

Garden Kalendar: Summer 2022

The Spring 2022 Garden Kalendar is composed of edited excerpts from my daily, hand-written garden journal for July-September, 2021--accompanied by occasional commentaries on those passages. The journal records my work in four gardens:

- The Alumni House Garden at Coe;
- A half-acre vegetable garden on a small farm near the Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center (a garden typically identified as the Wickiup garden);
- The gardens and landscape at Buffalo United Methodist, a small church that we attend not far from our home;
- The gardens at my home on Elmhurst Drive in Cedar Rapids.

This Kalendar constitutes about 50% of my journal entries in the third quarter of 2021. In case someone would want to see the layout of the gardens, here are links to maps of the Elmhurst Drive back yard garden and the Wickiup vegetable garden. The Alumni House Garden map is posted on the website's "map" page. As for the italicized quotations inserted between journal entries, they are passages from Dan Pearson's *Natural Selection: A Year in the Garden*, a superb gardening book that I read in 2021. Because of the length of this document, the complete Summer 2022 Kalendar is posted as a pdf. ~Bob

I learned to garden with and not against nature. ~Dan Pearson

1 July (Thursday). Another day when I ignored the Coe garden. It's now over a week when I've done little work there--though I did mow the lawn. The garden needs to take care of itself while I focus on the vegetable garden and the gardens at home. Yesterday after removing all the maps and issues of *The Garden Quarto*, I did place some ant poison in the box below the message board, an area that was swarming with ants. Tomorrow I'll see if the ants are either dead or gone.

This morning and again after supper I worked in the back yard. One major step forward is that I may have killed--after 40 years of failure--the tree that has produced an endless succession of saplings at the base of the big maple. Today I used an electric hand saw to remove a huge chunk of the tree's root system. I've never known the species of these saplings, though their leaves would indicate some version of an elm. Tomorrow I plan to fill the cavity of the old maple trunk with a mix of soil, compost, and tree sawdust and then plant something in the cavity--though I'm unsure what this might be.

Toward the back of the yard I assembled a small herb bed parallel with the rhubarb bed I created last fall. In the herb bed, I buried two large plastic pots with a Richters English mint in each one. Also in the bed is a lovage and an English thyme. I spread coconut fibre around each plant and mulch across the surface of the bed. I still have two lovage (started from seed this spring) that are homeless. Since they should require minimal care, I may plant them at the Wickup garden. [*All these plants have done well; the lovage at home and at Wickiup have grown to over 6' tall, much larger than I had expected.*]

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After lunch, I met with Buffalo's new pastor to discuss the church's Sunday morning worship bulletins and other publication issues. I volunteered to design and produce the bulletins for the weekly Sunday morning services. I then went to Nelson's Meats to confirm the catering order for the August 15 church celebration, followed by a trip to the Wickup garden. It was sunny and hot but an occasional breeze from the north made it reasonably comfortable—and I took it slow.

Most notable achievement was in the West Field, where I hoed the potato rows and dumped two wheelbarrow loads of fresh vegetation on the compost pile. I also looked for potato beetles, but they were notably few and far between--mostly solitary adults. I only came across one pair engaged in copulation. The potato cultivation was followed by pulling weeds in the J1 bed in the East Garden, which has two varieties of peas. Thanks to the recent rain, the pea vines look revitalized, but unfortunately the rain has also re-energized the weeds. I did pull up all the old radishes so I can now plant more onions. Concluded the trip by checking out the cucumbers in the R3 bed: the vines are growing and I saw no cuke bugs on plants. So far, so good.

2 July. Morning at home, afternoon at Wickiup, evening at Coe. The morning focused on covering the long east bed with mulch, which first meant laying down newspapers over 2/3 of the bed not yet covered (for weed control) and then covering the papers with the mulch from the pickup. Once the bed was mulched, I watered all the plants—except for the old Baptisia. The bed looks pretty good, though the plants are so small, dwarfed by the space around them. I followed the same procedure with the SE triangle bed, laying down newspapers, and I had enough remaining mulch to cover about 1/3 of the bed. My next task was planting five daylilies—all ones from Bluestone Perennials delivered in the spring of 2020. Somehow they were still a live, a testament to their impressive toughness. They are small and one has just a sliver of a single green blade, but they all appeared to have healthy roots, and they should do okay. I also planted the new hibiscus in the long west bed. It had dried out yesterday and was really drooping, but I watered it twice yesterday and again this morning. It appears to have revived.

In the afternoon I drove to Wickiup. During my last visit, a large blue heron landed on a dead cottonwood limb along the creek, not far from the garden. As I walked to the pickup to get my field scope, he flew away. I watched him effortlessly flapping his wings, gliding to the southeast until he disappeared behind some trees, perhaps a half mile from the garden. Today I had no such visitor—or perhaps I did not look up at the right time. I become so locked in to the tasks before me that I often miss what's happening around me.

I began today's gardening with the West Field. I did some weed and grass pulling while checking out the melons and looking for bugs. I harvested four hills of Red Norland potatoes, gathering 30 nicely formed, thin-skinned red potatoes. Also found a few Colorado potato beetles, but I only examined the first row. Back in the East Garden, I weeded the O3 bed with

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the fingerling potatoes, which had become badly overgrown with tall weeds, including several deep-rooted pig weeds. Saw evidence that mice or moles had been digging tunnels and discovered one fingerling partially eaten. I dug up four hills: found 3-4 potatoes with significant rodent damage, but most of the potatoes were fine. Next job was cleaning up dead pea plants in the J9 bed, where I now have several melons growing. Intended to weed and mulch the "D" bed with the cucumber plants but ran out of time. Before leaving I did harvest some of the thin purple bush beans and picked the garden's first real tomato of the season: a moderate-sized Lillian's Yellow Heirloom. Also harvested a few Sungolds and Juliet's World.

3 July. Doors & windows open, which means my journal writing will be accompanied by the frequent sound of fireworks, including a "cherry bomb" that exploded a few minutes ago. I think home fireworks are illegal inside the city limits, but either I'm wrong or a lot of people are unfamiliar with the city ordinance or they don't care.

My big accomplishment today was that I assembled the old swing set (the one that miraculously survived the derecho) in the back yard, then disassembled it, tied the pieces to the bed of the Chevy S-10 (including the wooden seat), transported it to the Wickiup garden, and re-assembled it again. After harvesting raspberries, a few green beans, four Mexicana F1 zucchini, and one Cocozelle zucchini, I spent a few minutes enjoying the swing, now positioned east of the young maple tree (that is fighting a terminal illness), and drank iced tea from my thermos. To my back was a gorgeous sunset. The sky was hazy, the result of debris blowing in from wild fires in Western Canada, which is suffering through a long dry spell, their high temps shattering previous records. A cruel irony: their lousy conditions accounting for stunning sunsets several thousand miles away in Iowa.

At home, I continued to work on cleaning up the SE Triangle bed. While removing unwanted grass clumps I discovered what I initially guessed was a Sioux Blue Indian Grass, but later I found a sign indicating it's a Panicum Cloud Nine, which does have a bluish foliage. I dug up the clump and will replant it tomorrow—once I decide where it should go. I also started digging the post holes for the framework to support the grapevine. The east hole went without a hitch, but I encountered serious maple tree roots where I wanted to place the west pole. Using the battery hand drill, I managed to cut through the roots, but the hole still needs to go down another foot in depth.

4 July. A spectacular drive from Wickiup this evening: dozens of fireworks shooting up from people's yards and driveways. I left Wickiup after 9:00 p.m., the sun had just set, and I saw a remarkable number of star bursts, several at close range. Home fireworks are far more spectacular (and louder) than when my Dad would shoot off Roman Candles on the farm.

As for my two-plus hours at Wick, I spent most of my time weeding. Cleaned up the O2 bed with three rows of carrots—which all are doing well. Also removed weeds from around the raised bed. I have four tomato plants growing on the O2 trellis. They were planted late and

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were never pruned, thus they are much wilder than the other tomato plants. I tried to corral their limbs inside their circular frames, and I tied a few stems to the livestock panel. While working in this area I also pulled up weeds in the asparagus patch—a bed that needs serious attention.

My final task was hoeing weeds in the West Field potatoes. While scratching along the edge of the Red Norland potatoes, I accidentally uncovered a nice red potato. Inspired by this unexpected gift, I brought over my root digging tool and dug around the perimeter of several plants, looking for new potatoes. I found 1-2 potatoes from each of the first eight hills, potatoes just the right size for boiling.

The garden is a place in which I can lose myself as I did when I was a child.

5 July. I finished digging the holes for the two posts to help support the old grapevine. I have dry cement at Coe that I can add to the hole and stabilize the posts, keeping them close to the ideal 90 degree angle. Closer to the house in the SE Triangle bed I planted the blue switch grass I found a couple days ago. The structural planting of the two triangle beds is basically done—though we still have plenty of space for adding more plants.

After supper I drove to Wickiup. My primary concern was weeding the asparagus bed, but I noticed a sweet pepper was partially wilted so I switched gears and watered the peppers. I then checked the cabbage for green caterpillars. Although I saw no signs of recent cabbage moth larva, I sprayed them all with my mix of white vinegar, liquid soap, and water. I concluded my visit by harvesting a few beans, a few peas, and five lovely Mexicana F1 zucchini. While harvesting I killed two pairs of mating squash bugs and a group of small nymphs that had recently hatched.

6 July. I began the day at Coe by weeding the crevice garden, removing grass, purslane, sorrel, and several myrtle spurge. I tried to save most of the self-seeding cleome, which have notably expanded their area this year. Several plants are preparing to bloom, and this will become a grandfather's whiskers bed in another 2-3 weeks. The cleome in the "J" bed are more advanced, several already blooming.

