or vine. I'm hoping that removing these diseased segments will prolong their survival rate. We'll see. I finished my trip to Wickiup by cleaning up the walkways east of the long asparagus bed.

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*"In mid-summer the garden is like a resort town that relies on its annual visitors for color and intrigue. Dahlias and zinnias, sunflowers, marigolds, and petunias, geraniums and gladioli will fill in the empty spaces through fall. When they finish, it will be winter, a season with its own stark beauty, when the garden reveals its bones, until spring when the garden's native residents return once more."*

**15 July.** It felt like it could rain, both morning and afternoon, but just a few minor sprinkles. This morning at Coe the light was perfect for photos, so I shot 50+ photos, mostly of flowers, mostly of gayfeathers and daylilies, which are at their peak bloom period. The "C" and "L" perennial beds are both exploding with blooms. [*These photos later provided most of the images for the 2021 Alumni House Garden calendar.*] After pretending to be a photographer, I turned my attention to various issues with the "M" beds. I began by trimming the espalier apple. The east-side arm was leaning forward, so I brought some wire from the garden shed, drove a staple into the fence, and tied the arm via the wire to the staple. With the arm straightened out and the fresh haircut, the red-leaf flowering crab looks pretty good.

Next challenge was the crevice garden. Several of the hen and chicks do not look good, many with areas of dead foliage. In contrast, the cleomes are thriving and just coming into bloom. After weeding the crevice garden and removing the dried-up sedum, I turned to the bed that runs parallel with the patio. I cut off peony seed heads, trimmed back many of the New England asters (and was surprised to discover one had started blooming), and pulled up several wild milkweeds. I also cut back false indigo and purple coneflowers hanging over the gravel walkway. I need to remove those taller plants from the front of the border, but that's a job for another day.

While hoeing a gravel walkway, an old teaching partner came by for a chat. He has decided to take a leave from teaching this fall, reducing any potential contact with possible COVID-19 virus carriers. He was planning to teach in the Alum House, and he might end up with an office in one of the bedrooms. He commented that he had periodically been checking out the garden this summer and said it had never looked better. I would agree that at the moment, the garden looks pretty good. It's certainly full of diverse vegetation and color.

In the afternoon I drove to Wickiup. After clearing the path between the onions/garlic bed and the long row of asparagus, I began weeding both beds. I spent a long time working on the J bed that has the sweet peppers and eggplants. After a thorough weeding and fertilizing, I covered the soil with sheets of paper and a layer of miscanthus mulch, followed by some fresh creek water. I failed to harvest any peas (which need to be picked), but I did bring home four sunpeach tomatoes and a nice collection of fingerling and butterball potatoes. I also harvested four onions and all the German hardneck garlic, several quite large. My final task was putting a fence around the R1 raised bed, where I had planted Swiss chard and scallop sunburst summer squash. Some animals had dug up several of the squash seedlings. I also discovered a half-

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dozen Vermont cranberry bean plants in the W2 bed that had been pulled up. I suspect a coon paid the garden a visit during the night.

*“A garden is an organism that roams and grows. Like someone you know well, a garden changes over time, changes while remaining the same. Tint the idea of a garden with metaphor and all sorts of innuendos appear. Example: The garden of one’s regard. In that metaphor the garden is a pleasure that occupies a special locale in one’s life, as does the regard. The garden of a classroom, where young minds are nurtured. A garden of misremembered days, as in ‘her childhood seemed far away and blurred, a garden of misremembered days.’”*

**16 July.** Spent a couple of hours this afternoon at Wickiup weeding the West field and looking for squash and cucumber bugs. I only found and killed one adult squash bug but found many eggs on leaves, and in several instances freshly hatched nymphs. Came across two limp vines and cut them off since the mother plants looked okay. In previous years I have usually left the squash, cucumber, and melon plants to fare for themselves. I would kill the bugs whenever our paths crossed, but I was not an avid bug hunter, assuming the bugs and their diseases would prevail in the end. I trusted a few plants would manage to survive long enough to be productive. This year I’ve been more proactive. While I won’t find all the bugs and their eggs, I’m hoping to make a dent in their numbers, improving the odds that a higher percentage of vines can survive. So far, the more aggressive strategy seems to be working—but a long way to go before that first freeze in the fall.

I finished the Wickiup trip by picking Carouby peas. These vines have been incredibly productive. After supper I shelled the peas and froze them in two bags. The peas were over-ripe, but they will be fine in a soup or shepherd’s pie. Hard to believe it’s almost time to start the fall garden, planting peas, lettuce, kale, beets, radishes, spinach, kohlrabi. . . .

**17 July.** This morning I was at the Coe garden for three hours. I initially concentrated on cleaning up the gravel walkways along the “D” bed, but it was soon quite hot, and I had to take it easy. I discovered several patches of crabgrass in the two south lawn sections. Since my student assistant was also working in the garden, I introduced her to this innocent-looking enemy, and we spent 45 minutes crawling over the SW lawn section, pulling up crabgrass. Perhaps tomorrow we can attack several large clumps in the SE section. I want them in the compost before they produce any seed. So far the crabgrass is much less widely spread than it was last summer. And there is very little brown nut sedge, an encouraging contrast with last summer. The clover has expanded and will need be restrained, but for a variety of reasons I’m less concerned about the clover. In our farmyard, I hated the clover. Mom liked to see the white blooms in our small lawn, and she insisted that I mow around the clover, a command I grudgingly followed.



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I finished my morning garden chores by cleaning up the area in and around the gazebo's sundial. While pulling up grass, sedge, and bindweed from the sundial's flower bed, I discovered a half dozen 4 o'clock plants, the result of unexpected self-seeding. Although they were not growing where I would have preferred, they were a welcome surprise, mixed in with the taller and more widespread *Verbena bonariensis*. The flowerbed is still rather random and undisciplined, but it looks much better than when I arrived at the garden this morning.

**19 July.** Attended worship service at Buffalo this morning, first time since March. It was good to see old friends, even behind masks, but it was hard for me to concentrate. I felt restless, not used to sitting in a pew for an hour. When we got home, I spent the rest of the morning fixing lunch: meatloaf, roasted potatoes and onions (with rosemary), fresh peas, and carrots with olive oil. The peas were picked over a week ago, and I was surprised at how well they cooked and tasted: just dropped them in boiling water for six minutes, drained, and buttered. I also did cukes in a vinegar/sugar mix with onions. Pretty good meal.

