

Summer 2023 Garden Kalendar

This Summer 2023 Garden Kalendar is composed of edited excerpts from my daily, hand-written garden journal entries from June 1 to September 30 in 2022--accompanied by a few brief commentaries on those passages. The journal records my work in four gardens:

- The Alumni House Garden at Coe;
- A half-acre vegetable garden on a small farm adjacent to the Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center near Toddville (a garden typically identified as the Wickiup garden);
- The gardens and landscape at Buffalo United Methodist Church, a small church not far from Mount Mercy College;
- 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 2022. A map of the Alumni House Garden map is posted on the website's "map" page. As for the italicized quotations occasionally inserted between journal entries, they come from Camille T. Dungy's memoir *Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden*, a garden book I was reading while editing this Kalendar text. Because of the length of this document, the complete Summer 2023 Kalendar is posted as a pdf. ~Bob

*Whether a plot in a yard or pots in a window, every politically engaged person should have a garden. By politically engaged, I mean everyone with a vested interest in the direction the people on this planet take in relationship to others. We should all take some time to plant life in the soil.
Even when such planting isn't easy.*

Excerpts from 2023 Garden Journal

1 July 2022. My first task this morning was visiting the Mercy Hospital Pulmonology Clinic. The nurse informed me that their tests had not detected any possible causes for my shortness of breath. She suggested a couple exercises that might help improve my breathing, but she really offered no substantive options for improvement. Since I've lived with the condition for over two years, I suppose I'll just continue plugging along.

After the hospital trip, I went to the Wickiup garden for a couple hours and returned for another four hours in the afternoon--though the second trip involved a stop at Theisen's to purchase ten bags of humus/manure and a new wheelbarrow. As soon as I unloaded the new wheelbarrow at Wickiup, I discovered it's a dramatic improvement over the old red wheelbarrow that I inherited from Culver's: light-weight, easy to guide, rolls smoothly, better ground clearance, handles much larger loads. Its first task was moving hay from a large hay bale into the garden to use as mulch. I love the odor of the freshly baled hay. I learned from

Marty that these bales weigh about 1500 lbs, and one bale would sell for \$50-75, depending on demand, quality of hay, etc.

4 July. I had intended to sit on the deck while composing this evening's journal entry, but due to the uncomfortable heat and humidity I have moved into the air conditioned sun room and am observing the back yard garden through the room's large glass doors. A few observations:

- The Patio Bed. The area in front of our sliding door is dominated by the *Asclepias tuberosa*, a beautiful 2' tall mound of orange blooms. The blue *Platycodon grandiflorus* blooms are just opening up; the white shasta daisies are fully open. The chicory are vigorously blooming, but they need to be dug up: they are too tall for the bed. On the west side of the maple stump are many tall weeds that need removal, but fortunately the coneflowers, astilbe, and hostas are holding their own and are all in bloom. The ribbon grass (*Phalaris arundinacea* var. *picta*, a cultivar of reed canary grass) looks the best since it was first planted in that spot 30 years ago. Now that the maple trees are gone, it thrives in the full sun. I had thought about trying to confine the *Phalaris* or removing it, but now I'm inclined to leave it since this variegated grass provides an attractive mass with multi-season interest. [*I've discovered the key to the Phalaris is mowing it early in the summer; it soon bounces back with improved color variegation and continues to look quite fresh into the fall.*]
- The East Long Bed. The bed is dominated by the *Baptisia* along the back of the bed, the daffodil foliage (turning brown but not yet ready to be removed), and the relentless wormwood, which I'm constantly pulling up, a practice that seems to stimulate even more growth. Several coreopsis have bloomed—though one at the north end of the bed didn't survive the winter. Several delphinium have bloomed, but they are all top heavy and leaning over; they need either plant supports or to be gathered into a larger mass. The hyssop I planted last summer, though not yet blooming, are attractive with their lovely light-green foliage. The allium are just getting ready to bloom. One primrose has a large yellow bloom, a stunning flower that it only lasts for a day.
- West Long Bed. As with the east-side bed, still a lot of dying daffodil foliage—and also a lot of gooseneck, much of it now in bloom. The dark leaf elderberry's primary trunk has died, but it has one side branch that is growing. Although there is no evidence that any of last year's zinnias managed to self-seed, the wildflower mix has produced many lovely small flowers, several of which I can't identify. The tall veronica is in full bloom, with its gorgeous little magenta flowers. Like the *Phalaris*, the two veronica are thrilled with the demise of the big sugar maple and the daylong sunshine. The dwarf lilac only had one bloom this spring, but perhaps it needs more time to become a vigorous bloomer. The nearby azalea had a lovely array of blooms lasting about two weeks.

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- SE Triangle Bed: Everything looks good though the bed could use more plants. At the moment the bed is dominated by the tall metal sunflower purchased in the antique store in Barnes, Kansas. There are also a couple of real sunflowers that have popped up, apparently the progeny of the huge sunflower in this bed last year. The burgundy penstemon look great, and the two weigela just finished a long bloom cycle. The millennium allium are preparing to bloom. Although not thriving, a few of the astilbe transplants have survived and produced a few blooms.
- NW Triangle Bed. This is the garden's cleanest, best-mannered bed. The bee balm is in bloom, also the daylilies and the 7' tall rudbeckia. The ornamental grasses look marvelous. Something has been eating the leaves of the two large columbine, but their yellow blooms were stunning, lasting over a month.
- Two Long Oval Beds. One notable success has been the red yarrow, great mounds of foliage with long-lasting blooms, but after the big rain they were sprawled all over and have not bounced back; they need to be cut back. *[After the pruning, they recovered beautifully and entered a second bloom cycle, less prolific than the first round but still with many blooms lasting into October.]* As for the lavender, a mixed bag: some are in excellent condition with uniform foliage and blooms; others have died or are partially dead. *[Of the three varieties of lavender planted in the spring of 2021, the Phenomenal Lavender from Richters has been the star performer: thick foliage, long-lasting blooms, undeterred by summer drought or Iowa winters. Very impressive.]* The two sedums have both produced tall flower stalks with lovely, distinctive blooms. We cleaned out the weeds and grass about two weeks ago from both beds and they are now quite spiffy.
- Old Maple Bed. It looks rather wild; a healthy assortment of wild flowers; it needs some serious weeding.
- Stumpery. It needs serious weeding and some taller flowers (asters, phlox, goldenrod) should be removed—but that means moving some of the stumps so I can reach the plants' roots. The comfrey has done well, but I've not yet harvested any leaves for the compost tea.
- Red Raspberry Bed. The bed is in good shape, reasonably clear of weeds; we have new cane in all areas. Just a few berries left to harvest.
- Black Raspberry Bed. Many new plants that have produced a few berries; the bed needs serious weeding. The rose of sharon at the south end of the bed has really grown, but it's engulfed in weeds. I need to find a new home for this beautiful plant though I'm undecided where to put it.
- Astilbe/Peony Bed: These astilbe are still in bloom, along with many fleabane and a couple dandelions; the whole bed needs weeding, as does the nearby raised bed with the hostas.

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We may have been trained to revile these plants, but dandelions help our yard in many ways. They find bare spots in the hard ground where grass roots can't penetrate and, opportunists that they are, and hard workers, they dig in, sending taproots as deep as three feet. Breaking up nonproductive dirt, they start to create healthy, receptive soil.

5 July. A brutal day, simply brutal. The temp was in the 80s when I left for Coe shortly after 8 a.m. The temp this afternoon reached upper 90s, with heat index between 105 & 110F. After watering plants at Coe, I drove to Wickiup and worked there until about 12:30, when I was finally beaten down by the heat. At Wickiup, I weeded one of the "J" beds, where I hope to plant lima beans. Today I harvested 1/3 gallon of black raspberries (would have picked double that amount but had to quit because of the heat) and harvested peas in the "S4" bed. I pulled up half of the peas and will clean up the rest of the bed so I can replant at the end of the month. Harvested three cucumbers and had them in a vinegar/sugar/onion mix this evening for supper. We're beginning to move into the summer veggie routine. The eggplants are a notable disappointment, just not growing, perhaps sapped by the flea beetles. The cucumbers and zucchini, on the other hand, look great. Today I harvested ten zucchini and many, many more on the way. I suppose I planted too many zucchini, but the ones we don't eat or freeze or give away will make good compost. Today for lunch I fried zucchini with frozen peppers and fresh peas, then topped with shredded Swiss cheese. Turned out okay.