I did some cleaning up of the "M1" bed, including harvesting a few Japanese beetles. I trimmed the knockout rose bushes and pulled out all the fleabane I could see. Pulled up several milkweed, cut off seed pods on peonies, and cut back most of the New England asters. The flower beds on both sides of the NW gate walkway now look a bit tidier.

After a meeting at Buffalo church, I spent the rest of the morning working on the "C" bed and areas under the SW flowering crab tree—which still has most of its leaves. I cut off all the tree suckers coming up in the hostas. In the main portion of the "C" bed, I trimmed back the catmint, cut to the ground all the spiderwort, removed several volunteer cushion spurge, and

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cut back most of the Husker Red penstemon. The stella d'oro daylilies are mostly finished blooming, but the majority of the daylilies are just beginning to hit their prime.

8 July. I often wonder how my periodic obsessions drive my gardening—not only big picture issues but day-to-day decisions. This morning I arrived at the Coe garden, aware of so many jobs that need attention. How do I decide what receives top priority? What factors influence my decision that I won't transplant the basil that needs to be moved to the "E" bed and I won't clean up the plants in the Gazebo sun dial and I won't prune the shrub roses in the "G" and "H" beds, but I will hoe a gravel walkway? Why do I become obsessed with the walkways, feeling that I can't address other tasks until the walkways have been hoed, raked, cleaned up, and relatively weed free? What is the governing principle that prioritizes the walkways over other tasks? I had a similar feeling this afternoon at the Wickiup garden: I spent two hours cleaning up the walkways around the "D2" bed, covering the area with newspaper and mulch. The newspaper/mulch combo provides many benefits (weed control, moisture preservation, providing clear walkways even after heavy rain, production of organic compost, etc), but I suspect the primary motivation is in search of an aesthetic cleanness, conveying a sense that while many areas of the garden may be ill-kempt, the fundamental structure is clean and orderly. Regardless of the quality of the painting, the frame needs to be right.

After lunch I sat in on a meeting at Ever-Green Nursery on the subject of biochar and its potential use in gardens and agriculture. While I had done a little reading on the subject, a few items came up in the conversation that caught my attention:

- Indigenous people in the Amazon have long known the benefits of biochar; they produce biochar by burning wood at super high temperatures while controlling access to oxygen; if the burning material has too much oxygen, you end up with ashes and not biochar.
- Biochar is full of pockets, like a honeycomb, and it can store moisture and other elements in those pockets. Those gaps can also extract materials from the water, enabling the biochar to clean water running through it.
- One recommendation is to mix your fertilizer or additives into the biochar and let it settle before applying it to the soil.
- A researcher at Iowa State ("Bernie") has been the primary mastermind and entrepreneur advocating the benefits of biochar. According to his calculation the goal is a minimum of 5% biochar, which would be approximately one bucket in a 4' x 4' raised bed.

[I used biochar in two vegetable beds at Wickiup and two flower beds at Coe. In one of the vegetable beds, there was a dramatic impact on the peas and beets: both vegetables had vigorous growth, particularly with the beets. As for the flower beds, they were planted with dahlias, and I did not observe any notable difference from previous years. However, this year the dahlias were again planted in those two beds, and the dahlias are thriving and producing blooms much earlier than in any previous year.]

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9 July. A beautiful night. Earlier this evening on the deck, I was enjoying my view of the back yard after a light shower, the setting sun casting a golden light over everything. For the first time I began to feel the post-derecho back yard was coming together into a coherent garden space. I did some serious weeding this afternoon in the long west bed, and that area looks much better. There's still a lot of planting to do—and the area around the Leopold bench still looks wild and unkempt, but slowly and haltingly, a real garden is emerging. This afternoon I drove to Iowa City to pick up Theo from a babysitter. After K was done with her meeting, she gave me a tour of their back yard with the two paths she had created with landscape fabric, mulch, and wood chips. It's quite impressive how much she has improved the appearance of her back yard in the past year. Almost no Virginia creeper or creeping Charlie or dock. Very impressive.

10 July. After supper I drove to Wickiup. Spent over an hour harvesting:

- Filled a small trug with Red Norland and Charlotte potatoes, taking one or two potatoes per hill. Every hill I yielded at least one potato, averaging the size of tennis balls but a few Norlands were quite hefty.
- Harvested bush beans: Provider, Dragon Tongue, Jade II, Red Swan, Gold Rush.
- Picked five nice zucchini, including one cocozelle. On the underside of the cocozelle were a couple dozen freshly hatched squash bug nymphs. I carried the zucchini to the water tank and dunked them in the tank.
- Checked out the cucumbers in the R3 bed; picked four nice Raider F1 cukes and four Manny F1s. All the plants are in good shape and only minimal evidence of problems with cucumber bugs. I wove some vines into the netting that surrounds the bed.
- Excellent harvest of carrots—all large and long. Majority of carrots were Yayas from the J8 bed.

11 July. Yesterday evening at Wickiup was all harvesting. Today it was all weeding: cleaned up the back side of the "C1" bed, front of "H1," back of "H2," and most of "R1," "S1," "S2" and "K1." Listing those beds makes it sound so simple: how could it take four hours? And today's weather was ideal: cool enough that I never needed a break, maintaining a slow but steady pace.

I continued to ponder why I find weeding so appealing. One factor is that when I'm finished removing from a flower or vegetable bed the dandelions and foxtail and pigweed and purslane and Peruvian daisies and velvet weed and all the other weeds and grasses, the bed looks different. I can see that real work has been accomplished. With other tasks, that's not always so obvious. Sowing seeds, for example. When I'm finished sowing vegetable seeds, the bed looks the same as it did before I put the seeds in the ground. The seeding produces no noticeable difference, and there's no guarantee the seeds will germinate and produce any positive changes in the future. Apparently I prefer instant gratification over delayed rewards.

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13 July. Another lovely day though with house guests and a late brunch, not much gardening until our friends departed for St. Louis. Last night I discovered that Jim had started a small herb garden on their balcony (15th floor) in Connecticut so I have him one of the Japanese garden knives I had ordered last week. The order was in response to personal frustration, having just lost my Coe Hori Hori knife. After several days without it, I ordered two new knives—one a precise duplicate of the one I had lost. Of course, a day later I found the missing knife stuck in the “L” perennial flower bed where I had left it. So I gave Jim my duplicate—and that still leaves me with a backup. I have come to appreciate the strengths and multiple uses of these Japanese digging knives. They’ve become one of my favorite tools—though that means there’s an increased likelihood of losing one.

Once our friends were on the road, I tackled a few gardening chores. Under the weigela long the long east bed, I planted a hosta that was dug up last fall. It had survived the winter and the June drought and my total neglect. The leaves have a lovely variegated pattern—a member of the “spilt milk” clan. I divided my hosta survivor into two large clumps and two smaller clumps and got them all planted in an open area behind the front row of light green hostas. The remainder of my home gardening effort was pulling weeds from around the big maple stump, including a lot of nightshade and another, ugly weed for which I have no polite name. I removed a lot of pokeweed—though I did permit two pokeweed in bloom to remain in front of the wood pile for another week. They are an attractive plant. I’ll never forget my surprise when we came across a pokeweed in the National Trust’s Fenton House garden in London. I will dig them out before they start throwing their seed around the area.

*What I like about writing is the act of capturing the process of gardening,
of distilling these experiences in words. . . . Writing helps
to keep those experiences present and alive and in the memory.*

14 July. This entry is being composed at the Campfire Campground in Lone Rock, Wisconsin. I did a bit of gardening this morning before our 10:00 a.m. departure to see Jim DeVita in *An Illiad* at the APT’s Touchstone Theatre in Spring Green. It was an outstanding performance, a perfect fit for DeVita. Tragedy piled on tragedy, the poet/actor accompanied by a solo cellist, whose cello became Hector’s dead body at the end of the play.

As for gardening, I began the day by watering plants at Coe. The basil in the herb garden was quite dry, but overall the plants were in decent condition. After picking up the live trap at Coe, I made a quick stop at ACE to purchase four mouse traps and a second stop at Fareway to purchase two apples as bait for the coons at Wickiup. It was evident they had again been messing around in the garden, digging up carrots in the “J” raised bed. I set up the big and small live traps in the walkways beside the “J” beds. The new mouse traps were placed near the pole beans next to the garden gate and along a mouse route in the “W2” beds with the fingerling potatoes. I’ll be back in two days to see if we have any success. Despite the coon and

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mouse tribulations, this has been a year with relatively little wildlife damage in the Wickiup garden. I've seen no recent evidence of any deer damage and no evidence of any rabbits—and for the last two years they have done major damage on bush beans and beets, consuming all of last year's beet crop.

15 July. In the Roadtrek van at the Campfire Campground. We just returned from an APT performance of Tom Stoppard's *Rough Crossing*. A silly farce, often amusing but not a very good play, particularly thin after the intermission. David Daniel, playing a member of the ship's crew, garnered many laughs drinking James Ridge's cognac. I'm glad I saw the performance and some of my favorite company actors, but not a play I would want to see again.

This morning I compiled a detailed list of the veggies planted at Wickiup this year and their performance status the middle of July. I'll copy down my comments on the beans.