*"[Flowers] are megaphones of scent, broadcasting their whereabouts in molecular slogans. We color them with our memories. They stain us with their charm. We gather them like bons mots on a sleepy morning, and arrange them face-to-face in vases, as they could speak among themselves. A guest in the summer house of the soul is a flower. Gardeners love to page through catalogs in which flowers pose nakedly in darkness and light. They serve the viewer's eye but elude the touch, which is sometimes the way with beautiful things. But the silky pages of a catalog may be stroked like petals. Floral shapes, glimpsed in half-light, can illuminate paths through a garden of memories. And when we applies the ear trumpet of imagination, flowers can be heard whispering some of life's oldest secrets."*

**20 July.** After lunch, I went to Lowe's and made several garden purchases: 10 steel posts, 2 alliums, and 3 black-eyed Susans for home or Buffalo. Then to Wickiup. As usual, mostly weeding. Cleaned up the south side "J" beds—one with a total of 4 beet plants, all that have survived from the first two plantings. The black-seeded Simpson and romaine lettuce have done much better, but in the lettuce bed I discovered a cozy rabbit nest, confirmation on why the beets have not survived. Two of the beds are now ready for fresh compost in preparation for sowing the fall garden. In the long bed on the south side of the garden, between the daylilies and the bed with the cube of butter squash, I found a volunteer tomato plant of decent size. I weeded that area around the tomato plant, removed nearby volunteers, sprinkled some organic fertilizer around its base, added an inch deep layer of fresh compost, gave it two gallons of fresh creek water, and surrounded it with a full-sized metal support. I now have four of these volunteers—but no idea what kind of tomatoes they may produce. I noticed today that while dumping weeds on one of the compost piles, there is a large volunteer tomato growing

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along side the pile, another plant that might also deserve a support. *[As it turned out, none of the volunteers produced many harvestable tomatoes. Several of the volunteers produced small yellow pear tomatoes, but has been true in the past, they often crack as they approach maturity. For thirty years I took care of a garden located near Franklin Middle School, and it had a cherry tomato that was a prolific self-seeder, always providing me with productive plants. So far that has not been my experience with the self-seeding varieties at Wickiup.]*

**21 July.** One fun moment at the Coe garden this morning. A faculty member, wife, and two small children were walking around in the garden. As they were leaving, I asked if they had seen the garden's hippo. When they said they had not, I took them into the southeast corner, near the wind chimes, where the hippo resides, partially hidden under a forsythia bush. The older child, a girl perhaps two years old, walked over and touched the hippo. She then asked her dad to touch it—which he did. In that small trip I realized it had been 2-3 weeks since I last worked in that part of the "G" bed. It needs some serious attention. It was a challenge to reach the hippo because the purple leaf loosestrife was leaning over the walkway, which could use some serious weeding. I have avoided working in that area because I did not want to disturb the wrens nesting in the nearby wisteria. I think their nesting cycle is over, and I should make this wild area a bit less wild.

**24 July.** After supper I filled up the Chevy S-10 with gas and drove to Wickup for a couple of hours, mostly harvesting cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, bush and pole beans, peppers, a head of lettuce, and broccoli. A few comments on cucumber and beans:

Cukes. Four cucumber varieties, all looking good: General Lee, Sweet Burpless, Diva, and National Pickling. Diva and General Lee have been more susceptible to wilt but they have also been more productive and I've only had to pull two plants. National Pickling has the largest and healthiest looking vines, but so far relatively few fruit. *[As it turned out, the healthy appearance of the National Pickling cucumbers was misleading. By the end of July, they were seriously distressed by the wilt. They produced a good number of fruit, but they jumped from immature to over mature very quickly.]*

Bush & Pole Beans. This evening I harvested beans from the following six varieties:

- Provider Bush: Seeds sown on 26 April; despite early sowing, high germination rate and an early producer; plants had no problem handling cool temps in May and has been a steady producer of good-sized, tender beans.
- Mascotte Bush: Seeds sown first week in May; so far not as productive as Provider, but it is covered with blossoms, most above the leaf canopy; nice beans but smaller than Provider.
- Golden Wax Bush: Big plants with big leaves; good germination rate and good production of nice-sized beans.

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- Velour Bush: Tonight was the first time I've harvested any of these purple beans; their germination rate was not great (perhaps 50%), and these plants have been a favorite with the rabbits that have managed to get through the fence.
- Seychelles Pole: Good germination; plants look good but production has been smaller than last two years. [*These remain my favorite pole bean: steady supply of long, delicious, tender green beans until the first freeze.*]
- Cherokee Trail of Tears Pole: first year for planting these beans; good germination rate, good-looking plants but so far relatively few beans. [*These eventually became the most productive beans in the garden, in part because they were relatively undamaged by the derecho; one other advantage is that they can be picked when young and tender or harvested at the end of the years as a dry bean.*]
- Kentucky Blue Pole: Big, robust plants with a lot of flowers; good production but most of the beans not yet fully developed. [*By the end of the year these vines had produced a lot of beans, relatively untouched by the derecho; their drawback is that the beans move from maturity to over-mature rather quickly—in contrast to the Seychelles beans that have a much longer period when they are just right for picking.*]

**5 August.** Beautiful day if you like sunny sky with floating cumulus clouds and temp in the upper 70s. But, alas, no rain. Spent the morning at Coe trimming branches from five flowering crab trees. I had to use the ladder for most of the pruning so it was a slow process—and after the pruning, I had to carry the branches out the east gate and create a pile for the landscape crew to take away. Ended up with two big piles. As for the trees, they look much better. I had hoped to do some serious cleanup in the “G” and “H” perennial flower beds, but I ran out of time. Both beds also need serious watering. Yesterday I used the drip hose and laid it throughout the daylilies in the “C” bed. Today I used it with the “L” bed. The grass could really use some rain, but I know it will spring back quickly once we have a decent shower.

In the afternoon to Wickiup garden. Spent first two hours working in the pumpkin corner in the West Field. Killed half a dozen adult squash bugs and found a leaf covered with recently hatched nymphs. Also found two plants that were dead: a vine borer worm was in one vine; the other vine had been dead for a long time and no sign of life inside the stem. After the pumpkins I walked through the watermelon rows. The vines all look healthy, and I only saw a couple of cucumber bugs and no squash bugs. The cucumber and squash bugs are primarily attracted to the sweet melons and summer squash. While I do find an occasional squash bug on the pumpkin vines, the established plants appear to have substantial resistance, in contrast to the cantaloupes and sweet melons.

**6 August.** My day started with a required test at Coe to determine if I have COVID-19. I assume the results will be negative. My temperature was okay (97 something), and I feel fine—though I did take two generic pseudoefed this morning because I woke up with congestion and phlegm. The nose swab (both nostrils) is not painful but uncomfortable, and I did feel like I

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was going to start crying, even though the swab was in each nostril for only a couple of seconds. The whole process took about twenty minutes. The woman who assembled my materials for the test said she appreciated the strawberries I gave her in April. She might be the women's basketball coach.

At the Coe garden, I focused on the "G" bed. Cleaned up the berm, which is very dry, the soil quite hard and compacted. The ferns have dried up and the two Jacob's ladder plants have completely disappeared. A Brunnera in the corner is still alive, as is a nice black-eyed Susan now in full bloom. In addition to cleaning up the berm, I worked on the drainage channel and the peninsula, removing asters, Queen Anne's lace, goosenecks, horsetail, swamp milkweed, other weeds. Cut back the balloon flowers and removed peony seed heads. I then turned on the sprinkler and watered the entire bed for about 7 hours.

While cleaning up the berm, I came across a lot of dried seed heads full of small brown seed disks from the species tulips planted in the bed. Originally from mountainous desert areas in the Middle East, they should love this hot, dry summer--no danger of rotting from excessive moisture. The contradictory pressures of gardening: the dry summer kills a Jacob's ladder but enables a Turkish tulip to sleep in peace.