6 July. Over five hours at Wickiup, coming home at 1:30. While it was humid, the temp was in the 80s, steady cloud cover, decent breeze, so I could keep working at a steady pace—though I was drenched in sweat by noon. I had intended to sow some veggies, but once I got into the "weed attack" mode, the seeds were set aside for another day. In preparation for sowing, I concentrated on tidying up three "J" beds, two of which were over-run with purslane.

7 July. The morning did not go as planned. I got off to a good start, on the road to Wickiup shortly after 7 am. The forecast was for temp in low 80s and cloudy, an accurate prediction. But on the way, the driver's window of the S-10 came off track, and I could not get it rolled back up. While struggling with that problem, I received a phone call from three Coe alums who were at the Coe garden and wondering if I would be there this morning. Since I had not seen two of them for several years, I immediately drove back to Coe and had a delightful hour catching up on people's lives. The visit concluded with a thirty-minute tour of the garden, the first time I had spent any significant time in the garden for the past week. I was surprised by how wild and big so many plants had become. A lot of plants crowded together into tight spaces. Some serious thinning is in order.

8 July. This morning was a toad-strangler, alas, what my parents would have classified as “raining pitchforks and nigger babies.” I wonder if they ever stopped to think about that imagery. According to two rain gauges at home, it rained 3 3/4" in less than two hours. For over thirty minutes it was a full blast. This downpour coincided with me driving the pickup to the auto repair shop to have the broken window’s mechanism repaired. Fortunately, the wind was not blowing hard and only a small amount of rain came in through the open window.

Because of the rain, all my gardening today was indoors. In the morning I made a basil pesto, using the African nunum leaves I harvested from plants in the greenhouse. After chopping up the basil in the food processor with olive oil, I added a little lemon juice. I put half of what I made with zucchini chunks fried with fresh shallots and garlic, and spread that mixture over pasta and topped with Parmesan cheese. Hard to go wrong with Parmesan.

9 July. Finally an evening for sitting on the deck, enough light for me to write in my garden journal. The sun has set on 1381, but up the hill Mt. Mercy’s Warde Hall (sporting a new blue roof) is still in sunlight. It’s a lovely evening with a waxing gibbous moon, temp in the 70s, comfortable humidity, just a hint of a breeze. Looking out across the back yard garden, I see several distinct patches of color: the orange *Asclepias* next to the blue *Platycodon*, a marvelous clump of daylilies with purple throats and yellow eyes. Many cosmos in bloom, many more on the way. Outside MVM’s studio window are hostas with white blooms and some stunning yellow composites (either coneflowers or a variety of daisy), accompanied by a patch of smaller, reddish-orange composites near the maple stump table. Further back in the NW triangle are the bee balm (rich burgundy blooms), the tall black-eyed Susans, and a nice clump of purple coneflowers. What’s disappointing is the absence of many new blooms in the Long East bed. The delphinium and coreopsis are done. A few lingering *Platycodon* and threadleaf coreopsis but not much to capture my attention, at least from this distance. As for the Long West bed, it has many small orange and dark brown blooms of the plains coreopsis and a mass of white gooseneck in bloom; also the two tall magenta veronicas. In the middle of all this visual activity is the tulip tree planted in the spring of 2021, which is much taller and fuller than last year. Its top is almost eye-level when I’m standing on the deck. Perhaps in two more years, it will be as tall as the peak of the house? Meanwhile, the locust have started their strumming, a pattern of sound rising and ebbing, rising and ebbing.

11 July. While at Wickiup I filled a small trug with cucumbers. So far this summer the Raider cukes have been most impressive—and to date I have not found or killed a single cucumber bug. Where are they?

12 July. Today I earned my salary at Coe. Arrived about 7:30 am. Tom, the tree guy, was waiting for me, and we spent the next three hours trimming the crab trees, plus pulling up an unwanted mulberry seedling next to the NW gate. He sawed off innumerable dead and unwanted limbs. I cut them up into smaller pieces and piled them outside the garden gate. I also trimmed the espalier apple tree, which had become rather unkempt and straggly. All the flowering crab look much better and should have enhanced air flow, perhaps reducing damage from the black fungus. I still have a bunch of suckers and water sprouts to remove, but the biggest jobs are done.

In the afternoon I went to Wickiup. A nice afternoon, temp in the low 80s, humidity in low 60s, a NW breeze. I spent most of my time in the West Field working on two rows of potatoes oppressed by grass and weeds. I started with my long-handled garden hoe, but quickly switched to the Japanese hand hoe, working on my hands and knees. This position made it easier to pull up grass and weeds close to the potato plants. I also dug around in the loose soil, searching for individual spuds to harvest. Managed to remove 15 nice-sized Red Norlands. They were all in good shape; no evidence of mice or vole damage. I gave a small bag of potatoes--plus green beans, zucchini, & cukes--to Marty [*the owner of the land where the garden is located.*]

Our garden regularly ruptures my sense of progress and process and time. There is the forward trajectory of days into months, seasons into years. June's tight rosebuds will lead to July's full-crowned blooms. Evident and irreversible change, straight forward as an arrow toward its mark. But there is revolution in the garden as well. And reversals. Months and seasons and days turning so far forward they bend backward. I stand in the past and in the future when I stand in the present of our garden. Just as with grief, neatly outlined stages double back and return well after or long before I expect them to appear or be over.

14 July. MVM is in Iowa City with grandson while K & P are in Spring Green APT watching Hamlet and a bunch of Danes deal with ghosts and regicide and suicide and all sorts of horrible, depressing, and oddly inspiring events. As for me, I worked at Coe this morning for four hours and after lunch at Wickup for almost six hours, where I began by examining the melons and squash rows in the West Field. All the plants look healthy, producing a lot of blooms and some fruit already emerging. As was true yesterday, I did not see a single cucumber or squash bug. Something has delayed their appearance--it's impossible to hope/expect they won't eventually appear, though their continued absence would be a nice summer gift. I'm also surprised how few Japanese beetles I've spotted this summer. For twenty or more summers, I've spent untold hours trying to control those beetles. Last year the

numbers were notably depressed, and this year they've been darn near invisible. This morning at Coe I checked the rugosa roses, one of their favorite juice bars, and did not find a single beetle. Same with the basil in the herb bed, another favorite hangout.

15 July. SK's funeral in Iowa City this morning, just a week after her husband's service. SK was MVM's best friend at Coe. They worked together for almost four decades on recruiting, numerous recitals (and many hours of rehearsal), the Kedron Consort, and the big trip to China, Japan, and Hong Kong in '94. Once they had retired, their lives drifted apart, with only intermittent contact. Fortunately, MVM saw her a month ago. It was striking how quickly her health—and memory—deteriorated. At the funeral MVM sang Copland's setting of Dickinson's "Nature, the Gentlest Mother," a song they had performed together many times.