Bush Beans

- Provider: "D1" bed; first sown on 4/3; too cold and wet for germination; re-sown on 4/27; the first variety to produce harvestable beans; source for about 1/4 of the year's crop to date.
- Mascotte: "D1"; same sowing schedule as with the Provider; many blooms but so far not many beans.
- Red Swan: "G1"; sown on 4/27; first crop on 7/8; short beans but cooked up nicely; many blossoms. [*I eventually developed reservations about these beans; I found their texture and taste less attractive as we progressed into the heat of the summer.*]
- Jade: "G1"; sown on 4/27; first crop on 8 July; nice long beans; one of my favorite beans in terms of productivity, texture, & taste.
- Gold Rush: "J5"; sown on 5/8; low germination rate; a few nice beans picked on 8 July.
- Dragon Tongue: "J5"; sown on 5/8; good germination rate; nice plants; respectable initial harvest on 8 July. [*I recently read that Dragon Tongue makes a nice dry bean; until now I've only used them as a fresh bean.*]
- Celine Colored: "S6"; seeds sown on 5/25, the first time I've planted this variety; near 100% germination; nice looking plants. [*These beans proved disappointing with below average productivity.*]
- Maxifilet: "J6"; sown on 5/25; marginal germination rate but the plants are now doing well; many blooms but not yet any beans.
- Yellow Indian Woman: "M1" bed; sown on 5/30; good germination rate; these big plants act like they want to climb. [*These plants were floppy and did not produce many beans; I eventually ignored them and never harvested any beans.*]
- Jacob's Cattle: "M1" bed; sown on 5/30. [*They are a lovely bean; produced a good crop of dried beans for winter soups and stews.*]
- Cranberry: "M1" bed; sown on 5/30. [*Another lovely dried bean that did okay in '21.*]

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Pole Beans:

- Kentucky Blue: "D2" trellis; sown on 4/29; good germination rate, good growth, but many plants eaten off about 1" above the ground, probably by mice; also suffered deer damage when deer broke through the garden fence. [*Only about ten plants survived, but they were productive; it is important to pick Kentucky Blue beans early because they quickly become too mature.*]
- Seychelles: "D2" trellis; sown on 4/29; good germination rate, good growth; they suffered same problems as the Kentucky Blue but less extensive; already producing harvestable beans; remains my favorite pole bean.
- Aunt Bea's Snap: "R2" bed; sown on 4/27; high germination rate; quite vigorous plants, loaded with blooms. [*These plants were prolific producers; these beans with burgundy spots are quite attractive, but they quickly develop strings, and I eventually stopped picking them. It turns out they were quite effective self-seeders and by June of '22 I had Aunt Bea's beans popping up all over the garden.*]
- Whipporwill Southern Peas: "D2" trellis; sown on 6/1; erratic germination; many did not germinate until after late June rains; plants look good but not yet any flowers. [*These "peas" proved to be quite productive and were used in soups; a couple of Whipporwills appeared in the same bed this spring—where I have planted tomatoes—and I've allowed them to grow, using the tomato cages as their support.*]
- Cherokee Trail of Tears: "H1" bed; sown 5/30; erratic germination; many did not germinate until after late June rains; no blooms so far. [These remain one of my favorite beans: they had good late-summer productivity until first freeze; beans quite good fresh and as a dried bean.]
- Black & White Goose: "D1" trellis; sown 6/1; zero germination; re-sowed at the end of June but only two seeds germinated.
- Littleton Dry: Same location, same sowing and re-sowing dates as with the Black & White Goose; similar results.

Beans, Lima

- Christmas Pole: "H1" bed; sown on 6/1; poor germination; re-sowed at the end of June; much better results; so far good-looking young plants.
 - King of Garden: "H1" bed; same sowing pattern and similar results.
 - Fordhook Bush: "J12" bed; sown on 6/6; looking good so far.
 - Jackson Wonder: "J12" bed; sown on 6/6; looking good so far.
- [*The summer of 2021 was my best year ever with regard to lima beans productivity; both pole beans did very well. The two bush beans were less productive—and the bean pods were smaller—but still an excellent crop.*]

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17 July. At the Coe garden this morning. While shooting July photos, I discovered a wisteria at the front of the pergola has apparently died. I removed all the dead vines, cutting everything down to the ground, but I left the roots in place, just in case some part is alive. Not sure of the reason for its demise since it had shown some vigorous new growth earlier in the spring. Perhaps it was unable to handle the three-week stretch of hot & dry weather in June. The other five wisteria appear to be doing fine; the two smallest wisteria on the north side of the pergola have generated a lot of new growth this year. [*The “dead” wisteria did revive and sent up new growth a couple weeks after this journal entry; in the spring of ‘22 looks quite healthy.*]

After shooting photos and feeding the earthworms, I mowed the lawn. As usual the grass was much taller, greener, and thicker in the SE quadrant. I should rake it, but I won't. I spent the rest of the morning cleaning up the “C,” “D,” & “L” beds, mostly pulling loner self-seeders—such as New England asters, goldenrod, fleabane, Queen Anne's Lace, etc.

There was a reception in the Alumni House for a retiring Coe staff person, and two non-Coe people were here for the party (one from Memphis). They came out to talk with me about the garden for a half hour. They had questions about several plants, such as the cleome blooming in the “J” bed, and I showed them how the seasonal sundial works. The woman from Memphis wanted the title of Stuart-Smith's *The Well-Gardened Mind*, the book that discusses the health benefits of gardening. A pleasant conversation.

After lunch, I took an hour nap. My nasty head/chest cold has been zapping my strength. It was 3 p.m. when I eventually arrived at Wickiup. As usual I spent most of my visit attacking weeds. Initially I concentrated on the area around the scaredeer and the Y2 trellis, where I discovered two nice-sized Shinktokiwa cucumbers. I removed wilted leaves from the cucumber vines but only found two cuke bugs. I finished the visit by filling a container with Red Swan beans: a prolific crop but many of the beans are short and stubby. I also harvested several Mexicana & Cocoselle zucchini and a few Manny F1 Beit Alpha cucumbers.

Balance is key in a garden and to aim for it not only makes a garden feel more restful, it also goes towards making your life easier. Understand, for instance, where Tulipa sprengeri likes to live and they will seed themselves around, and there is nothing more rewarding than plants showing you they are happy by making themselves at home.

24 July. Current assessment of cucumbers planted this year:

- Raider F1: In the “R3” bed; seeds sown on 5/2; have lost a few plants to disease but still some good, productive plants; the lack of strong green color in the leaves probably indicates they would appreciate a boost of nitrogen/fertilizer.
- Manny F1 Beit Alpha: “R3” bed; sown on 5/2; plants look about the same as the Raiders, but the Manny vines have been less productive.

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- Painted Serpent Armenian: "M2" bed; sown 6/4; lost one plant early; the rest look okay but so far no fruit.
- General Lee: "H2" bed; sown on 6/4; plants are strong & vigorous; no signs of wilt; these have been my most productive and consistent cucumbers the last three years.
- Poinsett 76: "H2" bed; sowed 6/4; so far, they are looking good.
- Shintokiwa: "Y2" trellis; sowed 5/17; I initially did a lousy job weeding this bed; after weeding this past week, several plants wilted; harvested two cukes a couple days ago.
- MaxiPack F1 Pickling: "O4" trellis; sowed 5/30; they look so-so; no wilt so far.

[End of year reflections: the Raider, General Lee, and Poinsett 76 were the most productive vines; the Raider cucumber vines were quite strong at the beginning of the summer and then tailed off; in contrast, the Poinsett 76 was a vigorous producer into the fall; by early August the Painted Serpent had succumbed to the wilt and only produced one cucumber; neither the Shintokiwa or the MaxiPack F1 Pickling were heavy producers, but they maintained a steady supply of cucumbers until the end of September.]

27 July. My head/chest cold continues weighing me down in this stretch of hot, humid weather. While today was in many ways a repeat of yesterday, one notable difference is that yesterday I started working in the back yard early in the morning; today I spent the morning here at home in the air conditioning. I did help MVM can 9 jars of pickles, did some work on this month's blog post, and downloaded daylily garden photos as I attempt to create a map of the daylilies at the Coe garden. After supper I drove to Wickiup and spent a couple of hours in the country. The temp was about 80F—which should have been reasonably comfortable—but it was very humid and zero breeze. Even as the sun was setting, I was gulping down iced tea to keep from overheating. In addition to clearing away dead pea vines from three beds, I covered a bed with newspapers and mulch around three small sweet melon plants. They are just now beginning a growth spurt, and to express my faith in this effort, I watered them with an extra shot of fish fertilizer. My other accomplishment was harvesting green beans: one full trug of Jade II beans and a second full basket of Max Filet. Both are producing large, tasty, nicely developed beans.

29 July. Thirty minutes past midnight. A small scrap of evidence the heat wave may be breaking up. This evening at Wickiup, about 6:30 p.m., I felt a cool breeze out of the north. While the temp was still in the 80s, there was this welcome hint that cooler days are ahead. On the other hand, the sky was hazy, the air thick with smoke from the fires in the West. Looking at the sunset, I imagined this is what a sunset on Mars would look like, the sky full of red dust.

As for the gardening, I walked into the West Field to dig up a couple Yukon Gold potatoes and found dozens of plants being devoured by Colorado potato beetles. I felt sorry for the beetles, trying to feed on plants that have almost completely dried up. But my sympathy was short-lived, and within minutes I was walking the rows, collecting larvae—and an occasional

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adult—in my yogurt container with soapy creek water. Once I had made the rounds, I did unearth two hills, gathering about twenty potatoes, all of a nice size, many ideal for baking. I finished the evening by picking Kentucky Blue pole beans. Many were over-mature, but they should still be usable. By 9:00 p.m. I was relying on my fingers to find the beans in the dark, a task which can be a challenge when trying to identify the pickable beans. I left the Seychelle beans for tomorrow.

1 August. Two days ago I met Cara at Buffalo and we installed the Labyrinth entrance—and it looks great. We also settled on a plan for the installation of the structure that will hold the wind chimes. The next step is installing the two large posts that will hold the crossbeam with the wind chimes. Yesterday morning Todd delivered the four Leopold benches, and they are now residing in a corner of the Fellowship Hall. We have ten days to get them primed and painted for the 145th church anniversary celebration. On Saturday MVM and I drove to Cedar River Garden Center and purchased over \$200 worth of plants for the church, K's front yard in Iowa City, and here at home. I'm determined to get everything in the ground, watered, and mulched by tomorrow evening. Last night and today I got most of them planted here at home, the majority in the Long East Bed: six hyssop (a variety with small orange blossoms and small, bluish-green leaves), several foxgloves (all costing \$2/pot), three Missouri primroses and three small Veronicas for the front of the border, several white gayfeathers for the middle of the border, two Baptisia (one with yellow blooms) for the back of the border, a coreopsis and two dianthus for the SE triangle, and a large hibiscus for the Long West Border. This hibiscus has large red blooms, similar to the two hibiscus I planted at Coe in 2014. I gave all the plants a mix that included compost, fresh top soil, chicken grit, vermiculite, and an organic slow release fertilizer. Primary task tomorrow is to lay down newspaper and mulch around these new plants. My dream is to have the Long East Bed and the SE Triangle bed completely mulched by tomorrow evening.