In the afternoon to the Wickiup garden. Spent almost two hours in the West Field, pulling weeds and killing squash bugs. I discovered that the lone Kuri squash plant with the wilted leaves is almost the victim of a squash borer. I found a large hole in the stem, stuck my knife into the hole, and moved the blade around, hoping I might be lucky and kill the invader. A long thin needle would have worked better. But even though the innards of the squash vine are dying, the plant is still struggling to produce viable seeds. The plant has one lovely red Kuri squash, and it's large enough to suggest it might reach maturity.

Here are a few things I've learned about squash bugs in the last two months:

- Initially I saw mostly adults, and they were often copulating.
- The last 2-3 weeks, I rarely see any adults, and in this time period I don't think I've seen any copulating.
- The nymphs go through several size/color schemes/shapes on their path to adulthood.
- These bugs spend most of their time hiding, usually under low-lying leaves (preference for ones that are rotting) or under the vine's fruit.
- When young the nymphs tend to stay together as a little colony.
- When the squash bugs are squished, they exude a green inner goo that has an unpleasant smell, quite strong and distinctive; fortunately, the aroma dissipates quickly.
- When their residence is disturbed, the older nymphs and adults quickly search for a new hiding place while I'm trying to squish as many as I can find.

*"In ancient times in desert worlds, a garden was a favorite spot for romance because few things were more soul-drenching than the idea of an oasis. A hidden garden in the aridity of life soon became a metaphor for love.*

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*In the Bible's torrid Song of Solomon, King Solomon sings to his intended that her virginity is like a luscious garden he will soon enter. Then he mentions one by one all the fruits he will pick, all the scents he will inhale."*

**8 August.** Nice morning. It got hot and humid but I was at Wickiup from 8 until noon, and most of the time there was a good breeze from the south so I could keep working, though drenched in sweat. I intended to do some planting and watering, but neither occurred as I became absorbed in other tasks. I began by cleaning up the raised bed with the petaluma pole beans that were spreading out all over the bed. I stretched white plastic webbing on the four cedar poles at each corner of the bed and wound the longer vines into the netting. I left undisturbed several vines intimately embracing a 6' Hopi Red Amaranth.

The next job was weeding the R1 bed planted with Swiss chard and a summer squash. The bed is now protected by a 2' tall wire fence I installed after rabbits (I assume) ate the first chard planting. I removed three squash plants so the bed was less crowded. I then harvested all the garlic from the S3 raised bed. A few were Leningrad garlic; not sure of the majority, 25-30 hardnecks, but they were all decent sized, though not as large as the Majestic. All the garlic looked good, though they should have been harvested a few weeks earlier.

After the garlic harvest I spent a few minutes examining the 7 desert zucchini in the M1bed, looking for bugs. Much to my surprise, found very few: only one squash bug and a dozen eggs on one leaf. I removed dead or dying foliage so the plants look more appealing—though I suspect what they would really like is some rain.

My next assignment was harvesting a few potatoes in the West Field. Dug up four hills. The two hills of the Moulin Rouge was a bust, producing just a few small, reddish fingerling style potatoes. Fortunately the two hills of red Pontiac was more productive, each hill producing 8-10 good-sized taters. While in the West Field I noticed that some animal (perhaps deer or coons) had been nibbling on several Thelma Sanders winter squashes. I grabbed a roll of plastic netting and laid it over some of the vines and their fruit. I didn't nail the netting down tightly, but I'm hoping the animals won't want to deal with the hassle of reaching the fruit through the netting. As I was putting on the webbing I did kill one adult squash bug and destroyed a few eggs but I did not find any nymphs or colonies of freshly hatched bugs.

*[The garden journal entries for the next two weeks deal with the impact of the August 10 derecho. Those texts became the basis for a Garden Shed essay posted in October 2020. This Kalendar posting will take up where that essay left off at the end of August.]*

**28 August.** I arrived at Wickiup at 8:00 a.m. and worked there for about four hours. It was hot, but there was some cloud cover and a decent NW wind so it was not unbearable. While I was weeding my small blueberry bed a fellow stopped by the garden and asked if is firm could occasionally take a sample of my vegetables to test in the lab for possible radioactive

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contaminants from the nearby Duane Arnold nuclear reactor. It has now been permanently closed—a closure hastened by derecho damage—but nuclear fuel waste will be stored there, and they need to keep testing into the unforeseeable future. They would take about one lb of veggies, focusing primarily on leafy vegetables such as kale and rhubarb. For each sample, I would be paid \$25. It sounded like a good deal so I gave him permission, inviting him to take as many samples they needed. Later I realized I should have asked if they would share any of their findings with me, but I assume if the samples indicated a serious problem, I would be notified. [*In December I received a check for \$125, my payment for five samples they obtained after that conversation in August.*]

**1 September.** Spent the morning and afternoon at the Coe garden, nearly all my time in the NE corner. In the east end of the “I” bed I removed dozens of hyssops. I love the plants, they are super tough, nice fragrance, a favorite of the solitary bees. But they get big and they crowd out their neighbors and they produce a lot of progeny. In the last two years they have taken over this area immediately north of the park bench and the plexiglass panel with the Bacon quote had completely disappeared. Bacon’s reminder that God was the first gardener is now visible again. I also removed the hyssop that had over-run several daylilies, which this year produced relatively few blooms. I was pleasantly surprised to discover the echinops planted in May were still alive. I cut back most of the perennial sunflowers and the campion, which is an adept self-seeder, the parents surrounded by many recent offspring doing quite well. I cut back the Russian sage, which is covered with small light blue blooms but the stems were floppy and hanging out over the walkway. Tomorrow my plan is to bring in a load of mulch from the Chevy S-10 and start covering beds with compost, a sprinkling of organic fertilizer, and mulch.

Another area I worked on was the Siberian iris colony in the “H” bed. I cut all the iris back and pulled up a lot of bindweed, as well as some sorrel, asters, etc. Cutting back the iris revealed a daylily that had somehow managed to survive in this dense alien territory. The iris certainly would benefit from separation and restarting—a job for another day but not likely this year. I then began cleaning up the area behind the NE park bench. The large bleeding heart has completely dried up, but I feel confident it will reappear in the spring. Some of the hostas are suffering from drought and too much sun (the corner’s flowering crab has lost almost all of its leaves to the fungal scab). The ginger that was attached to one of the hostas I planted several years ago is thriving and expanding. I did cut back a dozen or more flowering crab suckers—which all had healthy looking leaves, in contrast to their parent. I’m wondering if the lack of rain may have accelerated their foliage problems. The garden’s older crab trees were doing fine until early July.

I did send an email to Chad suggesting that Coe should create a stumpery on the south side of the Alumni House, in effect a memorial to the 2020 derecho. We’ve certainly got plenty of wood. I have decided I’m going to create a stumpery at home, a space comparable to a rock garden but with stumps and limbs rather than rocks. Should result in a space with unique dynamics.

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A couple days ago MVM gave some garden produce to our daughter, including a light green Ali Baba watermelon. When our grandson saw the watermelon, he said "A big pickle."