After lunch at a Viet Nameese restaurant, I returned home, changed clothes, and drove to Wickiup, arriving about 2:45 and worked until after 7:30. The rain gauge at Wickiup recorded 0.6" rain last night, most welcome, though a half inch less than in the two gauges here at home. Today I concentrated on the "R" bed with the four tomato plants (two Sungold, two Wapsi Peach) and a dozen volunteer Aunt Bea pole beans. The tomato plants are huge and sprawling. They are in cages, but I've made no attempt to prune them. The Sungold are now beginning to produce fruit; in fact, I ate one this afternoon, about two seconds after I picked it. [*This 2' x 2' arrangement of four plants in the rectangular bed was a failure. While the plants were huge, the fruit production was far below expectations, probably a result of excess foliage and the pole beans climbing around and over the tomato plants.*]

One notable achievement this afternoon is that I created a new strawberry patch in the S2 bed. The soil prep included adding chicken grit, biochar, and two bags of cow manure/compost. After tilling and raking, I mixed in some granular organic fertilizer and transplanted twenty Flavorfest volunteers that were growing in the walkway outside the old strawberry bed. After covering the exposed soil with miscanthus, I watered the bed with a couple gallons of fresh creek water.

One other piece of good news. In the mail I received two floppy bucket hats from REI. The new hats are lightweight polyester and welcome replacements for my two old summer favorites purchased in England, both rotting away.

16 July. When I began working in the Wickiup garden this spring, I had an image of what it should look like by the middle of the summer. I'm not expecting a perfect, pristine order, but the garden now looks so slovenly it's depressing to open the garden gate. A few weeds are welcome: they provide important fodder for the compost bins. But the current scene is far too wild, and I encounter difficulties simply walking around in the garden. In all my gardens,

whether here or at home or at Coe, the walkways are important for me: if they don't look reasonably neat and hospitable, it's impossible for the garden to look good and for me to enjoy entering the garden. Reasonably well-groomed walkways make it so much easier to live with the chaotic energy of the flower and vegetable beds. Nature will eventually win, but the walkways are my primary means for establishing a cultural beachhead, to restrain the flood that is always threatening to inundate my flimsy plans. Today I made some progress. I managed to clean up the walkways around the "R" and "S" beds and their connections with the primary N/S axis. I also weeded in and around the big "W1" bed with its nine tomato plants. I concluded my afternoon at Wickiup with some serious harvesting: three nice onions, a trug full of green beans (Provider, Maxi-Filet, Jade), a dozen zucchini, a dozen cukes (mostly Raider), a bag of Red Pontiac potatoes, a few Sungold and Juliet's World tomatoes, and a nice handful of beets. Most of the produce I'll distribute at church tomorrow morning.

17 July. This morning while MVM was singing at the Christian Science Church, the grandson and I drove to Wickiup and did some harvesting. We began by picking Seychelles and yellow pole beans and Red Sail bush beans. We also gathered a few cucumbers, a couple zucchini, and a couple tomatoes, including the summer's first Lemon Boy, which we ate for supper. We finished the trip by harvesting the yellow snow peas in the "J1" bed. While I picked peas, Theo ate peas, popping them out of the pods and into his mouth, requiring no assistance from me. Later for supper, he ate another pile of uncooked peas, wolfing them down the hatch. We finished the day by watching PBS TV while I shelled a gallon of peas, enough for several meals.

20 July. Cara arrived at Coe right at 8:00 a.m. with the repainted plexiglass flowers, the restored panels for the Rising Sun sculpture, and four new plant support panels for the "D" and "K" beds. I installed the plexiglass flowers in the east corner of the "J" bed while Cara reattached the colored panels to the Rising Sun. The flowers and sculpture panels all look much brighter, more dynamic.

In the afternoon I went to Wickiup, where I immediately discovered a major disappointment. My double row of carrots sown in June I had covered with a mesh tunnel to protect them from the heat and potential critter damage. A couple of days ago, I was worried the seedlings were beginning to get leggy, stretching for more sunlight, so I pulled back the tunnel and watered them. But I didn't go to Wickiup yesterday, and by the time I arrived this afternoon my babies were nearly all dead. I watered them, hoping some might revive, but it appears I need to give up the idea of sowing carrots in the summer. Will stick with early spring.

21 July. Just finished watching an hour of a January 6 Committee hearing on Trump's involvement with the mob violence and attack on the capitol. It is beyond my comprehension how people can continue to support Trump, millions of Americans believing the election was stolen from him. Thank goodness for the sanity of gardening, a space of hope and renewal in an insane world.

22 July. Worked at Coe for two hours, mostly watering plants. I'm intrigued by how quickly the marigolds (a variety of *Tagetes erecta*) in the large planters dry out so quickly, often needing to be watered every day. In contrast the same variety of marigolds in the Wickiup garden are never watered and they are thriving. Although the plants have not yet produced many flowers, the plants look magnificent. I wonder how deep their roots must go.

26 July. When I arrived at Coe this morning, I had intended to work on the gravel walkways, but while shooting some garden photos, I discovered the crevice and rock gardens looked quite weedy—as was also the space before the espalier flowering crab. So I spent a couple hours pulling grass and purslane from these beds. Of course, this tidying up does not solve the problem that there is nothing much blooming in either the crevice or rock gardens. The latter is totally dominated by the moss phlox on the west, the Angelina sedum on the east, and the big thyme in the center. A small patch of veronica can be seen behind the thyme, but it will soon be over-run by the phlox if I don't intervene. The bed needs some mid-summer color by flowers that can hold their own with the sedum and phlox.

As for the crevice garden, no cleomes this year. While they didn't fit with the rest of the bed, they were great self-seeding annuals, long-lasting blooms, always drawing the attention of visitors. In fact, no cleomes have shown up in any of their old hangouts. I've also lost most of the anemones in the "A2" bed, and in the "A1" bed the buddleia and crocosima and "hot lips" lychnis and most of the asclepias have disappeared. As I was writing that sentence I also realized that the Pearly Everlasting has not emerged this summer in the WFS bed. A lot of significant losses in that garden area—and so far nothing has been added to replace them.

27 July. This morning while weeding in the front yard, I decided I should write a Garden Shed essay on the subject of plastic flowers. I recall my Mom's plastic flowers at several locations in her kitchen. I understand a desire to have something in her world that suggested natural beauty. The plastic flowers were a relatively inexpensive symbol and could last for multiple years. Even when I was quite young, I found them ugly and tasteless, but it was her space, not mine. I never said a word, nor did my Dad—at least I never heard him make any comment. If the flowers brought her moments of happiness, so be it. Who am I to express disdain for such a

pleasure? No harm done. I got to thinking about artificial flowers while I was composing this month's church newsletter. I wrote a paragraph encouraging people to bring fresh flowers for our Sunday morning services, and included in my little paragraph a sentence making fun of fake flowers. I really don't care to hurt anyone's feelings, but why should I refrain from saying what I think? I recall several years ago when we were driving on a "back road" in the Lake District and came upon a small country church. The building was unlocked, and we spent a few minutes looking around. It was evident this was a very small congregation, but they did have a sign-up sheet for people to bring fresh flowers for each Sunday morning worship service. God bless them.

28 July. Yesterday and today I spent several hours at Wickiup, nearly all my time in the West Field. I harvested all my garlic and onions, killed dozens of potato beetles (adults & larvae), and pulled up innumerable weeds in the potatoes. Made some progress in creating a weed-free buffer between the potatoes (north half of the field) and the melons/squash (south half). We now have several rows where one can walk without traipsing through weeds. I saw a lot of young melons, squash, and pumpkins. So far the plants look good, relatively minor wilt. I did dig half a dozen hills of Yukon Gold, planted very late but still averaging 4-5 nice taters/hill. While digging potatoes, I saw a garter snake slithering down a row before darting into the straw mulch. In a nearby row I started to pull up a milkweed, but spotted a Monarch caterpillar and a couple of leaves partially eaten. I left the milkweed undisturbed.

30 July. After lunch, it was off to Wickiup, where I worked for about four hours. Yesterday afternoon I weeded potatoes (and killed a few Colorado potato beetles) in the West Field and cleaned up the path in the East garden along the black raspberries. Today followed a similar agenda. In the melon patch I cleared out a lot of grass but didn't see a single cucumber or squash bug. Amazing how few of those critters I've seen this summer. On the other hand, I continue to harvest potato bugs. I suspect today I killed at least 75 larvae and ten adults (one pair mating).