As for Wickiup, I drove there yesterday afternoon and worked for three hours. Unfortunately a deer had broken through the SW corner of the fence—the same spot they had broken through earlier this summer. The deer had eaten a bunch of sweet potato leaves (always a deer favorite), but this is early in the season and the plants will bounce back. Fortunately the tear in the fence was relatively minor, and it only took a few minutes to repair it. What took more time was killing the Colorado potato beetle larvae. The fingerlings in the J14 bed had been free of beetles all summer—but yesterday I discovered all the plants were infected. Took me an hour to collect them in my yogurt container. While the beetles had accomplished some significant damage, the plants still have sufficient foliage so they should still do okay. It's interesting to note that these fingerlings are much later in their growth rhythm than the fingerlings planted in the two "W" beds. Those vines are now dried up, without any green foliage.

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Yesterday I did dig up three hills of the Red Norland potatoes in the West Field. Those hills were very productive. I harvested more than two dozen nice-sized potatoes, all in good shape. No evidence of any mice or other varmints nibbling on these tubers. Most of the potatoes ended up at church this morning. I also donated for the congregation a bag of Seychelles green beans, several large Nantese carrots, three kinds of sweet peppers, a few Juliet World and Sungold tomatoes, several Lithuanian Purple garlic, one long purple eggplant, a few onions, a few cukes, and a few zucchini.

2 August. After a morning working in the back yard, I drove to Wickiup in the afternoon. During my last visit, a large blue heron landed on a dead cottonwood limb above the creek. As I was getting my field scope out of the pickup, he flew away, effortlessly flapping/gliding until he disappeared behind a grove of trees perhaps a half mile from the garden. Today we had no such visitor—or perhaps I simply did not look up at the right time. I miss so much of what is happening around me because of my myopic concentration on vegetables and weeds. . . . Before heading home, I harvested the garden's first "real" tomato: a moderate-sized Lillian's Yellow Heirloom. For the past week we have been picking the smaller Sungold and Juliet's World tomatoes, which are both quite delicious. This is the first year I have raised the Juliet's World: in size and shape they resemble an Amish Paste, but in texture and flavor they are significantly superior.

For those of us who choose to garden, there is nothing quite like the feeling of freedom that comes when you combine the cerebral with the physical.

3 August. Began my gardening day by going to Coe accompanied by a new sprinkler on a tripod, purchased in June but today was its first trial run. The Coe garden is really hurting. Many of the toughest perennials are in pain, many drooping leaves, including Joe Pyes, purple coneflowers, sunflowers, daylilies. I had gone five days without working at Coe and my negligence is evident. By some miracle I got the sprinkler set up and after a few minutes of trial and error, I figured out how it works and it began watering the "C" bed.

Later in the morning I went to Buffalo and discovered that Gary had managed to dig two incredible holes for the two pillars that will hold up the wind chimes. One hole was enormous, and he had managed to extricate from the hole a several-hundred pound bolder that had been buried, for who knows how long, in that spot, perhaps since the last ice age left Iowa 10,000 years ago. I set up the sprinkler for watering the Labyrinth and started weeding the herb garden, which is very dry and full of weeds.

In the afternoon to Wickiup, where I cleaned up three strawberry beds and picked Mascotte beans. These were sown at the same time as the Providers in April, but today was the first crop I've harvested. In previous years they've started producing shortly after the Provider, but this year they've been much slower. I like the Mascottes because they tend to remain thin

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and tender. These beans are easy to see because they develop while at the top of the bush, above most of the leaves, but they can be a challenge because they often clump together, making it difficult to remove a bean pod while leaving behind the less mature pods. Another issue is that the stems don't always snap off easily, requiring me to hold a stem with one hand while the other separates the bean from the plant. A further challenge this evening, I was picking at 8:45 p.m., there was no moon, and it was rather dark. Fortunately the beans are light green and contrast with the darker green leaves. I hated to stop picking because it was a lovely evening, quiet, low humidity, and a comfortable temperature in the 70s.

5 August. A minor miracle: a rain shower this morning. Although it lasted about 90 minutes, it was only a light drizzle, just enough to keep me inside. The rain gauge at home registered 0.2"—not enough to faze the drought but still welcome. And the rain was accompanied by refreshingly cool temp, ideal for gardening the first week in August. After working at Coe in the morning, I drove to Wickiup in the afternoon and worked there for about five hours:

- Fertilized, mulched, and watered two cucumber beds on west side of the garden; so far the vines are showing good disease resistance.
- Weeded the garlic in the "B1" bed and dug up all the first group of Chenok Red garlic; they look in good shape.
- Hoed and weeded the small blueberry bed; one of the new plants was very dry and had a lot of brown leaves; not sure it will survive.
- Tilled, fertilized, and sowed Merlot lettuce (Hudson Valley) and New Red Fire lettuce (Pinetree) in the "J8" bed, which still has an 8' row of carrots. Covered the seeds with a compost/vermiculite mix and a thin layer of hay, which I hope will help keep the soil moist.
- Prepared "D1" bed for sowing peas.
- Harvested all the young beans I could find in the Aunt Bea pole beans. This variety is prolific but they develop strings and become over mature very quickly. I may try saving them as a dry bean and see how well they work in a winter soup.
- Weeded the herb bed, which at the moment only has a few chives and the old sage plant—an impressive clump of sage.
- Drowned dozens of potato beetle larvae that were munching on the fingerling potatoes in the "J15" bed. Saw some mouse or vole damage and placed four mouse traps in the bed, using peanut butter as the primary bait.
- Harvested our first zucchini from the "B2" bed: several oval Italians, a couple of Black Beauty, and three light-colored Palestinians; also harvested seven nice cukes, a dozen Sungold, and a lovely Mikado tomato.

10 August. Anniversary of the Derecho. Enuf said.

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12 August. After supper to Wickiup. Discovered two holes in the fence on the south side of the garden where deer had entered. One spot is where they had broken through at least three times earlier this summer. To give these unwelcome visitors more of a challenge, I attached a new deer fence to cover the old one. The other entry point was behind the compost bins. I simply needed to tie the fence to the wire that circles around that side of the garden.

The rest of the evening I was in a harvest mode. I gathered a bucket of black-eyed peas, the first time I've grown these, and I was not sure when they should be harvested. Since many of the pods were turning yellow, I assumed the appropriate time had arrived. Next stop was with the cucumbers. The General Lee in the "H2" bed have been very productive. Although I removed some sick vines and killed a few cucumber bugs, the vines still look good. I harvested the first okra of the year from the Burmese okra plants, which have lovely orchid-like flowers. They are worth planting even if one never harvests the fruit. I then turned my attention to the tomatoes. Found several ripe Cherokee Purple and Berkeley Tie-Dye; also a lot of Juliet's World (which have proven to be very productive) and Sungolds, and the first of the year Wapsipinicon Peach. In the West Field I gathered two melons from vines that had died. I'm not sure what variety of cantaloupe these are, but when I cut them up, they turned out to be very good, solid flesh, sweet, good flavor. A nice beginning to the melon harvest.

There is an old Chinese saying that if you plant pines you invite the wind.

13 August. Today was all Buffalo. I began by focusing on the herb garden, mostly weeding and more weeding. On my hands and knees, Japanese hoe in hand, creating islands for the herbs worth rescuing: large oregano colony, lemon balm, lavender, hyssop, thyme, rhubarb, several clumps of chives. Also cleaned up the strawberry bed. Dug out several small trees (leaves suggest some kind of elm) and many clumps of grass. The peony beds still need weeding but the area looks much improved. In the afternoon I focused on the Labyrinth. I weeded around the three primary trees, giving each fresh mulch and a couple gallons of water. I then mowed the Labyrinth path and the central area around the tulip tree. Before leaving I pulled up the blue stakes that MVM and I had initially used for marking the Labyrinth's walking path. As I was mowing the Labyrinth, I discovered that the water sprinkler had not reached the north quarter of the Labyrinth. There's a significant difference between the watered and un-watered paths.

One small advance today in my knowledge of weeds. At Buffalo, at home, and at Wickiup (but not at Coe), I'm often encountering a tall annual with small daisy-like blooms suggesting it is in the aster family. In one of my weed ID books, I finally identified it as Canada Fleabane, with other common names such as horsetail and mare's tail. It has a chemical that can be an irritant to horses. The leaf smell suggests carrots.

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16 August. The weekend was consumed with the church's 145th celebration—both preparing and then the sequence of events, followed by cleanup and exhaustion when it was over. Some errors in planning and snafus along the way (terrible mistake not scheduling the group photo immediately after the worship service), but overall the event went as smoothly as one could hope. We were blessed with great weather: pleasant sunshine, moderate temperature, low humidity, minimal wind, clean air, no gnats or mosquitoes.

On Saturday I did some final landscaping at Buffalo—e.g., putting mulch around the big oak stump. Mulched and watered the circular flower bed where I had planted the sunflowers and Helenium (the latter got too dry and its blossoms had turned brown—the story of my gardening career the last two months). This morning I was back in the gardening saddle. At home for an hour, weeding and watering and planting two Medusa allium and a Russian sage in the Long West bed. The new allium should complement the Medusa planted along the same walkway earlier this summer.