**2 September.** After working in the Wickiup garden for several hours, I finished up my visit by doing some harvesting. Filled my trug with tomatoes, perhaps ten different varieties, including: Berkeley Tie-dye (the garden's most prolific producer so far this year), Lemon Boy (as always, a steady, strong producer), red Brandywine (doing okay, but fruit smaller than in previous years), Galahad (perhaps the best new find for this year), Detroit Early #17 (a few mid-sized fruit, nothing special), a few small yellow pears (on a volunteer plan), and a few Gardener's Delight (another volunteer from last year's planting, producing large, red cherry-style tomatoes that ripen evenly and rarely crack).

**3 September.** The Sun Room facing our back yard will now live up to its name. All the limbs of the damaged maple true 15 feet west of the room were removed today. Only the trunk, 3 stories high, remains. A crew of four young men worked on the tree this morning. A hydraulic lift raised two of the crew who worked together trimming off limbs and dropping them to the ground, chunk by chunk. The crew was also able to remove the limb resting atop the garden studio and the neighbor's storage shed. Meanwhile I made my own progress: I dug out and moved to the east side of the back yard most of the rocks that had provided the borders for the astilbe, peony, and hosta beds. My plan is to widen several paths and beds—which will necessitate a lot of replanting. I ended up with a large pile of decorative rocks, including several from my folks' farm in Kansas.

**4 September.** While cleaning up limbs in the back yard this morning, I set aside a few candidates for our stumpery. We have discussed creating a stumpery where the silver maple had stood in the front yard, but I'm leaning toward a more private derecho memorial in the back yard, a companion to a new rock garden. As I ponder these various projects, I'm beginning to feel impatient. I would like to see the tree trunks and their big limbs removed so I can begin creating some new flower beds. Today I looked through a daylily catalog, imagining potential combinations. I'm also curious to see how the various ornamental grasses in the back yard manage to survive the wind and the drought and the heavy equipment running all over them. [*As it turned out, the ornamental grasses—about twenty clumps of miscanthus, switch grass, and feather reed grass--not only survived but had a great summer in 2021. Despite the various adversities, they were thrilled by the additional hours of daily sunlight and were far more robust than I would ever have imagined.*]

About 11:00 a.m. I went to Coe and watered the two raised herb beds. Sad to see the creeping thyme, which was beautiful and bountiful this spring, is almost all gone—probably a victim of the dry weather. In contrast the nearby oregano has never been more exuberant. Before coming home, I harvested a bag of parsley, more than sufficient for the tabouleh salad MVM was assembling. While she was proceeding through that recipe—which is time

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consuming to prepare—I fixed lunch: fried sliced onions, green peppers, garlic, okra, yellow zucchini chunks, and two eggs in olive oil, all topped off with shredded cheese and served with French bread. An enjoyable lunch. After a scoop of ice cream, I helped MVM finish assembling the Middle East salad.

*"I find it interesting that, according to many religions, life began and ends in a garden.  
Creating an earthly paradise connects the two and offers a timelessness  
drenched in sensual pleasure. Striving doesn't necessarily stop in a garden.  
Quite the opposite—gardeners compete with weather, soil, neighbors, bugs, rodents,  
and common sense. But a garden can offer a tunnel through time, a sanctuary  
in the old-fashioned sense of the word, a sacred place where one is safe from human laws.  
I'm thinking of the laws we impose on ourselves, as well as society's, the family's,  
and then that something dimly lit and harder to fathom: instincts ingrained so deeply  
they feel like absolutes. For me, all those laws stop at the garden gate,  
and I can spend a small eternity with a rose."*

**5 September.** This morning to Coe, where I began by sprucing up the area around the greenhouse and shed. I went through all the plants still in pots I had either started from seed or purchased from nurseries. Among the former, the Jacob's Ladder plants looked quite healthy and the Stoke's Asters were small but okay. I cleaned their pots and gave them some soil amendments. As for the nursery stock, I counted about 25 survivors, including a couple of grasses, a columbine, four tall stonecrop (they looked fine), and five daylilies (looked okay but their soil was stone dry). I gave everyone a good watering with a kelp fertilizer mixture. Need to get them transferred ASAP from this field hospital to a permanent home somewhere in the garden.

I then turned my attention to cleaning up the "A" beds. One task was cutting back, for the second time this summer, the lemon balm. Of all the plants in the garden, these dudes seem totally undisturbed by the derecho and drought. They all have rich green leaves on plants busting at the seams, determined to cover the bed from the back fence to the front of the border. They are overwhelming the anemones, most of which managed to hang on and the largest duo even have a few flower buds. I need to move the lemon balm to a new locations where they are not a threat to any other plants. One option would be around the urn at the east end of the "A2" bed, free to fill in an area surrounded by fence, yews, and the much taller perennial sunflowers. [Finally, a year later I dug up the lemon balm, divided them into six clumps and transferred them to the back of the "A2" bed, directly in front of the old apartment—an area that had previously been separated from the garden by a wooden fence, badly damaged by the wind storm, that was finally removed earlier this summer. In October I added several more anemones purchased from Sooner Plant Farm in Oklahoma.]

As for the "A1" bed, a lot of plants really hurt by the recent drought: the ginger, the foam flowers, the three gentians with the lovely blue flowers. The whole bed, stem to stern, is in bad



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shape. I did clean up the east end, removing a lot of dead foliage, old coneflower stems, unwelcome grasses. The area still looks rough but better than it did. I set up the soaker hose and let it run through the afternoon. Later this week I'll add fresh compost and mulch.

One other job was washing the Cuisinart food processor that helps chop up food for the red wiggler earthworms. It amazes me how much food those earthworms consume, but how slowly their excrement pile develops. I've been feeding those guys twice a week all summer, mostly chopped veggies from our kitchen, and it all disappears very quickly.

After lunch I went to Wickiup for five hours. The main task was cleaning up the raspberry bed on the west side. The new bushes transplanted there this spring are still alive but not yet much above-ground growth. Their bed had a lot of big, deep-rooted amaranth and foxtail grass that needed to be removed. I left the creeping Charlie ground cover. I'm not sure the ground ivy creates any major problem so for the time being I'm letting it flow over the miscanthus mulch. It's been so dry, even the creeping Charlie looks stressed.

**6 September.** This is the first time this month I entered the correct month in my garden journal. Again this evening I started to write "August" and then realized, "No, it's September." I went back and discovered I had mistakenly entered "August" for every entry this month. I wonder why it's so hard for me to catch up with the speed of the changing calendar. The derecho managed not only to destroy all our trees but also to destroy time. All our days have become indistinguishable.

Last night it rained, a real rain, 1½" in the rain gauge at home. Tomorrow I'll check the gauges at Coe and Wickiup. I was at home all day after church, nearly all the time working inside, mostly in the kitchen cooking. We shredded a dozen zucchini for the freezer, saving three cups for a gluten-free zucchini bread. It turned out pretty good, producing three loaves. I made two meatloaf recipes, one for the freezer. For each meatloaf I just threw together whatever I could find: ground beef and pork, onions, fresh chopped tomatoes and pepper, couple of shredded garlic cloves, a few okra, Baby Ray's BBQ sauce, salt and pepper. For supper we had a baked Kennebec potato, large enough so all we needed was one potato that she shared. I had my half with sour cream and cheese.