I finished my Wickiup visit with some serious harvesting. Gathered all the zucchini I could find. The five Mexicana plants have been incredibly productive, often with 3-4 fruit at the same time on one plant. Today I easily harvested 20 fruit, filling two baskets. Also harvest two large garlic, their size quite surprising, considering how late they were planted last fall. Once I was back home, I washed five garlic to take to Buffalo, plus freshly harvested Yaya carrots, onions, a nice pile of medium-sized Yukon Gold potatoes, several Beit Alpha cucumbers, a gallon bucket of Seychelles pole beans, and a group of small and medium-sized zucchini. Topped it all

with a few tomatoes: Juliets, Lemon Boys, and Golden Bison--but so far no Wapsipinicon Peaches.

Yesterday I worked at Coe for a couple of hours but never made it there today. I need to do some serious trimming of standards and dwarf lilac in the "H" bed, but my primary focus in recent days has been on areas that visitors see first when walking into the garden. There's so much to do--and not enuf time--so one just does as well as one can. I am reminded of the advice for eating an elephant. Just be satisfied with one bite at a time. You can't consume an elephant in one meal. Same approach with the garden. I need to accept the fact I'll never be done. The gardening is never finished. As Anne Lamott advised with regard to writing, you just take it "bird by bird."

What infuriated me . . . was that the audiobook I'd just finished, like so many foundational environmentally focused books, seemed to have no other people in it. The (nearly always white) men and women who claim to be models for how to truly experience the natural world always seemed to do so in solitude. Just one guy--so often a guy--with no evidence of family or anyone to worry about but himself.

2 August. A white male, working in solitude at Coe this morning and afternoon, total of eight hours. I had intended to drive to Wickiup in the afternoon, but the S-10's driver door window came off track again. I returned to the auto shop and asked the mechanic who had previously worked on the problem to try again. He did get it temporarily fixed and changed me \$20, but he admitted that his fix might not be permanent. I need to get the pickup to Clint's shop, but for now I'll hold the window in place when rolling it up or down. Thus one more item that no longer works properly: air conditioner (which has not worked for at least 20 years), heater fan, windshield wipers (though the "fast" speed still works), overhead light, washer liquid dispenser, and emergency hand brake. Despite all of its frailties, the body and motor are in good shape, the S-10 still averages 20 miles to the gallon, and we remain good buddies.

At the Coe garden, I continued doing what I've been doing all this week: hoeing gravel walkways, pulling up crabgrass, tidying perennial flower borders. This morning I returned to the "I" border in the area east of the *Baptisia*. I removed several tall asters and hyssops--and also a nasty biennial weed, about 4' tall, with little green seedheads that relentlessly attach themselves to gloves, pants, skin, etc. Also in the "I" bed, I cut back the rose campion flower stalks and uncovered a couple mums, a bergenia, and a lovely tall stonecrop that were in hiding.

We did have a brief rain storm, which give me an opportunity to jot down notes for this week's MMGR. As I was looking at the garden during the morning's thunderstorm, I was

intrigued how the black-eyed Susans, all in full bloom, seemed unfazed by the wind and the pelting rain. They showed almost no movement, in contrast to most of their neighbors (such as the Joe Pye weeds) swaying and bouncing around. The Susans remained quite calm and stoical.

In the afternoon, once the sun had arrived full blast, I moved into the shade of the pergola. The wisteria has continued to expand this summer, and the eastern 3/4 of the pergola is uniformly covered with foliage. While I appreciate the shade, the sun worshippers—such as the daylilies—are now looking undernourished and floppy. I need to rethink the plants along the pergola's walkway. While the river oats would love to take over this area, I hope to keep them corralled in the rain garden and bring in a fresh community of flowers for what has become a shade garden. One option might be to set aside space for flowering annuals, perhaps in pots, that don't mind limited hours in the sun.

One other achievement today: I pruned the flowering crab standard and began a full-tilt assault on the viburnum. As I was trimming the tops and sides of the "H" bed viburnum, it became evident that I need to assert constraints on the bindweed, which has thoroughly engulfed a couple viburnum. If I am going to throttle its expansion, I have no choice but to use a spray weed killer, such as Round-up. I'll need to be methodical and patient. At the moment the bindweed is confined to the "H" bed; I certainly do not want it to jump over to the "G" bed.

4 August. In the afternoon to Wickiup, half of my time in the West Field. Killed dozens of potato beetle larvae, typically 2-4 beetles/plant. Just a couple times did I find a swarm of babies close together. Never found any eggs. I did note that many larvae were on the underside of the leaves; they are usually on top. I thought this might be their attempt to stay out of the sun's afternoon heat. Once I was finished with the potatoes, I checked out the melon patch and found three rotting, yellow-skin watermelons. In one case the melon had split open even though it was not yet fully ripe. I found one cantaloupe separated from its vine, actually a volunteer plant that had appeared in a row of potatoes. I brought the melon home, cut it up, and discovered it was in perfect condition, excellent texture and taste—but I have no idea what variety it is.

As for the East Garden, I weeded two "J" beds, ones that I'll use in a couple days for planting Brassica seedlings. I also weeded the corn—which is looking darn good. I harvested a variety of tomatoes. The Golden Bison continue to be the most productive plants. I gathered about twenty cucumbers, coming from all four cuke beds. A few of the O2 trellis cukes had grown too large, but overall a handsome group. Today was the first time I harvested any General Lee. So far those vines look in great shape.

After supper I started a new job: clearing out "stuff" in the patio bed outside MVM's studio. This involved removing teams of the weed with the lovely little blue flowers, some big

dandelions, a dense network of lily-of-the-valley, and several tall pigweed. I also uncovered a nice clump of astilbe and an attractive patch of sweet woodruff.

6 August. While picking green beans, I noticed small gray squash bugs on the leaves of a nearby zucchini. I cut off the leaves and carried them down to the creek, with most of the scrambling young bugs still hanging on to the leaves. I dunked the leaves into the creek and threw them toward the center of the creek's little pond. Although I trust that most of them drowned, I was disheartened to see that several were able to walk on water and make it to the creek bank.

8 August. While a writing workshop was being held in the Alumni House, Lisa came out to talk about flowers, butterflies, the Monarch project, and trees. I gave her three Baptisia and three cardinal plants I had potted in the spring. Lisa said there was to be another big tree giveaway coming up in October, and I might be able to obtain a new group of trees for Buffalo. We'll see what's on the list of options that Lisa sends me.

If I understand God as separate, as above all creation, then what happens elsewhere, to others, may not matter much to me. But let me believe God is in all creation, that birds and beasts and boulders and streams are all part of God's body. How much better might I treat the lives around me?

10 August. The second anniversary of the August 10 derecho. Two years ago the back yard was a disaster, total chaos. Tonight, it's a lovely evening, temp in the mid 70s, locust strumming their repetitive Philip Glass melodies, clear sky, moon floating over Warde Hall, neighbors watering their lawn—a classic evening in suburbia. Of course, I have hundreds of jobs to be done in front and back gardens, but sitting here on the deck, I've been given enough distance from the scene so that things look pretty good: red hibiscus blooming, several clumps of black-eyed Susans, coneflowers savoring the old hosta bed, millennium alliums in full bloom in several beds, tall verbena blossom spikes, golden seedheads on the Karl Foerster grass, goldenrod just coming into bloom, *Asclepias* entering a second bloom cycle, the blue flowers of the Platycodon, several delphinium re-blooming, several sunflowers looking down on their neighbors, the rose-of-Saron covered with magenta blooms, the ornamental grasses all in top form, a few late season makes blooming in the NW triangle bed, etc. Two years ago, almost none of this existed.