In the afternoon to Coe. First task was feeding my red wigglers with shredded newspaper and chopped up carrots. The worms had not been fed for over a week, another sign of my recent neglect of the garden. As for the outdoor garden, I hoed and raked the walkway in front of the “C” and “D” beds. Removed unwanted plants from the “D” bed—mostly Queen Anne's lace and goldenrod. Pulled up sedge and crabgrass in the lawn and watered spots in several beds. While many plants have been stressed by the summer drought, the perennial sunflowers at the east end of the “A2” bed look marvelous; many are as tall as the fence and covered with gorgeous light yellow blooms.

17 August. This afternoon MVM and I drove to Cedar River Garden Center. I had my eye on their collection of ornamental grasses, waiting for them to be discounted in a weekly special. This was the week, 30% off. I bought over \$400 worth of plants, including a tall stoncrop, a late-blooming red daylily, six small Little Bluestems for the front yard, and three pots of Bluestem, Switch Grass, and Fountain Grass to create a circle of grasses on the west side of the front yard. I bought four Northwind Switch Grasses, probably for the back of the “A2” bed at Coe. After supper I started clearing an area in the front yard for the Little Bluestem, an effort that will require removing a multitude of lilies-of-the-valley with their dense root system. I had once entertained high hopes for these as a ground cover, but they never produced many blooms and they aggressively overwhelmed their neighbors.

18 August. Wayne called yesterday and indicated he plans to start on the garden shed project this Saturday so I have three days to clean up that area. I also need to establish a space where I can store all the stuff we remove from the current shed before it's torn apart. This morning I worked in the deep back yard. Pulled up many big weeds: Sweet Annie (some quite impressive in size, with wood-like trunks), pigweed, nightshade, Canada fleabane, pokeweed, and a nasty, weed with small seed burs that eagerly attach themselves to any clothing or skin and are often

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impossible to pry loose. Despite these challenges, the area around the shed and studio is now reasonably open and should not present any impediments once they start building the new shed and greenhouse.

This morning at Coe I met briefly with Prof. F in the Psychology Department, and we talked about the garden and its “natural” elements. She is planning to have her class spend some time in the garden, reflecting on various ecological and sustainability issues. I recommended she read Stuart-Smith’s *Well-Gardened Mind*, and I sent her a link to my review posted to the website’s Garden Shed blog. In the afternoon I returned to Coe and cleaned up the “A2” bed, where I intend to plant the recently purchased Northwind switch grass. Unfortunately, I came across some poison ivy, close to where it appeared a couple years ago. I thought about digging it up, but since it was not close to any other plants, I decided to spray its leaves with Roundup. There’s no danger of rain for a couple of days so this treatment should create a serious problem for the ivy. About 20 feet from the ivy, I found a volunteer Joe Pye weed, nestled close to the old apartment building. I decided to leave it alone and see how well it grows in this rather inhospitable environment. Unfortunately, I also discovered that the toad lilies in the middle of this bed have died. The weigela also looks rather woeful. This is not an area that at the moment has many thriving plants.

*I always question why I bother to go to the lengths to create gardens
when I see such fine-tuned balance, everything in its place
and just getting on with it, out in the wild.*

23 August. A miracle: 1 ½" in the rain gauge—surpassing all the rain we’ve had since June. It started raining in the early morning hours and continued until after 8:00. Most welcome. Once the rain abated, I went to Coe, only to discover that a shutoff valve for the sprinkler was broken. Water was spraying from the broken connection, but there was no water pooled around the sprinkler, indicating that the break was quite recent.

At 9:30 Sarah D. (accompanied by husband and child) came by the garden to meet with MVM and me. Sarah is a Coe alum whom we had not seen for close to 20 years, which meant that we had a lot of catching up to do. Her 2-year old son was delightful and we had a wonderful conversation. Alas, she and her family needed to continue on their journey westward, so I was soon re-engaged with my garden duties, mostly weeding.

When I came home for lunch, I discovered that Wayne was working in the back yard, tearing vinyl siding from the shed. We used the old milk wagon to cart the siding down the hill to his van. The shed is now a tar paper shack—and in some ways it looks much improved. I never did like the shape of the shed (too tall in proportion to its width) and the white siding accentuated its unbalanced proportions. The black and brown shed looks rather woeful but as a ruin it is somehow more appealing, more organic. I’m reminded of Wordsworth’s dislike for

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white houses in the English Lake District, regretting how they failed to blend into the scenery. Of course, Wordsworth home at Mr. Rydall was white. :)

24 August. It's early for me to be writing in this journal (6:20 p.m.), but I can't work outside because we are in the midst of an active thunderstorm, which arrived 20 minutes ago, accompanied by voluminous thunder. We've had a couple periods of intense rain and wind, perhaps gusts of 40+mph. The initial wind was from the west, but it's shifted to the east. The rain has let up but the clouds remain an intense dark gray. I don't know how much it's rained but enuf that we have a small stream running across the laundry room floor.

I spent the morning (from 8:00 a.m. 'til noon) at Wickiup, mostly harvesting. Filled a big trug and small one with tomatoes, many varieties: Abe Lincoln, Kellogg's Breakfast, Mikado, Wapsi Peach, Berkeley Tie-dye, Lillian's Yellow, Omar's Lebanese, Cherokee Purple, etc. This was the biggest harvest of the year and far bigger than any harvest last year—diminished yields caused by cut worms, the drought, and the derecho. I filled another large trug with cukes, plus two cantaloupes and two zucchini. And then the golden and red raspberries, which produced over a quart for freezing. After harvesting, I crawled along half of the west-side raspberry patch and pulled up weeds/grass while removing old cane.

I find it curious that I found cleaning up the raspberry bed more enjoyable and satisfying than harvesting the berries—which are quite delicious. Why would that be? Part of the issue is that harvesting is so passive. The plant has done all the work and my role is simply to steal its bounty. The fruit was not created for my benefit. The plant's commitment is to producing seeds and insuring the survival of the species. But perhaps the plants understand that if they produce beautiful flowers and attract pollinators, humans will want to protect their fruit from competitors and diseases. Perhaps the plants are smarter than we give them credit for. Regardless of how we interpret the plants' intelligence, I enjoy trying to help the plant succeed. Actions such as pulling weeds enable me to feel pro-active.

Alas, much of the Wickiup garden is over-run with weeds. Many areas look rough and unkempt, particularly on the south side. With so many beds in need of attention, it's hard to know what to tackle first. With the berry patches, those beds are "in play" now—so the cleaning up makes pragmatic sense. Of course there are many garden areas yearning for my attention: the front yard at home, the back yard, the area where the greenhouse is being constructed, the herb and flower beds at Buffalo, all those flower beds at Coe. And none of those places received any attention this morning because I went to Wickiup.

27 August. I'm tired. I should be working on the September church newsletter, but my mind and body are zapped. Part of my problem is that I work up this morning at 4:20 and never could get back to sleep. And this afternoon I was drained by the summer heat/humidity. I've drunk five glasses of water, tea, peach juice, and Pepsi this evening, and I'm just beginning to feel like my system is reviving and becoming re-hydrated.

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I began the morning in the back yard. I dug up and put in plastic pots two rhubarb plants for Linda in the Library. I then dug up and set aside hostas, clearing the space where the greenhouse will go. I removed most of the hostas' scorched foliage and was pleased to discover they all had fresh growth. These dudes received no rainfall or watering all summer, and yet here at the end of August they all have fresh growth and are looking pretty good. Tough critters—got to love 'em.

I left for Coe at 10, first stopping at gas station to purchase petrol for the lawn mower and the Chevy pickup. The mowing went slowly. The day was hot and the grass had grown too tall, which meant that I had to use the grass catcher and dump the cut grass in a compost bin. While I was mowing, John from the Philosophy Department came by to eat lunch, and we chatted for 45 minutes on diverse topics, including our writing projects and gardening and deer. A nice conversation. And then Wendy and Kent arrived and we went to the Tic Toc for lunch. So I had two hours of socializing with old faculty friends—an unusual day for me.

I was back at Coe by 2:00 for a final three-hour stint. After finishing the mowing, I met with three student workers. I showed them how to clean up the gravel walkways and offered a few suggestions on pulling up crabgrass. We worked together for 45 minutes and made some progress on the lawn section in front of the NE bench, where the worst infestation is located.

A garden without shade lacks depth and a sense of the unknown. Imagine walking from bright light into a cool and dappled tunnel of greenery with its sense of mystery and intrigue and the feeling of safety and protection. Shade provides contrast and punctuation in a space and animates the ground plane, which alters from moment to moment. You also limit the range of what you can grow if your garden is relentlessly open and exposed to the light.

28 August. I was hoping it would be a pleasant day for working outdoors. The temp was okay, in the upper 70s, but the humidity was also in the 70s. So for five hours this morning I followed a pattern of working for 15-20 minutes and then coming inside, sitting in front of the fan, drinking water or iced tea, reading a few paragraphs in a magazine, allowing my body to cool down, and then returning to the combat zone.

Most of my morning concentrated on the deep back yard. I dug up more hostas and moved them into a new raised bed. I also cleaned up the area around a group of astilbe, hoping to obtain a clearer picture of what's worth saving. I cut down a large Sweet Annie and pulled up a lot of weeds and grass. While weeding one bed, I realized that the huckleberry plants I had started from seed now look almost identical to nightshade. I began to wonder if the black fruit were actually huckleberries. I do not want to confuse the huckleberries with nightshade.

A few observations on the back yard:

- Now that I've removed most of the tall Sweet Annie, it's easier to see the back bed of hostas, which are now in bloom, a lovely line of white blooms in front of the garden studio.

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- The three compost piles in the back are full. I hate to be dumping so much vegetation in the green yardies for the city to haul away, but there's no more room in those piles until I have time to rebuild and expand the bins.
- The backyard design continues to evolve and take shape. God be willing, by the end of tomorrow I may have finished constructing the new raised bed next to the firepit.