**9 September.** Our 53<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary. We still joke about me forgetting to bring the grape juice for the communion during the ceremony. We had lovely late summer weather for the wedding in Kansas, but today in Iowa it was chilly and drizzling, adding a bit to the 1' of rain already recorded in the rain gauge. Temp in the mid 50s in the garden shed this morning so I turned on the space heater. Fall is coming, a new sheriff in town. I spent a big chunk of the morning revising and editing the Monday Morning Garden Report for August 31. I finally got it posted this afternoon, first report since early July. In the afternoon I started working on a slideshow of photos from the last two weeks in May. Downloaded over 100 photos, including about 80 photos of individual blooms and small ensembles with almost 40 different flowers, all in bloom at the same time. Everything looks so fresh, green, vibrant, takes one's breath away.

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Hard to believe the garden was so different just three months ago. I still need to write a paragraph intro and label some photos, which now feel like documents of ancient history.

In the afternoon I fired up the hedge trimmer and started pruning the "C" and "D" bed yews. I got most of them finished, except for the top of one large yew. My other task was removing bindweed that had grown over the Eiffel Tower honeysuckle in the "H" bed. I first had to cut back and remove the asters and goldenrod that were interfering with access to the honeysuckle. I still need to clean up around the base, but the top of the honeysuckle is much improved.

**10 September.** It has continued to rain. When I arrived at Coe this morning, the rain gauge recorded 1" since yesterday. When I left at noon, we had received another inch. Because of the rain, I worked in the garden shed, creating a new Garden Tour slide show with photos from the last two weeks in May. I downloaded another 100 photos. The final slideshow will have over 90 pictures: some decent landscape views, followed by about 80 photos of individual flowers and small ensembles, 40 different flower species, all in bloom at the same time. Everything looks so fresh, vibrant—it takes one's breath away. Hard to believe it was so different three months ago.

In the afternoon, after sorting and cleaning onions (preparing them to be chopped up and frozen), I drove to Wickiup—a light rain on the way but it stopped by the time of my arrival, a few minutes after 4 p.m. The Wickiup rain gauge recorded 1/3" less rain than in C.R. I was disheartened to see deer tracks through the garden. I could not find any gape in the fence so the deer must have jumped the fence. A few sweet potato leaves had been eaten, also tops of carrots and broccoli, but not widespread damage. There are 5-6 decent cabbages that would have been tempting but no signs they were nibbled on—nor any evidence of munching on pole beans, which have often been a favorite evening snack.

**11 September.** Rain and more rain. As I was putting vegetable scraps in the composter this evening, I looked inside a bucket that has been collecting rain water for the past week. The water was 6-7" deep. Today it rained hard a couple of times, well over an inch since yesterday. We've gone from desert to swamp—and it's a chilly swamp. High temp today was upper 50s, cool enough that we turned on the furnace to remove the chill in the house.

In the afternoon MVM and I worked in the yard. I thought I had identified a young oak seedling that might be an offspring of our pin oak, but a quick glance revealed my error: it was a maple. In fact, we found a lot of maple, mulberry, redbud, and elm seedlings—but no oak. In the back yard we measured the big maple's trunk: at the point we measured the trunk's circumference was 112"—not quite 10 feet. I showed my wife where I thought we should cut off and save a portion of the maple for the stumpery and where we might locate the stumpery. She expressed no objections, so I think we have a plan. The rest of our afternoon was spent cleaning up the front yard, picking up hundreds of small branches and putting them in piles for the

street crews to pick up. We also pulled up weeds, to be donated to the compost bin, and I dug up a bunch of unwanted trees, including a large redbud I should have removed last year.

**13 September.** Decided to skip church this morning and drove out to Wickiup to do some harvesting while MVM was at home preparing pumpkin bread and singing at the Christian Science Church. Disheartening to discover fresh deer tracks in the garden. They had eaten more sweet potato leaves, eaten pole beans and okra, and completely wiped out my fall beets. Every beet sowing this year has failed due to rabbits, dry weather, and now deer. I will have sown hundreds of seeds and not harvested a single beet. The deer invasion is especially dispiriting because the fence appears to be intact and the inner trellises are all in place. I must find a way to make the garden more secure—though none of these measures would slow down another coon invasion or cut worms. So many ways for things to go wrong. *[As it turned out, I eventually discovered there was a hole in the SW corner of the fence, a hole partially hidden by the blackberries, a gap the deer were using to enter and exit the garden. Closing that gap eliminated my deer problems. Later in the fall, I installed chicken wire all around the base of the garden fence and that eliminated the problems with the rabbits.]*

As for harvesting, I filled a bag with yellow onions, all in good shape, and a nice crop of Majestic and Leningrad hardneck garlic—though they should have been harvested earlier in the summer. Although the bulbs were beginning to separate into individual cloves, they had not yet started generating new roots. I will replant some my harvest because I can't find any Majestic garlic from any online suppliers: they are all sold out. At Wickiup I also gathered about 15 large tomatoes, though some looked a bit rough and a few skins were split (probably caused by the excess rain we've been enjoying). The garden still has gobs of green tomatoes. I harvested one nice-sized cabbage without any signs of worm damage, one hill of sweet potatoes with several nice-sized potatoes, and 7-8 Yellowstone carrots that I'll give to K.

This afternoon I worked in the back yard, chopping up and moving to the street a lot of small branches. I managed to clear a path so someone can now walk relatively unimpeded from the house to the garden studio, a journey of about 200 feet. Psychologically, because of the sequence of wind and deer damage, I felt rather depressed thinking about the vegetable garden, felt I was ready to shut down the garden for the year and concentrate on our problems at home. But that makes no sense. The vegetable garden still has a bounty of produce available for harvest: zucchini, winter squash, watermelon, onions, garlic, sweet potatoes, carrots, peppers, eggplants, Swiss chard, spinach, cabbage, raspberries, potatoes, okra, and probably a few others I've forgotten—such as tomatoes!. I suspect my depression was caused by the overwhelming work that needs to be done here at home. It's over a month since the derecho and we are looking at another 3-4 weeks before any of the big tree trunks will be removed. I need to keep my focus on the jobs I can do now. We have certainly made enough progress that we can begin laying out new paths, borders, and perennial beds.