This afternoon at Wickiup I harvested all the grapes that seemed ripe. One vine has produced several dozen clumps of small, green grapes. Perhaps half have already fallen to the ground—though I'm not sure they were fully ripe before falling. Tomorrow I'll try to figure out

how to make grape juice. One summer Dad put our grapes into jars of sugar water and made a delicious grape juice. The next year, the grapes fermented, and the result tasted like vinegar. I still have more grapes to harvest, particularly the Concord grapes here at home, and I'm determined to make a decent grape juice. [*By the end of the month, I had produced six pints of frozen grape juice concentrate, my best year ever.*]

13 August. I stayed home this morning and put in a couple hours in the back garden, primarily weeding and watering. I cleaned up the Long East bed, removing wormwood, patches of grass, several large dandelions, innumerable creeping Charlie, and a variety of no-name weeds. Also chopped off a large tree of heaven that had appeared among the Baptisia. In the hosta bed I removed those weeds with the strings of tiny green seed burrs--nasty SOB's. I pulled up half a dozen of those and deposited them in the green dumpster. Let the city give them their just desserts.

Spent a few minutes working in and around the red raspberry bed. Those plants look great, and it appears we're going to have a real fall harvest of berries--the first since rebuilding the bed after the derecho. I removed miscellaneous weeds, put the taller raspberry canes behind the retaining wires, and pulled up all the raspberries growing in the walkway bordering the rhubarb bed. I was pleasantly surprised to see how attractive the walkway now looks, almost neat and orderly. Another surprise when I was tidying up the veggie/herb bed and discovered a dozen baby radish plants from seeds sown in April. I thinned them out so we might get a half-dozen radishes in 2-3 weeks.

15 August. Over seven hours today in the Coe garden. A few quick observations:

- It really struck me today how the garden is structured by two outer frames (the brick/cedar wall and the yews) and the two inner frames (the gravel walkways and the four lawn segments). The outer frames are relatively low maintenance, but the inner frames are quite demanding and insistent on my dedicated attention. Remarkable how much "better" the garden looks after the grass has been mowed
- The dominant flowers in the current garden are the black-eyed Susans (which can be found throughout the garden, except for the "K" bed) and the Kelvin Floodlight dahlias (the garden's divas).
- Enjoyed watching a lone Monarch on the dahlias, attracted to the back side of the red blooms on the Bishops.

17 August. Great day for summer gardening: temp began in the 60s and topped off around 80F with low humidity, darn near perfect for mid-August. Spent the morning at Coe, mostly

working on the walkways at the west end. The gravel hardpack was not easy hoeing, but I got most of the weeds and grass dismembered. Came upon 4-5 myrtle spurge I missed yesterday. I dug them up and planted them among the rocks at the back of the WFS bed, far enough from the walkway that it's unlikely people (particularly children) would have any contact with the foliage. Between yesterday and today I've transplanted about 15 small plants from the "gravel nursery." Only one fragment had a large core root, suggesting it has been around since last year. While in the area, I spruced up the crevice garden, removing grass, purslane, and creeping spurge. Also removed a bloody cranesbill, but I'm sure I didn't get all the roots.

20 August. This morning it was raining, very gentle, but a nice steady shower for perhaps two hours, producing half inch according to the rain gauge here at home. Because of the rain, I worked inside through the morning. After preparing Sunday's worship bulletin, I prepared Juliet tomatoes for the dehydrator—a Xmas present for MVM but the first time we've used it. I did eight trays of the Roma-style slices; required about six hours for the slices to dry fully. We're still not sure what is the best way for storing them after they've been dried. We'll probably put them in the freezer.

In the afternoon to Wickiup. Although I have plenty of weeding and seed sowing to do, this was a harvesting trip. I started at the north end of the "M1" bed bush beans and worked my way slowly through all the plants on the east side of the raised bed and erratically picked beans on the west side. About half the beans were over-developed and went into the compost bucket, but I could still fill a large trug with a nice assortment of beans. After the bean row, I harvested onions, leeks, peppers (including a dozen Buena Mulatto), a small trug of cucumbers, a large container of tomatoes, a half-dozen zucchini, and a bag of Red Pontiac potatoes. We should have plenty of fresh produce for the church tomorrow. I also harvested a handful of raspberries and blackberries but not enuf to share.

In the middle of the afternoon I drove to Cedar River Garden Center and spent \$150. Picked up a bunch of different columbine at the half-price table and paid full price for two fall-blooming clematis, a tall stonecrop for the front yard, two coneflowers for the flower bed outside MVM's studio window, and a speedwell for the Long East bed. Now I need to get them in the ground.

21 August. Another lovely day, hundreds of large cumulus clouds gently scudding across the sky, a nice east-coast breeze, temp in the low 80s. Alas, most of my day was inside: preparing food, dumping laundry into the clothes washer, attending church, canning beets, hanging wet laundry on the clothes line, washing windows in the sun room, cleaning the deck, having lunch with Dick, taking dry laundry off the clothes line, folding laundry and putting laundry away,

etc. All stuff that needed doing but not leaving much time for gardening. Finally, late in the afternoon, I worked on the old hosta bed in the back yard. Dug up several big hostas that I'll move to the Coe garden. Remove enough weeds so someone could see two coneflowers planted in the bed two years ago, coneflowers still blooming. I encountered sweet woodruff that after 30 years of neglect has managed to survive in the shade of the hostas. I cut to the ground most of the *Phalaris* grass. It looked good earlier this summer, but now it was sprawling and had lost its variegation. A small patch of *Phalaris* trimmed a couple months ago looks much fresher. Next year I need to cut back the entire bed in the early summer. I finished up my gardening for the day by removing the brown, sunburnt leaves of the big blue hosta and discovered the new leaves in the shade of the old leaves look pretty good.

24 August. The morning at Coe, the afternoon at Wickiup. At Coe, I did a lot of trimming around the shed/greenhouse, beginning with the large, sprawling juniper at the corner of the old student apartments. Although this area is not my responsibility, I walk by it every day, and I doubt if any college administrator will object to my effort to make the area look a bit more civilized. Popping up through the evergreen foliage were sow thistles, pokeweed, couple large elderberry, nightshade, several grasses, a weed with cocklebur-like seeds, horehound, sweet Annie, and several redbud. A distinguished assortment of unwanted vegetation. I didn't dig out all the roots, but I cut everything back so for the moment they are out of sight. I then turned my attention to the area west of the greenhouse. The primary problem is removing the small trees that have appeared in the last two years: mostly maples, along with a few redbuds and flowering crab. In most instances, I just cut them at ground level and made no attempt to dig out their roots. While cleaning up this area it occurred to me that perhaps my next step should be to spread old newspapers over the area, add a layer of compost, and cover with a thick layer of mulch, letting the newspapers smother the undergrowth and turning everything into a rich humus. My ultimate plan is to turn this shady area under the flowering crab tree into a hosta garden, using hosta transplants from home. [*This is still my plan though so far I've done nothing to turn this shade garden dream into a reality. Perhaps in the spring of '24 it will happen.*]

27 August. This afternoon I took our neighbor Ruthie to the "farm" (her term) to look at the garden and harvest fresh vegetables for her. Jim, my gardening partner in the West Field, was there, so we exchanged a few pleasantries, but most of our attention was on harvesting: three zucchini, several Buena Mulatto peppers (Ruthie loves these—just the right heat—and sent one to her mother in Africa), several varieties of tomatoes (including some Big Rainbow, a new variety, very productive), cucumbers, and three hills of potatoes (two Yukon Gold and one Red Pontiac). I picked up two Skin-of-the-Toad melons that came right off the vine. I gave the

smaller one to Ruthie (along with a cantaloupe) and kept the larger one for myself. It's now in the frig, but I won't cut it open until after we finish eating the cantaloupe and honeydew already in the frig. Jim and I lamented we had lost a lot of melons that ripened more quickly than we expected. Today I had to throw several onto the compost pile and only found one melon that I could take to church—and it has a couple small cracks. As for the watermelons, we will have an ample supply, but they are not quite ready. I did harvest our first Galeux D'eyssines—a French heirloom squash that has only been available in the U.S. for about twenty years. The melon was covered with large scabs (caused by sugars bleeding through the skin), and the stalk looked brown and dry. I located a classic French pumpkin soup recipe that should be perfect for this squash. The name of the squash refers to an area in France and translates “embroidered with scabs from Eysines.”