29 August. After printing and delivering the church newsletter, I spent the remainder of the day focused on various back yard issues:

- Moved several astilbe to the new raised bed, planted a group of astilbe in the SE Triangle bed, and a third group was placed around the maple trunk in the old hosta bed above the patio.
- Filled the milk wagon with miscellaneous stuff from the shed: pots, saucers, nails, bungee cords, bags of fertilizer, etc and moved everything into the garage—which meant that I first had to create spaces in the garage for these new arrivals.
- Filled a garbage can with stuff from the shed to throw away, including an old heater and a pile of plastic pots.
- Took out Cara's wooden sundial model. It's in bad shape, but I am not yet ready to throw it away, so I laid it in a flower bed next to the bridal wreath. I may just let it reside there as a ruin, a fitting symbol of my own temporal disintegration.

31 August. The first of September is for many gardeners the beginning of fall, but it came a day early this year. Today was darn near ideal early fall gardening weather: high temp of 80F, moderate humidity (though a light misty rain for a couple hours this afternoon), overcast most of the day. Wonderful to have weather where I could keep working without needing periodic "cool-down" breaks.

This morning I stayed at home, playing in the back yard. I moved more red cement blocks for the new raised bed. Dug up and replanted more hostas and astilbe. Spent a couple hours removing weeds and grass from the east-side walkway. Dug up several clumps of phlox and moved them closer to several volunteers. While weeding the chives in the rhubarb bed, I discovered several fingerling potatoes—descendants of potatoes planted in the spring of 2020. Amazing to find they had somehow survived.

After lunch I drove to Coe and revisited the gravel walkway east of the "L" bed, a walkway that I cleaned up earlier this summer. This time I was more thorough and weeded the cracks between the bricks that border the walkway.

Today I experienced a couple of downers, one expected, one not. The expected disappointment was that I missed another garden blog deadline. The subject for today's posting was supposed to be an essay exploring the parallels and analogies between teaching and gardening. So far I have no draft, just random thoughts, wandering ruminations. I can also blame the beautiful gardening weather with my failure to make much progress on this week's

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Monday Morning Garden Report, though I did manage to compose two paragraphs and generated a list of bulleted points. Maybe tomorrow I'll produce a draft. As for the unexpected downer, I read my first two blog posts from 2016. It was embarrassing to find so many simple, obvious editing errors in both postings. Did I post them without reading what I wrote? It was particularly disheartening to think they have been posted for several years. At least with blog posts, it is possible to go back and correct such errors. This winter I must catch up on completing old blog posts and edit my old submissions—at least ones that I suspect did not go through a serious editing process.

At five I was propagating primrose seed in yogurt pots and making gardens on the roof of my self-styled mud and brick troll house. I liked the idea that I could fashion little worlds of my own from raw materials and, once I discovered the alchemy of growth, I was hooked. Soil, water and attention seemed to be all the ingredients required.

1 September. At Coe this afternoon for four hours. The most notable event is that I was stung by a wasp. Actually stung twice, one on the left knee cap and once just above the ankle. This unprovoked attack occurred while I was pulling weeds out of the crevice garden. I spotted a yellow and brown wasp, a variety I could not recall having seen before. Since he was flying around and landing on plants close to where I was working, I decided to move to a different area and let the wasp rule his terrain without my interference. As I picked up my pile and grass and weeds, I suddenly felt a pain around my left knee, and a second or two later felt a sharp pain near the bottom of my left leg. When I pulled up my pant leg, the wasp flew out. For the next 30-40 minutes I would periodically feel a pain in both areas, an annoying sting that would come and then fade away. I can't recall the last time I was stung by a wasp or bee, but it's certainly been several years—which is surprising if one considers how much time I spend around these stinging critters. But I try to leave them alone, and in most instances they have ignored me.

2 September. Another beautiful day--but with an unusual rhythm. My gardening began with three hours at Wickiup, harvesting. The first hour was absorbed with raspberries. They require patient attentiveness because the berries are often fragile, especially the golden "champagne" variety. I ended up with a trug about 1/3 full, perhaps three quarts. The next crop was carrots, digging up three varieties in the O2 raised bed. The yellow Amarillos were disappointing—not as many full-sized carrots as last year. One carrot thought it was in its second year and produced a tall stalk, instead of a large root, and was in bloom. The Italian Berlicum carrots were okay, though a bit stumpy. A few had been gnawed on, though not recently. My handwritten information on the sign for the third row was worn away and unreadable. Most of those carrots were thin, long, and straight. All the carrots are now in a bucket of water; tomorrow morning I'll scrub them and store them in the refrigerator.

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After the carrots, I dug up two batches of garlic. The elephant garlic were not enormous but notably larger than the true garlic varieties. Some remained intact when I dug them but others immediately separated into individual cloves. None were soft, none with fresh roots. I also dug up about 20 Bogatyr (spelling?) hardneck garlic, all in good shape. After the carrots and garlic, I filled the large trug with peppers, several varieties. The plants look in good shape, potentially a record-breaking season. And in the freezer we still have several bags of frozen peppers from last summer.

Finally, the tomatoes. I filled one small trug with Juliet's World. The three vines started producing early and are still going strong. I filled two large trugs with tomatoes from the "C2" bed—and I still had not reached the end of the row, gathering less than half of the ripe tomatoes. Tomorrow I'll harvest the remainders.

In the afternoon at Coe, three hours working on the gravel walkway in front of the "I" bed. Today was slow going because of the grass, purslane, and spurge growing in the cracks between the bricks. The root knife is invaluable in digging out the roots, but it ain't easy. I still have more of that walkway section to hoe and rake. It would not surprise me that over half of my hours in the Coe garden during the summer are spent weeding/hoeing/raking the gravel paths and their borders. I have a deep affection for those walkways but their upkeep can be exhausting.

3 September. I was scheduled to meet an FYS class in the garden this morning at 11:30. Because of the imminent rain in the forecast, I thought the session might be postponed, but the professor decided to proceed as planned. When we started, it was a light drizzle, but after a couple minutes, the rain became more intense. I quickly condensed my leisurely 20-minute introduction into a five-minute sprint. To their credit, the students were uncomplaining and maintained an appearance of respectful interest. I intended to talk about the British gardening tradition, the evolution of a more naturalistic gardening style at the end of the 19th century, the relationship between native and "exotic" imports, etc. My plan was to conclude by asking how much they would be willing to pay per year, per person, to keep this kind of garden open and functioning at Coe. Of course, all of those topics were left for another day. [*As it turned out the session was more productive than I had envisioned: two of the students in that class later became student garden assistants.*]

4 September. In the afternoon to Wickiup. I began by weeding the first row of potatoes and digging up four hills of Yukon Gold and five hills of Red Chieftain (from High Mowing). The potatoes for both varieties tend to remain close to the center and the surface, so they are relatively easy to dig. I harvested a good crop of nice-sized potatoes. I then shifted to the two "W" beds in the main garden, where I had planted the Russian Banana fingerlings. Those beds had experienced a lot of mouse traffic, and my mousetraps had killed several mice in the past

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month. While I saw occasional evidence of mouse paths, I saw only minor damage in the ten hills I harvested. A crop of lovely small potatoes, perfect for roasting.

5 September. Today would have been an ideal day for gardening, but my life became consumed with processing the spoils of gardening: an afternoon of canning whole tomatoes and freezing two gallons of tomato juice--which will be transformed into spaghetti sauce come January. Fortunately this morning, after church, I did manage a trip to Wickiup and spent two hours harvesting tomatoes and raspberries. I took along my garden notebook and wrote down a few comments on the tomato varieties:

- Arkansas Traveler: Good, steady production of medium-sized, nicely developed, red fruit; one of my favorites.
- Galahad: Well-formed, evenly developed orange fruit; prolific and still going strong; healthy looking plants.
- Hungarian Heart: Modest production; two plants, each with only a couple small green tomatoes.
- Dr. Wyche's Yellow: Large, well-formed orange tomatoes; good production.
- Juliet's World: Looks like a Roma in shape and size, but excellent for fresh eating; juicy, with good texture and flavor; an early producer and very productive; blemish-free fruit; very few cracks.
- Giant Belgian: Large, red fruit but development of individual fruit has been uneven; the tops of the fruit remain yellow/green.
- White Currant: Sprawling (well over 10'); prolific production of small, light yellow fruit; no blemishes.
- Nebraska Wedding: Large, orange fruit; consistently even development; good production.
- Omar's Lebanese: Red fruit, uneven fruit development; small production.
- Roughwood Golden Plum: Moderate-size, yellow fruit; these are just beginning to ripen.
- Lemon Boy: Over the past five years, this has been one of the garden's top performers, but this year both plants were set back by cut worm damage and have never recovered.
- Lillian's Yellow: Moderate production this year but this remains my favorite slicing tomato; very juicy, delicious flavor.
- Mikado: Large, red fruit, ; good, even fruit development; prolific, one of the garden's top producers.
- Mariana's Peace: Moderate to large red fruit; modest production; fruit develops nicely.
- Mountain Merit: Moderate-sized red fruit; over a dozen on the vine; nice, even fruit development.
- Tasty Pink Beefsteak: Big fruit; over a dozen on the vine but uneven development; many black spots on fruit.
- Sungold: As always, great production of a marvelous tasting small tomato.

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- Striped German: Moderate to large fruit; half-dozen on vine; similar to Kozula 60; orange/yellow fruit with reddish bottoms.
- Siberian: Small to moderate-sized red fruit; modest production.
- Thessalonika: Perhaps my top-producing tomato last year, but this year only modest production on the two plants.
- Upstate Oxheart: Many large fruit but tops have remained undeveloped; major problems with black spots on fruit.
- Wapsipinicon Peach: Prolific production of juicy, modest-sized, smooth-tasting fruit.