**15 September.** This morning at Coe, temp in the 80s, humidity at 60%, no problem working up a sweat, but a breeze made it bearable. MVM was using the garden shed for a Zoom meeting (internet again down at home) so I worked in the “D” bed, removing Joe Pye weed, Queen Anne’s Lace (surprised how much there was, all in final stage of seed dispersal), coneflowers, penstemon, goldenrod (currently the dominant flower in the garden), and asters. Started digging up some bloody cranesbill that has spread extensively the last two years. Although I remain a fan, I’ve discovered this species needs to be reserved for special locations. It works great in the “B” beds where it is constrained in those narrow beds, but once it gets settled in larger arenas, it’s a relentless expander with a dense, deep root system. It was a challenge removing it last year from the back of the rock garden (and a few remnants survived my assault), and it’s going to be a challenge in the “D” bed. I suspect I will eventually need to remove it completely because I have no way to constrain it. I am beginning to wonder if the “bloody” name is the British way of saying “God Damn” cranesbill—rather than a reference to the color of the blossoms. All of the other cranesbill varieties in the garden are much less aggressive. On the other hand, the bloody cranesbill form attractive, well-proportioned domes of foliage in the “B” bed and look quite appealing even when they have no blooms—plus they have quite lovely red foliage later in the fall. In contrast, the same cranesbill in the “D” bed just keep expanding without ever developing any spherical symmetry. The bed already has some lovely stonecrop in this area; it would make sense to remove the cranesbill and replace them with the stonecrop. I should add that the Pennisetum grass at the east end of the bed also looks very nice at this time of the year with its lovely seed heads. The single clump was divided into three clumps two years ago, and it didn’t produce many seed heads last year, but this year it looks robust and has effectively filled in the space. It’s proved to be one of my most successful planting introductions. Also a couple small surprises while working in the “D” bed: I found a Jerusalem Cross with a small red bloom and a miniature lupine that had miraculously survived the drought.

Next stop was cleaning up the “A1” bed. I cut back the crocosima foliage and dug up a few strawberries. I’m inclined to remove all the wild strawberries. Bringing them from the Wilderness Field Station was a well-intended gesture, but they have never produced any fruit (my suspicion is we’re missing a pollinator) and they don’t provide a convincing carpet of ground cover (in contrast to the dense barren strawberries in the “K” bed). It’s time to develop a sharper appearance for this area. I cut back all the goldenrod in the bed’s “upper deck.” Although just entering their bloom cycle, they were all bent over and looked rather untidy and wild. These two varieties in the “A1” bed are shorter than the Canada goldenrod found throughout the rest of the garden, but they either need a support system or I should try cutting them back in the summer and see how they handle that mid-season pruning. At the west end of the upper deck, I did remove the volunteer elderberry and Joe Pye Weed, opening up room for three asclepias I purchased from Bluestone.

In the afternoon I went to Wickiup, and shortly after I arrived Dale stopped by and told me a neighbor had counted five deer in the garden this morning. I had seen a lot of deer tracks,

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but was not expecting such a high body count. While he was a bearer of bad news, Dale also brought me 5 nice-sized frozen rainbow trout he had recently caught. In exchange I gave him four small cucumbers and an onion. In my opinion that “five for five” was a good trade. After Dale left, I concentrated on fence repair. Yesterday I stretched 40 feet of chicken wire across the base of the fence on the west side, including the gape in the fence where I suspected the deer were crawling through. After stapling the chicken wire to the fence posts, I ran a steel wire through the fencing to help hold up the chicken wire and drove into the ground two steel posts to stabilize the fence.

Today I focused on the south side fence. I began by using the grass trimmer to cut down the grass growing next to the fence and uncovered two places where I could see a rabbit trail through the grass into the garden. I drove in several more steel posts along this fence line, and the next time I’m out at Wickiup I will install two 50’ rolls of chicken wire, which should be long enough to cover all the fence on the south side. fence.

This evening, about 8:00 p.m., I was on the back patio, washing carrots, sweet potatoes, and Rose Finn Apple fingerling potatoes that I had harvested two days ago. The west-side neighbors came over to chat, wanting to discuss our tree situation. I said we had hired a Michigan Tree service and expected they would start removing our trees in about two weeks. I gave the neighbors some fingerlings and two of the sweet potatoes. We have far more potatoes than we’ll ever need.

**16 September.** Sitting on the back desk, looking at the smoke-filled sky from forest fires on the West Coast, the worst fires in anyone’s memory. Most of the trees in the neighborhood are stripped of any significant limbs: they look surreal, with funny shapes and angles, as if they were designed by Dr. Seuss. When I first came onto the desk, I could see a barred owl sitting on a tree limb west of the house. He then flew to another tree, almost impossible to discern in the fading light. With so many trees gone and the forest fire smoke in the air, sunsets are more dramatic than before the wind storm. The owl just flew east to another tree, just a trunk and no limbs, perhaps 40’ high. I can hear a faint clucking sound, perhaps the owl.

All my gardening today was at Coe. This morning I tried to clean up the area around the shrub rose in the “H” bed. Last week I purchased a small spray bottle of Roundup herbicide, and today I sprayed some of the bindweed near the rose and under the viburnum next to the garden wall. This is the first time I’ve ever used Roundup, evidence of my frustration in not finding another method for controlling the bindweed. While spraying this morning glory cousin, I was already mad at myself for thinking that this would be a sensible shortcut. In the great scheme of things, the bindweed is really a minor irritant in the garden. It’s only found in 3-4 areas in the “H” bed. It’s not the end of the world if the rose and viburnum have some bindweed growing in them.

I felt better about my efforts pruning the hydrangea in the “H” bed. While it still had many attractive flowers—though old and dried—the branches were really weighed down, never having recovered from the derecho. I gave the shrub an extensive trimming, reducing its size

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by about 50%. It looks rather naked at the moment, but the “G” hydrangea I cut back in July has a lot of new growth, and I expect this hydrangea to bounce back in the spring. [*It did, with more blooms than in any previous year.*]

While working in the “H” bed, I discovered the white aphids had returned to the standard Hawthorn. Many of the aphid colonies on the upper branches were accompanied by black ants. It looked like the ants were looking after the aphids. When I trimmed this small tree a couple months ago, I cut out several branches that had aphid colonies. I’m not sure the aphids are doing any significant damage to the tree, but the tree has a lot of brown leaves, and a sequence of drought, heavy rain, and aphids might not be an ideal recipe for a healthy tree. I got out my Neem Oil and sprayed all the aphids I could find. I’ll check back in a couple of days and see if the Neem had any demonstrable impact.

One major decision today—at least I think it’s a decision that I will adhere to. I’m going to remove a lot of goldenrod and cranesbill from the garden and try to increase the diversity of plants serving as key players in the late summer/early fall garden. Since 2014, I’ve been constantly removing the goldenrod, and here it is six years later and the garden’s most dominant flower in the middle of September continues to be the Canada goldenrod. I admire the plant and have no objection to its continued presence in the garden, but the garden would benefit from diminishing its influence. Besides the goldenrod, the four most prominent flowers at the moment are the pink and light blue flowers of the turtleheads, the cleomes (which now dominate the rock garden), the obedient flowers, and the stonecrops. I would like to add two or three other perennials that would work better than the goldenrod with that quartet. My thought at the moment is to remove all the bloody cranesbill from the “C,” “D,” and “L” beds and try to remove all the goldenrod from the “C” bed and most of it from the “D,” “H,” “K,” and “L” beds. Another candidate for a substantial reduction would be the aster with the small white blooms in the “I” bed. The flowers are pretty but they don’t show up well from a distance, and the bulk of the plants often look rather unruly and undisciplined. There’s a similar problem with the aromatic asters in the “D” and “K” beds: perhaps their time has come as well. It’s nice to have these late-flowering plants, but we’re not getting much bang for our buck. One option would be to use more Russian sage, perhaps introducing it into the “K” bed? It might look good in front of the taller ornamental grass and establish a continuity with the marvelous Russian sage at the east end of the “I” bed.