After returning home, I prepared seven trays of thinly sliced Juliet tomatoes for the dehydrator and ran it for 6 ½ hours at the default temp (135F). The temp and duration worked well: the tomatoes came out dry but still flexible. Another success was preparing roasted zucchini for supper. After removing the seeds, I sliced up a medium-sized golden yellow zucchini. I mixed together the zucchini sticks with fresh basil leaves (African variety), Italian seasoning, olive oil, and Parmesan. Roasted at 425F for ten minutes and then under the broiler for five minutes. Came out darn good. An easy way to use a good-sized zucchini in one meal.

“Acts of creation are ordinarily reserved for gods and poets, but humbler folk may circumvent this restriction if they know how,” wrote Aldo Leopold, a man considered by many to be the father of American wildlife management. “To plant a pine, for example, one need be neither god nor poet; one need only own a shovel.”

29 August. A real gardening day: full morning and two hours in the afternoon at Coe, followed by three hours at Wickiup, and after supper another hour at Coe. The Alumni House gardening was driven by the absence of any significant rainfall. The Wickiup garden is in decent shape: nearly all the vegetables and fruit are well-mulched and some recently watered. The Coe garden, on the other hand, has received less rain and some beds are not well-mulched. We've had several rain showers in the last three days passing through eastern Iowa, but they all skirted around the Coe garden. So this morning I got out the tripod water sprinkler and began with the “H” bed, moving the sprinkler every 3-4 hours counter-clockwise around the perimeter of the garden. It takes several hours for the sprinkler to throw out enough water that will really sink into the soil. I hate this watering technique because so much water is wasted, but at the moment I have no other choice.

After turning on the water sprinkler I spent a couple hours weeding and cleaning up the SE lawn quadrant. My primary focus was pulling up the crabgrass. Although the task is frustrating and never-ending, it is in many ways an easy and relaxing gig, on my hands and knees in the soft grass, pulling up whatever crabgrass or dandelion or purslane or sedge or creeping spurge I find around me. Of course the crabgrass will eventually win: it's fanatically stubborn and has too many resources with those tens of thousands of seeds waiting for next spring. But I would like to make it work for its victory. This morning I also trimmed the dwarf lilac in the "H" bed. I removed several dozen small branches, eliminating all the new ones near ground level.

31 August. K has COVID, P just tested positive, and MJT in DC has tested positive. Everyone in the family managed to avoid this infection for over two years, and then in one week we have three positives. MVM took care of the grandson on Saturday. Although she wore a mask, being in that house all day, it's hard to believe she won't get it—which probably means that I'm next in line. At least we've had the boosters, so we can hope for mild symptoms. I read today that Iowa is averaging 4,000 new cases/day, over 400 hospitalized, and about 20 people dying every 24 hours. Still a nasty business. [*As it turned out MVM and I did not test positive until much later in the year; our symptoms were annoying but temporary and apparently inconsequential.*]

The big success story for this week is the grape harvest. Two days ago I gathered over a gallon of grapes from the vine in the back yard, and today I obtained another gallon from two vines at Wickiup—and many more to harvest as the grapes continue to ripen. By far the best grape harvest I've ever had. This evening we heated the grapes stored in the refrigerator, ran them through the juice strainer, and produced two gallons of concentrated grape juice. A mix of 25% grape concentrate and 75% water—plus a generous supply of sugar—produces a pretty good grape juice.

4 September. Because of COVID precautions, we skipped church; instead, I spent the morning at Wickiup. Perfect weather: overcast, temp in low 70s. Though I did some thinning and watering of the "G1" bed carrots, the first order of business was the bean crop. Picked another large batch of yellow Monte Gusto pole beans, following the two gallons I harvested two days ago. They've been amazing this year. Also harvested all the dry bush beans in the "C1" row next to the raspberries. They have been decimated by rabbits, based on turd evidence, but I can not find where the bunnies are entering. Since the fence line is overgrown with weeds and grass, it's not likely I will find the entrance site before winter. The other big harvest was tomatoes. I picked the year's first Lillian Yellow Heirlooms. Also a nice crop of Abe Lincolns: medium-sized, solid, light red fruit. The big producer continues to be the Juliet: amazing how

many fruit I have gathered from that one "H1" plant—perhaps 200 tomatoes in the last two days and many more that will soon be ripe.

This afternoon we canned seven quarts of tomatoes. We should be close to the end of this year's canning. I gave the neighbors on both sides a bag of veggies: half dozen tomatoes, garlic, potatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, beans, cantaloupe, and honeydew melon. The floor in the family room is still covered with veggies, dominated by several large yellow and Mexicana zucchini.

5 September. A four-garden day, though my work at home was relatively minor: watering the few remaining plants in the greenhouse (basil, ice plants, rosemary, sweet peas, cardinal flowers, foxglove, balsam) and completing the second and final grape harvest. The morning was at Coe. Watered three areas of lawn, using small rotary sprinkler, and pulled some crabgrass, mostly in the SE quadrant. Most of my time in the "G" bed was under the pergola, digging up grass and gooseneck and other unwanted vegetation between the gravel walkway and the rain garden channel. It's slow going because of all the roots (including the wisteria roots that I'm trying not to damage), the tenacious river oats, and my desire to save a few plants in the area: black-eyed Susans, *Platycodon*, daylilies. I made some progress, but the area still looks rough. In the faux whiskey barrel I did a thorough weeding, removing all the swamp milkweed roots I could find, added a fresh batch of compost/soil mix, and planted an autumnal mum covered with russet/orange/yellow blooms. [*A lovely, large mum advertised as a perennial, but it did not survive the winter.*] I also planted three stonecrop in the "H" bed along the gravel walkway in front of the giant hibiscus--which has finished flowering for the year. I'm hoping the stonecrop will add some late-season color to an area currently dominated by worn-out black-eyed Susans, a dim shadow of their former selves.

6 September. This afternoon I made grape juice from the grapes (mostly Concord) I harvested yesterday. After heating and mashing the grapes, I drained off the liquid, using the orange plastic colander, rather than the cloth bag. The colander was much faster than the cloth and much easier to clean up. Produced over a gallon of grape juice, which I'll freeze tomorrow. We also decided to do one more round of tomato juice, so I drove to Wickiup, picked up a watermelon, and harvested every ripe tomato I could find. A few observations on this year's tomato crop:

- The great discovery has been the Big Rainbow—a yellow tomato with pink innards, reminiscent of a Lillian's yellow heirloom. These dudes started producing in July and are still going strong. They need to be promptly picked because they go soft rather quickly. Excellent flavor as a sliced tomato.

- In the rectangular “R” raised bed I had experimented by planting two Wapsipinicon Peach with two Sungolds. The pairing did not work well. Neither has been productive. The plants needed more space and better air flow—a situation complicated by the appearance of several volunteer Aunt Bea pole beans. I made the mistake of allowing several to grow, and they have buried the tomato plants, producing a huge volume of lovely beans--though they must be picked early because of how quickly they develop strings.
- The Juliet tomatoes have been incredible. The single plant in the “H1” bed has been covered with tomatoes for weeks. I keep harvesting and it keeps producing, with no end in sight. The plant is over 8' tall with branches running in all directions, including over the straw pathway. We’ve dehydrated dozens, given away hundreds, cooked hundreds, eaten hundreds.
- The return of the Golden Bison. I first planted this variety 7-8 years ago, and they were an early and vigorous producer of nicely developed, good tasting, medium-sized yellow tomatoes with an attractive texture. They have again done well this year, though their production is now declining.
- The Torch F1 Roma-style tomatoes from Johnny’s have been a lovely surprise. Not as prolific as the Juliet, but firm, well-developed fruit, excellent flavor, long-term production. They are also quite attractive with their unique red/green pigmentation.