6 September. It's 7:30 p.m. and I'm sitting on our deck, the second time this summer. The sun has just set, temp about 80, no breeze, a beautiful evening, enjoying the ebb and flow of the locust orchestra. It's such a wonderful sound, a summer evening's figured bass continuo, thousands of tiny harpsichords enriching our lives for untold millennium. My back is to the setting sun. Before me is the Warde Hall cross on the Mount Mercy campus. To my right the back yard garden, now dominated by Canada goldenrod, though many have been trimmed back because of their top heavy flower heads, leaning over the pathways, obstructing traffic. The goldenrod is accompanied by the yellow Isabella zinnias in the Long West Bed, the fountain grass this side of the gooseberries, the sunflower sentinels stationed at several locations—most notably the large contingent in the SE Triangle Bed. There are still several groups of coreopsis pumping out blooms and two great clumps of *Rudbeckia* in the two triangle beds. The back yard is a long way from becoming a coherent garden, but it's hard to believe how much better it looks than it did in September of 2020, just four weeks after the derecho. A year ago all the large maple and oak trunks were still lying across the yard, a virtually impenetrable terrain.

My morning was spent in the kitchen preparing a noon meal for K & T: gluten-free meatloaf, baked carrots with fingerling potatoes, fried eggplant with garlic and sweet peppers, white currant tomatoes, and cucumbers in vinegar with sugar and diced onions. Unfortunately I couldn't serve the coleslaw I made yesterday because it was not stored in a certified gluten-free container.

After lunch I worked in the front yard, trying to settle on a final arrangement for the stepping stone paths. With one exception, the paths follow the pre-derecho arrangement, but the new layout is simpler and easier to follow. After the stepping stones were in place, I set out the ornamental grasses purchased in August at Cedar River Garden Center and asked MVM to assess the layout. After making a couple of minor adjustments, I started planting the grasses. I began with a group of six little bluestem, which I arranged in a triangle near the center of the yard, and then planted the big zebra miscanthus not far from the driveway. The latter planting took some time because I had to remove a bunch of lily-of-the-valley, and their root system is quite obstreperous.

A mosquito just found me and it's now 7:55 p.m., too dark to see what I'm writing.

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7 September. Began the day at the Cardio Clinic next to Mercy Hospital for a stress test on the heart. If I can correctly interpret the numbers they posted to MyChart, the results came back “normal.” Apparently the heart data revealed no major abnormalities in the heart or circulation. *[By a remarkable coincidence, one year later on the same date I had a heart attack, requiring hospitalization and a stint inserted in an artery to improve blood flow. In a conversation with one of my physicians, he indicated that the stress test should have revealed the artery issue, and he had no idea why the test failed. Fortunately the stint is working, and I feel much stronger than I did in the months prior to the heart attack.]*

I arrived at the Coe garden about 10 and worked there all day. Most of my efforts were focused on the central gravel walkways leading to the fountain. I tried to be thorough in removing weeds from between the bricks. I also dug up a lot of crabgrass and creeping spurge in the SW lawn quadrant, which has more crabgrass than I first suspected. I’ve been using the small root knife to create a distinct line of separation between the turf and the rows of red bricks around the walkways. This is the first time I’ve tried to establish that clean edging, and it appears this improves the appearance of the lawn. I’m also hoping it may reduce the emigration of grass and weeds into the bricks and gravel. Perhaps once the distinct edging is established, it will be easier to maintain. Hope springs eternal.

At home after supper, I worked in the front garden (I’ve just decided to experiment and start identifying this space as a front “garden”: it feels to me more like a garden than a yard) and planted four ornamental grasses purchased at Cedar River. I chose a spot for the big bluestem at the curb where our property meets the Herder’s front yard. Its placement should complement the tall ornamental grass next to the electric pole on the opposite corner of the yard.

Editing the garden is a gradual process of elimination, and I like to let nature take its course and for foliage to find its way back into the ground in its own time.

8 September. Four hours this morning at Wickiup. The first two hours were absorbed in weeding tomatoes, raspberries, asparagus, and sweet potatoes (which involved removing the enormous Hopi Red Amaranth that had spread its branches over the sweet potato bed). At ten I switched gears to a harvest mode, with the following results:

- Filled a small trug with cucumbers, mostly General Lee and Poinsett 76, but also a couple Max Pack F1 pickling (from the O4 trellis bed), a couple nice Shintokiwa cukes from the Y2 trellis bed, and most surprising a couple of cukes from the Manny F1 Beit Alpha vines in the R3 bed. I thought those plants were dead, but at least two have revived and started producing more fruit.
- Dug up about 1/3 of the shallots in J14. I’ll dig up the remainder later this week.
- Dug up all the onions in the D2 bed, sprinkled among the pole beans; a few had gone soft but most were good-sized and firm.

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- Harvested 5 or 6 small eggplants, but those plants in the K2 bed are very disappointing; the plants at home behind the garage are twice as large and producing much larger fruit. I have no explanation for why the Wickiup eggplants are doing so poorly.

I concluded my morning harvest by gathering the tomatoes in the L1 & L2 beds. Filled two large and two small trugs. Some plants have been remarkably productive. A few observations.

- Dad's Sweet Delicious: beautiful looking yellow fruit; even development, few blemishes; today was the first significant harvest of these tomatoes.
- Wapsipinicon Peach: today may have been an all-time record; harvested over 30 tomatoes on four vines and there are still dozens of green tomatoes on the way; amazing contrast with last year when the total harvest was three small Wapsi Peaches.
- Cherokee Purple: a disappointing year; the size and number of tomatoes is smaller than in previous years.
- Berkeley Tie-Dye: they may have been last year's #1 producer; this year the fruit are not developing evenly, and many of today's fruit were spoiled.
- Brandywine: nice, firm, round, red fruit; moderate size, few blemishes.
- Bloody Butcher: rather small fruit, fewer than ten tomatoes per vine.
- Abe Lincoln: as in previous years, steady, reliable production of moderate-sized, blemish free tomatoes.
- Mikado & Kozula 60: so far this year's top two performers; both have produced a large number of big slicing tomatoes.
- Lemon Boy: today was the first time this summer I've picked a good number of Lemon Boys.
- Livingston's Honor Bright: a relatively small vine; has been slow to produce any ripe tomatoes, but today I picked several nice fruit.

10 September. Working at Coe this afternoon, I decided it was too hot working on a gravel walkway in the sun so I spent a couple hours in the shade of the "G" bed, tackling the following tasks:

- Weeded the hellebore bed; the hellebores handled the drought with no apparent problems and look much better than I would have expected.
- Trimmed the three remaining red twig dogwood; they had several dead branches and were looking rather ungainly.
- Pulled up several Queen Anne's lace, trying to disrupt their seed dispersal plans.
- Cut back several swamp milkweeds.
- In the rain garden, dug up a common weed (I think it's a kind of persicaria) that loves the rain garden soil and has become mixed in with the astilbe. The nearby blue lobelia have notably expanded their presence in the garden and have many more blooms than I had expected; several plants have popped up a couple feet from their mothers.
- Trimmed back the viburnum so it's no longer hanging over the wood chip path and weeded the path.

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The “G” bed is intended to be a “bit wild,” but it’s a bit wilder than I would like. On the plus side, it was heartening to see the expansion of the blue lobelia, one of the garden’s most beautiful late summer flowers.

Gardening is not a discipline that is truly in tune with ecology.

12 September. Most of the day involved attending a worship service, cooking, doing laundry, and paying bills, but I did manage two hours digging up lily-of-the-valley in the front garden. I used the triangle hoe with the sharp point, and it did a good job cutting through the thick mass of *Convallaria* roots. Because all the compost piles and bins are full, most of the roots went into a green yardie for the city. I hate to lose that gorgeous organic material, but my main priority is cleaning the front garden so we can finish the stepping stone path and replant the daylilies. I read yesterday that the fall is an excellent time for replanting daylilies, but they should have at least a month in their new location before the first real freeze. There’s a decent change we are now in our final month.

13 September. Finalized negotiations with Megan for a performance of her one-woman play “The Break” at the garden on Monday evening, October 4, with sponsorship by the Theatre Department, English Department, Writing Center, and Alumni House Garden. This is a first. Let’s hope it all works out.

14 September. Sitting on the deck, writing in my journal. A lovely evening, temp in the 70s, no breeze, half moon just above the tree tops, purple and rose sunset, an idyllic culmination to another 8-hour gardening day at Coe. As was true yesterday, near total dedication to the gravel walkways, including several hours with root knife, trimming sod along the red brick borders. I also did a lot of raking. Everything is weed free and the gravel raked smoother around the fountain, and I’m close to being done with the “D-E-F” walkway. At 5:00 I met with two new first-year garden assistants and gave them a 30-minute introduction to various garden tasks.

BTW, while sitting on our deck, writing in my journal, I’m wearing my Route 66 baseball cap. I bought this cap ten years ago when I taught the Route 66 May Term course, but I believe this is the first time I’ve ever worn it. I don’t often wear baseball caps, and I would normally not choose this hat because it’s white and would easily look dirty. But wearing it as an occasional deck hat seems just right. It’s now 7:36 and getting dark. It will soon be impossible to see my Lamy’s black ink marks on the page. The moon is now behind a neighbor’s tree, the world continues to rotate, and in the distance I hear police and ambulance sirens.