*“Four years ago I planted a single obedient plant—tall gothic spikes of purple flowers—which multiplied fast, and I began to ignore it. Last year I moved some of its offspring to a shady border by the woods. Today the obedient plants give that border architectural lines of a European cityscape seen from afar: gothic spires on churches.”*

**17 September.** This afternoon, for the first time since the derecho, I worked in the garden studio. The computer fired up with no problem and I wrote three paragraphs for this week’s MMGR. I had opened up three windows, and it was quite pleasant. In the studio is a photo of

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E.B. White sitting by an open window in his small back yard retreat, composing an essay on his typewriter. I lack his skill and genius, but perhaps we have experienced a similar pleasure, blessed with an ideal work space. I know I have a lot of writing to do, and I have no idea what I will do for this month's Garden Shed blog posting.

**18 September.** Ruth Bader Ginzburg died today, a loss that will trigger a fierce fight over the Supreme Court vacancy. Remarkably bad luck that in four years Trump will manage to appoint three justices, an accident of timing that will do irreparable damage to the country for years to come, comparable to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when we once before had a Supreme Court ill-prepared to deal with the social and cultural demands of the times. We are likely to get another Plessy vs Ferguson decision all over again.

Meanwhile, in the life of a gardener, it was a beautiful day. In the morning at Coe I spent three hours cleaning up an area in the "C" bed, probably no larger than 6' x 4': cutting off old yarrow seed heads, digging up quack grass and wormwood (both fierce challenges because of their underground root systems), trimming back and digging out various cranesbill, removing the daylilies' dead leaves and flower stalks, trimming or digging out cushion spurge, removing weeds and redbud seedlings and sorrel and whatever else I encountered that should not—in my opinion—have been present. Three hours in 25 square feet, and the area still is not yet "under control" (of course, an impossible and illusionary goal); nevertheless it looks much better, a shift toward civilization. My current gardening approach at Coe is for intense, detailed work, one or two small areas at a time, "bird by bird," trying not to be impatient. Many areas to work on, many jobs will be left undone. The assignment is to just keep plugging along, one step at a time.

While working in the stonecrop, I came upon two large brown praying mantis. It's been two years since I saw the last one, which was a green mantis, perhaps in April, in the same area. Today I came quite close to these guys. They would occasionally move slightly, but they certainly made no attempt to hide. I hope a couple of their photos turn out okay. I also saw the groundhog running into the evergreens, across from the greenhouse. I brought out the big Havercamp live trap. It has not been used since we caught a coon early in the summer. The trap has a lot of caked on dirt that needs to be removed. All I need now is an apple and peanut butter for bait.

In the afternoon to Wickiup. Walking around the garden, I spotted fresh deer damage (strawberry and pole bean leaves eaten, cabbage nibbled on). I eventually found a hole in the west fence, behind the blackberry bushes, not far from the one I repaired a couple days ago. I unrolled 50' of chicken wire I bought earlier this week and tied it to the wire I had already installed and to the steel and wooden posts, stretching it around the corner. This should also close off potential rabbit entrances.

As for harvesting, I dug two hills of Kennebec white potatoes, 5-6 good large potatoes per hill. I harvested the last of the big Ali Baba watermelons. So far this season, they have all been delicious. Dug a few more potatoes, picked about 10 tomatoes, many lying on the ground, and

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a couple cukes, a cantaloupe, a sweet melon. Should have harvested the limas but ran out of time. I also pruned some grape and removed tree branches that the derecho had blown into the grapes—that task goes on and on and on.

*“We happen to find some plants like rosemary tasty, but the flavor didn’t evolve for our pleasure; it evolved to torture the noses of animals, which would then keep their distance. The same is true of sage, thyme, lavender peppermint, and many other herbs. Perverse as we are, we enjoy their piquancy. But to most insects and animals, they deliver pain or disgust. We were never part of the plants’ useful universe. We just appeared one day as a sort of aggravation. Plants can employ us the same way they employ deer or lions—as chemical messengers easy to bribe and deceive—but they don’t really need us. In fact, they did just fine for millions of years without us. So I feel we’re privileged to walk among them and find pleasure in their ways. It might have been otherwise.”*

**20 September.** After lunch I took two old garden hoses from the garage and laid them out on the ground to mark off future walkways—as well as identifying several potential flower islands. When I showed MVM the layout, she said she thought it looked okay. So with a neighbor’s help, we used two wheelbarrows to move wood chips from his back yard to the future walkways. I’m hoping the wood chips will kill some grass and weeds while enabling us to see more clearly what modifications we might want in the design before we make more permanent layout decisions. The woodchips are already making it easier for me to see what it’s going to look like and how these various perennial flower beds will complement each other.

**21 September.** Drove to Wickiup in the afternoon. Unrolled another 50' of chicken wire for the south side of the fence. I put in a new post on the south side, a post that had previously helped create a boundary for a raspberry at home. The rest of the time was harvesting: four hills of Rose Finn Apple fingerling potatoes, one hill of sweet potatoes (5 potatoes, one quite large), a gallon of dried Trail of Tears small black beans, a dozen tomatoes, some green beans (mostly Seychelles and long noodle), a dozen carrots, four zucchini (one quite large but still usable), about 10 sweet peppers (mostly Felicity), one injured eggplant, 7 small cucumbers. I could tell a deer had been in the garden: had eaten most of the leaves on one bed of okra but they don’t eat the fruit. Concluded the trip by harvesting a pint of raspberries, mostly red. New berries still coming on so potential for continued production until the first frost—which won’t be in September.

*“Given that any garden is a willful act, I try not to intrude too much. The more the merrier is my motto, let my beds be an Ellis Island of natives*



*and immigrants whose cultures blend into a beautiful mix.  
But the road to excess leads to the castle of indolence,  
and hodgepodge beds take a lot of upkeep."*

**22 September.** Just finished ordering over \$1,500 worth of bulbs from Colorblends and Van Engelen for Coe, Buffalo, and home. Earlier today I received an email from Colorblends informing me they were running behind in filling orders and beginning to run low on some stock—and I did find that both firms were “out of stock” of some bulbs—but I was able to order almost everything I wanted from one of the two firms. Most of the two orders were composed of tulips, speciality daffodils (plus a big order of mixed bulbs for Buffalo), leucojum, snowdrops, Dutch iris, alliums. This will give me several thousand bulbs to plant, plus here at home I will need to dig up and replant hundreds of bulbs in flower beds that I’m redesigning. Many of these bulbs have long needed replanting (such as the jonquils by the gooseberry bed). The derecho has forced me to do what I should already have been doing.

As for gardening, it was another beautiful day. This morning at Coe, I cleaned up the “L” and “M1” beds, removing dozens of goldenrod. Since it’s now in bloom, I hate to dig it out, but the garden has too many and many are top heavy, flopping all over each other, making everything look rather sloppy and unkempt. It’s a wonderful wild flower but I need to reserve it for the back of a few beds. At 1:00 (noon God’s time), I took several photos of the seasonal sundial. The gnomon’s shadows rendered a perfect visual confirmation of the fall equinox.