8 September. Composed at 8:30 a.m. in Room 433, St. Luke’s Hospital. Yesterday was the day I had been fearing for decades: a heart attack. In the morning I felt okay, but I was frequently having trouble getting my breath, even when walking just a few steps. I spent most of the morning inside, preparing several gallons of tomato juice for freezing. After lunch (for the record: fried zucchini in olive oil with chopped leeks, bell peppers, tomatoes, couple of eggs, and cheddar cheese), I went to my basement office to finish this Sunday’s church bulletin. As I was doing a final editing, I realized I was out of breath, even though I simply sitting in my office chair, reading a computer screen. I knew something was not right. As I began walking upstairs, I felt a severe chest pain, I was desperate for air, and I began sweating. After a brief conversation with MVM, we got into the CR-V and she drove me to St. Luke’s. The original goal was Mercy, but St. Luke’s was on the way, and by then I was under severe distress and wanted assistance as soon as possible. Shortly after pulling into the emergency room parking, I was in the hospital, laid out on my back, and they were hooking up an IV and EKG. The only medication they gave me were three chewable aspirin. Perhaps there were fluids flowing into my system through the IV, but I was not aware that the IV line was attached to any visible source. Gradually the pain in the chest dissipated, and my breathing became more regular. Several times with different nurses and doctors I recounted my health history and the narrative of the attack. Eventually a doctor informed me they were going to insert a tube into a vein and

do an angiogram. That operation happened around 6:30. I was surprised that I was fully awake and could follow the procedure, which lasted about 45 minutes. They found one constricted artery and inserted a mesh that opened it up. Throughout my time in the operating room, I felt no pain or discomfort. I'm also intrigued that at no time, even before we arrived at the hospital, did I experience any serious anxiety or fear of dying. For whatever reason, I felt confident that everything would be okay. After the insertion of the stint, I was taken to my hospital room for my first overnight stay in a hospital since my birth in 1945. I still felt a little tightness in my chest, but overall I felt fine.

As I lie here in this hospital bed, jotting down these notes in my garden journal, one immediate issue is a question how this will affect my gardening. I've known throughout this summer that four gardens (Home, Coe, Wickiup, & Buffalo) is more than I can handle. Something has to go. It is painful to choose between Coe and Wickiup, but Coe requires much less work. With the trees all gone in our back yard, the garden at home could become more of a potager, mixing vegetables and fruit with the flowers, shrubs, and ornamental grasses. I could choose a few veggies that would provide a wealth of produce for MVM and me. As for Buffalo, it pains me to give up that landscape because I know there's no one in the church who can take over that work. And in all these considerations, I have no idea what my future limitations will be. What will be my new normal? Perhaps with this correction of my artery, I'll be able to work at a level I was 3-4 years ago. Or perhaps there will be new restrictions. I certainly do not want to repeat what happened yesterday.

Final thought: today MVM and I were supposed to be on the road, driving in the Roadtrek van to a campground in Wisconsin and this evening attending a play at American Players Theatre in Spring Green. Thank goodness the heart attack did not occur while we were on the road or at the campground . . . or while I was gardening at Wickiup . . . or on a canoe trip in the Boundary Waters.

9 September. Hard to believe that less than 48 hours after my heart attack, I was in the Coe garden this morning, doing my normal garden routine. Instead of celebrating our 55th wedding anniversary in Spring Green, MVM was home weeding the front yard and practicing piano while I was at Coe, feeding my worms (ground up cukes and tomatoes from the garden), watering plants, pulling up crabgrass, putting air into the wheelbarrow tire, and tidying up parts of the "K" & "L" flower beds. In "K" I pulled out goldenrod from the middle of the bed (in front of the miscanthus and Joe Pye weeds) and cut back most of the *Platycodon* (leaving for another day 3-4 plants still blooming at the back of the bed). In "L" I cut back the catmint and cranesbill, trimmed off the tops of ox-eye daisies, weeded the Siberian iris, and dug out several cushion spurge and a rosebud seedling. Still a lot to do in that bed (e.g., removing dead

daylily foliage and flower stalks). I didn't set any speed records while working, but I had no trouble maintaining a steady tempo and never felt any shortness of breath nor chest discomfort. Still, I'm trying to be careful. This afternoon, with the temp into the upper 80s, I worked inside, though I did several errands to the bank, Sam's, Walmart, and the church. After supper I watered plants here at home and harvested a few red raspberries, enough for tomorrow's breakfast.

10 September. Most of the morning I was at Coe cleaning up the "M1" and "L" beds. In "M1" I removed tall plants with compound names (snakeroot, goldenrod, milkweed) that were sticking up through the rows of peonies and Baptisia. I cut back the yellow rose bush, which has not blossomed for at least three years. I'll wait until the fall or early next spring to dig it up. While removing the milkweed, I did not see any evidence that Monarch caterpillars had been munching on the leaves. As for the "L" bed, it was mostly removing dead flower stalks, dried-up foliage, and weeds from around the daylilies. This also involved pulling up dozens of ox-eye daisies that were running over daylilies that did not produce many blooms this past summer. Either this fall or early next spring, I need to dig them up, subtract any interfering roots/plants, give them a generous dose of a fresh soil/compost mix, and see if they can be reinvigorated. I also dug up several spurge, but they have a deep root system, and they might return.

After lunch MVM and I went to Wickiup, my first visit since the heart attack. Our plan was to harvest veggies for church tomorrow. We picked a full basket of Big Rainbow, Lemon Boy, Abe Lincoln, Arkansas Traveler, Juliet, and Torch tomatoes. Another container was filled with Seychelle pole beans, several zucchini, three cucumbers, a bunch of shallots, and a clump of beets—plus several watermelon, two acorn squash, a spaghetti squash, and two pumpkin. For the first time in several years, we picked four ears of sweet corn, which we had for supper. The ears were a couple days over mature but still darn good. We'll harvest more tomorrow. It was great to have fresh corn on the cob for supper—plus fried potatoes (with shallots and sweet pepper), yellow beans (with a few bacon bits), and a fresh sliced tomato. A perfect, end-of-summer meal.

This morning after I arrived at Coe, I realized that I had forgotten to take my two morning heart pills. So I drove home, took the two pills, and on the way back to Coe stopped at an estate sale. Located just a block from our home, this is a small house with a mission-style interior design (lovely wood floors and paneling in a combination living room/dining room). I stopped at the sale because they had advertised a picnic table, but it had been sold. Before leaving I spotted a box full of books and noticed the top book was on English gardens. I soon discovered about a dozen garden books, none of which I own. There were two books on the gardens of

Gertude Jekyll and souvenir books from the Sissinghurst and Great Dixter gardens in England. I ended up buying four large books with high quality photos. The books appeared to be pristine and unread. I might go back tomorrow and buy a few more when the price is reduced to a dollar per book. Meanwhile, I'm wondering who this person was, someone living so close to us, with this interest in English gardens and evidence that he or she might have visited some of these gardens. Based on the clothing and the decorations in the house, I'm guessing it was a single, elderly woman. I did notice that on the fridge was a magnet with a sun-bleached photo of a young Jackie Kennedy. Who keeps a fridge magnet of Jackie for over 50 years?