15 September. A psychological breakthrough. When I arrived at Coe this morning, I didn’t feel compelled to work on the gravel walkways. While they aren’t done, it felt okay to start tackling other jobs. So I headed to the “M2” bed and started cleaning up the rock and crevice

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gardens—and the mess that has developed around the espalier flowering crab. The rock garden was easiest because its landscape is covered by the sedum, phlox, thyme, and a small speedwell. All I had to do was pull up a few solitary cranesbill and a couple of redbuds. The espalier bed required more effort, particularly in pruning the suckers popping up from the tree's roots. Those roots need to be covered with a landscape fabric and a thick layer of mulch. As for the crevice garden, that project was the most time-consuming. I pulled up the creeping spurge, foxtail, purslane, sorrel, and the dozens of the little sedum growing on the gravel walkway next to the large limestone blocks. A hen and chicks that had been covered by a myrtle spurge is now in the open. I dug out a large bloody cranesbill—though I certainly did not find all its roots. And, of course, I left all the cleomes. Although they are too tall for the bed, they are still in bloom. It's remarkable how well those 4' annuals with such a small root system handled the summer heat and drought.

20 September. No gardening yesterday because I was finishing our taxes for 2020. It was a good day for working on a project indoors because it was quite hot for so late in the summer. Once my mind entered the tax preparation groove, the tabulating and calculating went quite smoothly, and I had everything finished by 8:00 p.m.

This morning Wayne was here before 7:00 a.m. to begin the second phase of dismantling the old garden shed. After removing the roof and siding in the morning, he started installing the new plywood. Supposedly the new foundation for the greenhouse will be poured later this week. All my gardening was at Coe, beginning with the "B" bed in the area round the pergola and the peninsula. I pulled up Queen Anne's lace and a bunch of ox-eye daisies, dug up swamp milkweed and horsetail and gooseneck, and removed two red twig dogwood (both on death's door). In the afternoon I switched to the "A1" bed next to the patio. In the raised bed I installed two black cathedral supports to hold up the flopping asters and goldenrod—with only marginal success. Next year I need to cut those stalks back in late June or early July so the flower heads don't need any extra support.

22 September. The first day of fall. Perfect gardening weather, with high temp in the mid 70s. Unfortunately, just enough cloud cover that the seasonal sundial could not record the equinox at noon. The big news at home is that they poured the cement for the greenhouse slab. This evening MVM used a nail to record "RMVM 9/21" in the damp cement. One wonders who will eventually come across that inscription, perhaps 50 years from now, and try to guess who was RMVM.

As for gardening, it was all at Coe, divided into three phases. In the morning I trimmed the yews on the north side. They are all in good condition, the foliage a dark green and clean looking. Several branches in the "K" bed have lovely pinkish red fruit. I wonder if the seeds could be planted and would germinate. The only section of yews not yet pruned are in the SE corner—and I still need to prune the viburnums across the east end. In preparing to finish the

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“K” bed yews, I also cleaned up the “K” bed. I cut back most of the *Platycodon* seedheads—though I left a few plants that still have fresh blue blooms. The goldenrod in the bed were flopping over and the blooms past their prime, so I pulled out of the ground most of those plants. The big *Miscanthus* were flopping over, so I installed two more plant supports to assist those already in place. I’ve ordered four more of Cara’s big steel frames and they should be ready for next spring. After dealing with the *Miscanthus*, I turned my attention to the area around the four *Amsonia*, three of which were purchased from Cedar River Garden Center earlier this summer. Some animal had again been digging around their roots and in one case the roots were exposed, but unlike earlier this summer—when two of the plants had been yanked out of the ground—all of the plants were still in their assigned positions.

While weeding around the lone red hot poker, I noticed some leaves on a small plant that I initially guessed was a solitary vetch. But before I pulled it up, I saw the plant had tiny, light blue flowers, and then I remembered that Wendy had given me this plant several years ago, neither of us knowing its name or preferred growing conditions. Somehow, despite my disregard for its existence, it had survived, surrounded by much larger plants, able to exist without my assistance. The blooms are quite lovely, though also quite small and easily missed.

There is part of me that wants to put everything on hold at the moment, to leave the remaining bulbs I have yet to get in the ground and to risk not bringing in the tender perennials in their pots. I want to leave the gutters to fill with leaves, the runner beans on their tripods to topple, the compost heap unturned and the veggie patch to moulder. I want to ignore all the tasks that stop me looking up and to put gardening aside for a while to enjoy the magnitude of autumn.

24 September. After supper I did some weeding in the Long East bed while periodically looking up at a gorgeous sunset, an orange/pink frosting across the tops of the scattered clouds in the west. As I was preparing to remove a large purslane by the clothesline pole, I noticed that the bed now has a thriving colony of *Nigella*—“love-in-a-mist.” These are the progeny of a single plant transplanted from the Coe garden this spring. These *Nigella* have initiated a second bloom cycle, with several blue flowers above their feathery foliage. I’m curious why this *Nigella* has produced a late-summer bloom sequence. As far as I can recall, the *Nigella* at Coe have never produced any blooms this late in the year. I’m also excited to see the area covered with baby *Nigella*. Let’s hope they survive the winter and produce bouquet of gorgeous blue flowers in the spring. [*They did survive and this colony has continued to expand.*]

26 September. K. and Theo were here all day so K. could participate in an online Zoom meeting. In the morning, after an hour of gardening, I came in the house to take care of Theo and fix lunch: cherry tomatoes, cukes and onions in vinegar and sugar, roasted carrots and fingerling potatoes, and a scrambled egg skillet dish with sweet peppers, garlic, eggplant, sliced ham, and shredded cheese. After lunch. Theo and I worked together outside. I would dig

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up dandelions and other unwanted weeds and hand them to Theo. He would put them in the red Radio Flyer wagon, pull the wagon to the compost pile, and throw his load on the pile. Not the fastest system for transporting future compost, but he stuck with it for half a dozen trips, and we got some real weeding accomplished. As a reward, we came inside about 4:00 p.m., washed our hands, and ate ice cream. He's become adept at eating ice cream with a spoon and consumed his three scoops with no problem.

This evening I was reading a short piece online and came across a reference to the research of Ray Oldenburg on the importance of a Third Place where one can step outside the two places that dominate most of someone's life: family and work. The reference included a list of potential third places, including parks and gardens. I was reminded of Prof. Neal Woodruff's advice when I was hired to direct the Writing Center. He told me that such a program should provide student writers with a "third voice"—a perspective distinct from that of either the student writer or the instructor. The writing consultant could give writers and faculty an opportunity to view the paper and its subject from a fresh angle, independent of the other participants in this conversation. Reading this online reference to a third place initiated my own reflections on the possible parallels between a writing center as site for the third voice and a garden as a third place, a site where people can enjoy a freedom from the constraints that work and family may impose of their lives.

28 September. The mosquitoes found me at 6:15 this evening at Wickiup, two hours after my arrival. During those evening hours I concentrated on harvesting:

- Garlic
- White snow peas (some pods quite mature but many were still in the tender snow pea phase)
- B & W Runner Beans (the first time I've ever harvested runner beans; only three plants but a lot of beans)
- Four Zucchini (three Black Beauty and one White Lebanese)
- A trug full of Sweet Peppers (mostly Sweet Banana & Felicity)
- Four Eggplants (all undersized)
- Seven Cucumbers (mostly Japanese variety; all should have been picked several days ago)
- Two large Cabbage heads (one green, one purple)
- A celeriac (first time I've harvested this vegetable; I'm still not sure what I've grown or what to do with it)
- King of Garden Lima Beans
- Half dozen small Okra (I've done a terrible job picking the okra before they grow too large).
- Two small Skin-of-the-Toad Melons (the vines had died; I don't have much faith they will be very good)
- A large, odd-shaped, striped Watermelon (it had split on one end, probably over-ripe)
- A pint of red Raspberries (the gold are finished for the year).

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- Two trugs of Tomatoes (the bonanza were over 100 Juliet's World tomatoes from two plants; also a large number of Arkansas Traveler and Wapsipinicon Peach; all three varieties still have large numbers of green fruit).

I was in the midst of harvesting the Juliet's World fruit when squads of mosquitoes found me. I had encountered a few individuals earlier but this assault was relentless. Mosquitoes are not usually a problem at Wickiup, but the last three weeks they have been nasty in the evening as the sun is setting.

30 September. This afternoon at Coe I worked on the two raised "E" bed. In the east bed, I trimmed the oregano. Because of the oregano's expansive inclinations, I may let it have free rein (or is it "reign"?) over most of the bed and put the thyme, tarragon, basil, and rosemary in large pots, surrounded by the oregano. The sage and rue can survive in co-existence with oregano but the thyme, tarragon, and basil need protection. It appears the Maltese Cross has died, perhaps the victim of the dry summer. I have several I started from seed that are still in pots so I may plant them in this bed to replace the crosses that have disappeared. After straightening up the herb beds, I hoed and raked the surrounding gravel walkways. Everything now looks much spiffier.

In the evening I returned to Coe with two packages that contained a 6' tall privacy screen. After assembling it, I set it up on the gravel walkway in front of the east gate. I was hoping the screen would obscure the view of "A" avenue. While the screen looks okay, it's not large enough to block our view of the road. There's also the problem, which I should have foreseen, that the screen is not easily moved, and there are many instances when one needs easy access to the east gate. So I think I will move the screen to the "A2" bed and use it to break up the the apartment building's bland vinyl siding that borders the garden.

As for the shed/greenhouse project at home, today Wayne installed the greenhouse roof, and the structure looks very nice. Today I started moving tools and supplies from the garden studio into the shed. That transfer gives me back my outdoor office so I can use the computer. I have a ton of unfinished writing projects (old Monday Morning Garden Reports, blog posts, etc), but I also need to keep using daylight hours for gardening. Many of the writing projects may need to wait until later in the fall and winter months.

The autumn is so much bigger than we are, and as humble gardeners it is unwise for us to try to fight it head on. Goodness knows how many tonnes of leaves there are to come down yet or what profound but microscopic activity we are missing as the life in the garden prepares for the dormant season. There is the smell of rot in the air, a spill in the beds and the paths are a slew of rampant nasturtium, and if I want to hang on to let as much goodness as possible be drawn back to earth, I have little choice but to let it all happen and take solace in the relief of not having to keep up appearances.