Before driving to Wickiup, I spent a couple of hours at Buffalo cleaning out weeds and grass from the herb bed. I was pleased to discover that two of the three rhubarb I planted are still alive. The bed also has some lovely lavender and a huge spread of oregano, a pollinator favorite. It was then on to Wickiup, and I immediately saw that deer had crashed through the south fence. Because of the derecho, their normal food sources have been destroyed or made unavailable, and they are relentless in their determination to use my garden as their neighborhood grocery store. I called MVM and she came out to help me install a new 4’ high wire fence around the south side of the garden. Now we just have the north-side fence that has not been reinforced with the wire fencing. We concluded our visit with a quick harvest, including two cabbages, one of which had been nibbled on by a deer. It’s now 1:18 a.m. Time to set the journal aside and get some sleep—though I don’t feel sleepy at the moment. Perhaps I’m energized by an adrenalin rush, excited about planting those thousands of bulbs.

**23 September.** Another perfect gardening day, but it started out with a depressing note: I discovered at Coe that an animal (coon?) had pulled up one of the garden’s *Amsonia hubresti* (alias Arkansas Bluestar) and it was completely dried out. The amsonia was behind taller goldenrod and coneflowers, and thus I had not noticed its demise. I planted this Amsonia after seeing a stunning group of amsonia in a park in Madison. I need to order some more and see if I can do a better job protecting this area. [*This past summer I found this variety of amsonia on sale at Cedar River Gardens in Palo and planted four more in this same location. And the same problem*

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*occurred: an animal pulled three of them out of the soil. Two I successfully replanted but one had dried out and not salvageable.]*

**24 September.** This afternoon I worked on the gooseberry/currant bed in the back yard. The gooseberries look healthy, with many new leaves. As for the currants, minimal signs of life. Their branches were severely beaten up the derecho, and I see no evidence of fresh leaves or buds. I did prune both species, but I'm not optimistic about the currants. In the bed I also did a lot of weeding: removed dozens of seedling maples and Virginia creep and a weed whose ground-level, prostate leaves look like a Black-eyed Susan. While working in the back yard I did have one pleasant surprise: I came across a Amity Red Raspberry label (Peck's \$24.99). This should be the back yard red raspberry that produced the volunteers I transplanted to Wickiup. The tag indicates they should have a June season and a second crop in September. I never had a fall harvest here at home, probably because they were in the shade of the big maple, but at Wickiup they are producing a vigorous second crop.

**25 September.** Today my life turned an inevitable corner. During my annual physical, the doctor detected an irregular heart beat, my blood pressure was the highest it's ever been, my heart beat at rest was 82 (usually it's in the low 60s), and he suspects these symptoms may be the result of a panic attack I had during the derecho. After doing an EKG (which did not raise any immediate red flags), they scheduled a visit to a cardiology clinic next week. The doctor prescribed a blood thinner, and I'm probably looking at an electrical shock treatment to see if they can restore a regular heart beat. It appears my life free of prescribed drugs and invasive therapies has ended. It was a good run, 75 years, and I hope to have a few more years when I can remain active. The decay of the system is evident and irreversible, and I have no complaints. I've been incredibly lucky. One can't go on forever.

After spending an hour with the insurance adjustor (reviewing our wind storm damage to home and three other buildings), I finished the October church newsletter and then turned my attention to the Coe garden—where I had two unusual experiences with Coe students. While I was working in the “K” bed, a young lady came up to me and said there was a dead bird on the patio. It turned out to be a goldfinch that had probably tried to fly through an Alumni House glass door. I picked up the bird (which still looked alive) and put it in a trash container. A few minutes later three students appeared, carrying a bowl of water with a dead fish. They wanted to find a place where it could be buried. I volunteered to dig a hole for the fish—and thus the tiny angel fish was laid to rest in the “G” bed berm. I assured them that dead fish make excellent fertilizer. I then returned to my task of removing a large swath of goldenrod running through the middle of the “K” bed. I had cut back the goldenrod in June, hoping that might stimulate shorter, sturdier stalks with more profuse blooms. The results were disappointing, most of the goldenrod producing no blooms. Today I removed all the goldenrod in that area. I'm not sure what will be their replacement. The *Platycodon* has steadily expanded next to the goldenrod and perhaps it will spread across these vacant spaces.

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*"I'm not the sort of gardener who plants small islands of flowers, neatly separated by mulch or rocks. I think of that as zoo gardening. Not too much of anything, and everything in its place. I get twitchy just thinking about it. Those people probably have tidy desks, too. I like profusion."*

**27 September.** After lunch, I examined dozens of photos of greenhouse/shed combinations, looking for an image that could serve as a model for a new structure to replace the white shed damaged by the derecho. Eventually I found one that looked quite appealing, sent the photo to MVM, and she liked it. Now we'll see if Wayne will take on such a project. [*He did and the new shed/greenhouse was completed in the fall of 2021, matches beautifully with the garden studio, and is now fully functional.*] This afternoon I worked in the back yard and took apart some of the compost bins destroyed in the storm. Most of the lumber will go into a throw-away pile, but a few boards are salvageable and might prove useful here or at Wickiup.

I intended to draft another Gerard poem for this month's Garden Shed web posting, but never got to it. I have drafts for two poems in decent shape: "Of Daffodils" and "Of Floure-delis" (I don't recall Gerard's Elizabethan spelling). As for my reading, I'm working my way through *The Know Maintenance Perennial Garden* by Roy Dibbuk. The author stresses trimming and pruning perennials in the spring and leaving that material as a mulch and compost fodder for your perennials. He argues against a reliance on hard wood mulch—nor should gardeners need commercial fertilizers. He does advocate an occasional dose of glyphosate on a few specific weeds: thistles, quackgrass, bindweed. The book includes thoughtful profiles for upper Midwest garden plants and sensible design plans for large, deep perennial beds. Some of his recommended plant combinations may be useful for our back yard.

**30 September.** Another lovely day, small shower last night (0.15" in the Elmhurst rain gauge) but quite nice during the day, just a bit of wind out of the west. All my gardening was at Coe, cleaning up the "G" bed. I cut back the Siberian iris, spruced up the area around the shrub rose, removed several of the rose's dead branches, cut back a dozen or more penstemon, dug up several clumps of goldenrod and Joe Pye, trimmed to the ground the coneflowers and Black-eyed Susan, pulled up many weeds, cleaned out the two faux whiskey barrels, dug up horsetail, fleabane, milkweed, and their alien cohorts. It is encouraging to witness the notable decline in the horsetail over the last two years. About half of the bed is done; need another day to finish the fall housekeeping for this area.

One significant accomplishment today: I finished the "translations/adaptations" of the four Gerard passages, and they are now posted to the website. I'm not a fair or disinterested judge, but I think my collaboration with Mr. Gerard works out reasonably well, and I feel good about these little poems. I love how the one on fritillaries ends with an image of gardens as "bosoms of the beautiful."