11 September. Anniversary of 9/11. Our lives were changed forever by such senseless hatred, creating so much pain and sorrow. But on Elmhurst Drive, it was a perfect day for gardening—and all my gardening was here at home. I began the morning by redoing the walkway between the old hosta bed and the Long West bed. I pulled up the cement steps and removed by hand hoe a lot of grass, flowers in the wrong place, dozens of small violets, and the ribbon grass, which is determined to escape its assigned boundaries. With MVM's assistance I laid old magazines, catalogs, and copies of the Chronicle of Higher Education across the width and length of the walkway and then covered everything with hard-wood mulch. The stepping stones are not perfectly positioned or supported evenly, but as a whole a major improvement over how the walkway looked at 8:00 a.m. It would have helped the layout if the old maple tree trunk and roots had been cleaned up after that tree died a decade ago, but the trunk's foundation is still there, making it difficult to find the space for plants and the stepping stones. Once the path was relaid, I planted three yellow dogwood purchased last winter from Sooner Farms. They should have been planted in the spring, but I could never settle on where to put them. Despite my indecisiveness, I did manage to keep them alive through the summer, they all have new leaves, and this morning I finally delivered them to their new home, assigning them the task of establishing a clearer border with our neighbor's property. Maybe we'll be lucky and one or two of these arctic dogwood will survive.

Another task today was working in the back of the garden, cutting down and pulling up various tall weeds that are going to seed. My particular focus was on the Canada fleabane and an annual thistle with tiny flowers that produce white seeds with wispy filaments that float through the air, similar to cottonwood seeds. Some of the weeds were 7-8' tall, well above my head. While I didn't get them all, their numbers are reduced and most of the seeds are in the green yardy, waiting for delivery to the city compost pile.

13 September. A beautiful day weather-wise, but I had three doctor appointments at 9, noon, and 2:45 so it was not a good day for gardening. Good news, however, from the doctors: no

evidence of long-term damage to the heart, heart beat remains regular, good blood pressure, cardiogram “photos” look okay.

Like the labor it took to bring my daughter into the world, many ministrations in this garden happen while I'm on my hands and knees. I am often supplicant, begging the earth to provide what I need.

14 September. Perfect day for gardening, a taste of heaven. This morning at Coe for over three hours. My primary focus was on trimming the “K” bed yews. I cleaned up the path between the yews and the fence so I could set up the ladder at key points in back of the yews. They look the best they have looked since I started working in the garden in the summer of 2014. At that time they were in rough shape, with large areas of brown foliage, probably the result of the previous winter’s frigid wind. When I finished pruning them this morning, I thought they looked pretty good: dark green foliage, only a few small gaps, clean lines, reasonably well rounded corners. They have some dead interior branches that need to be removed, but I can do that later in the fall. While I was trimming the yews, it hit me how they have taken over half of several flower beds, expanding six or more feet beyond their original assigned area. They have created a lot of dead space, taking away areas that could be used for a much richer palette of perennial flowers. I just don’t have the courage to give them the radical surgery they should receive. Perhaps I could “experiment” by cutting back the yews at the east end of the “F” and “I” beds. I do wish I had been thinking about this issue in 2014, but I had no knowledge or experience with how the yews would deal with my initial pruning. I now know they would have repaired themselves. Ah, glorious hindsight.

In the afternoon I drove to Wickiup and spent most of my three hours cleaning up three beds on the south side of the garden. I concluded my visit by harvesting ten ears of sweet corn and a cup of red raspberries from the south end of the “A2” bed. The sweat bees were all over the raspberries and are consuming a high percentage of the fresh berries. But they’ve shown no interest in stinging me, and we’ve had a sufficiently large crop so I’m willing to share.

15 September. Another beautiful day for gardening. This morning at Coe I focused on the “I” bed, pulling up unwanted goldenrod and hyssop and pruning more yews. Fortunately these yews are not as wide as the “K” gang, making it much easier to cover their flat tops. I still have a couple cowlicks to trim, but the “I” yews are now 99% done. As I was finishing my pruning, a gray catbird flew into the yews and remained for a minute or so, looking around, only leaving when I began to step down from the ladder. Rarely do I see a bird—or any animal other than a rabbit—in the yews. I’m also struck by the absence of insects or spiders. Inside the poisonous yews, it’s a barren world.

19 September. In my walk around the Coe garden this morning, I discovered someone had taken from the message center the plastic protector with the garden maps and *Garden Quarto* issues. I checked the garbage container, thinking they might have dumped the publications and kept the zip-lock envelope, but no luck. So after lunch, I edited the map, correcting a few errors in the plant list, and printed new copies. Also collected a bunch of Quartos for the message board, put everything in a new pouch, and placed it in the message board container. I then came home and worked in the garden studio, revising/editing two old MMGR's and drafting a new one for this week. It's been a long time since I wrote and posted an MMGR the same week. Perhaps today's industry inaugurates a new habit of timeliness? Probably not.

22 September. After lunch I stayed home, cleaned the Roadtrek in preparation for the trip to Kansas, and spent three hours planting perennials that should have been planted weeks ago. I began with two coneflowers and three Rudbeckias in the old hosta bed outside MVM's studio. In preparation for the planting, I created a small limestone border, hoping to keep the soil from sliding over the limestone steps. In the Long East bed, I planted three black-eyed Susans and a veronica. All these plants from Cedar River Garden Center, as was a daylily I introduced into the front yard, replacing a hosta that did not like the summer's incessant, unfiltered sunlight. I still have one clematis and about ten other small plants (mostly columbine and ornamental grasses) that I had hoped to plant this afternoon but ran out of time. After supper, I made a quick trip to Wickiup to harvest tomatoes and a few zucchini. The big news was that I harvested the first Kellogg Breakfast tomatoes. These orange beefsteaks are huge and plentiful. Several have a few cracks but most appear to be in good condition.

Though we often think of them as individuals, most plants prefer to live in clusters—in groves and fields and prairies and gardens—communicating with others of their kind and also with mycelium, with birds, with rabbits, with bison and prairie dogs and insects and trees and other flowers. It is difficult to survive, much more difficult to thrive, without a community on which to depend.

This, then, is my thanks to my vibrantly beautiful community.

26 September. No gardening entries for the last four days because of the trip to Kansas, but while on the trip I read an excellent garden book: *My Weeds* by Sara Stein. The text is very informative, a superb mix of personal anecdote, humor, scientific information, and practical advice. My primary reservation is her defense of questionable herbicides and pesticides. She's definitely not an advocate for organic gardening—and neither was I this afternoon at Coe. I spent a couple of hours attacking the bindweed in the "H" bed. I did a lot of bindweed unwinding, trying to separate the bindweed from its host plants—primarily asters, goldenrod,

honeysuckle, and switch grass. Once the strands were laid out, I sprayed them with Round-up. I then crawled under the viburnum and tried to spray bindweed leaves without spraying any viburnum leaves. I did nothing with the bindweed that is mixed in with the rugosa rose and the hibiscus. That will require meticulous attention. I hate to use this spray, but with the bindweed, I don't feel I have any other choice short of digging up the entire bed—which is basically what I did when I removed the thistles that dominated portions of this bed in 2014.

29 September. Yesterday I drove to Cedar River Garden Center and purchased a metal 4-piece mobile, made in Mexico, for the Coe garden. The list price was over \$450, but with at 30% discount it came to \$315. My current plan is to install it along the "A2" bed fence, to the right of two circular metal flower containers installed on the fence. The new sculpture has three large circular disks, and I'm hoping all these circular shapes complement each other. I also purchased a small, rusty iron whirligig that I put among the purple coneflowers in the "K" bed. I'm always looking for pieces that might enhance the energy level in the winter garden.

Today would have been a beautiful day for gardening, but almost eight hours of daylight were consumed with writing, editing, assembling, and printing the church's October newsletter. Completing this project became complicated because we lost our cable connection, and I had to meet with the technician to identify the source of the problem and how it could be corrected. And in the midst of these tasks, I had a luncheon date with an old friend/faculty member. Although I'm on campus almost every day, I rarely interact with anyone. This was a welcome opportunity to catch up on water cooler gossip and the college's many trials and tribulations. Tomorrow I have a few hours for working in the garden and then a meeting with a few faculty for a short tour of the garden. After that meeting, MVM and I hit the road for Spring Green's APT to see a dramatic adaptation of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. My next immediate task, however, is posting a draft of my monthly blog posting to the garden website. This year's record for completing these texts on time is abysmal; perhaps I'll catch up once winter arrives.