

Plant Exchange

Sweet Summer Yellow



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

Tony Ellis of Yankton grows gladioli. These in his backyard are prospective entries in the Yankton Flower and Vegetable Show. Yellow glads tipped in orange have begun to open in time for the event. His wife Donna will arrange the glads for the show, and for their enjoyment at home.

Yankton Glad Hearts

Share tips from your outdoor or indoor plant experience, give us a tour of your plant site, or let us know what you enjoy most about these plants and people who grow them. Contact news@yankton.net. Attn: Brenda Johnson or write P&D, 319 Walnut St, Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson. See "Plant Exchange" blog on Facebook or www.brendakjohnsonplantexchange.wordpress.com.

BY BRENDA K JOHNSON

It's amazing the impact a field of flowers can have on you. It can lodge in the mind of a youth and influence an adult.

Tony and Donna Ellis own Tony Ellis Auto Sales at 1200 Ellis Road east of Yankton. Tony grew up on the land by his used vehicle car lot.

Tony refers to himself as a "hobby farmer with toys." He mows a large area around his car lot with a riding lawn mower. He likes the way it maneuvers with hydraulic levers, the way some like their sports cars. He admires agility in operating machines. He says people who work with machines can become part of the machines; they become so skillful. A versatile tractor helps him garden large vegetable plots by his car lot.

He and Donna recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary with a party. Donna, family and friends decorated the large room with tokens from their lives together, auto memorabilia, sweets and flowers. Donna works with Tony at the car lot. She also helped stage, decorate, and manage the Christmas event called "Crimson Door" for Yankton Area Arts; a successful fundraiser. At home she makes sure the flowers she and Tony grow in their yard also fill their home with bouquets.

"There where Bow Creek Metal building is, used to be solid glads (gladioli)," Tony says. It's across the road from where he grew up.

"(Gurney Seed & Nursery) irrigated that field," he says. "You find places in this world, when you drive by, there's a whole field of flowers—that was it. I'd see it every day. Naturally (Gurneys) let glads run their course. They sold the corms."

"I didn't know it at the time but it must have stuck in my mind," Tony says. "I was a teenager, dating Donna at the time. I was about nineteen."

Tony has grown his own gladioli for more than a decade. He starts them in plots by his car lot and moves them to his yard at home when corms are larger and ready to bloom that season. But three years ago he had to start over.

"When you had the salmon pink glad bouquet in front of you, they were awesome," he said. "When we'd take them to the car auction in Omaha I'd give them to the girls at the counter. Nice thing about glads. If blooms at the bottom fade, it keeps on blooming a couple of weeks; you just shorten the spike."

A charred post from the fire that destroyed his car lot building and equipment three years ago still stands by the entrance of the new shop.

"My building burned up and the corms were in the pit inside and I lost them," he says.

"(The following spring)

Donna showed up with five or six bulbs and pretty soon I had a five gallon bucket of those bulbs. We don't have salmon color anymore. Now we have other colors."

Tony shows an ice cream bucket of dime size gladioli corms.

"If you plant them this year, you might get a flower in two years, especially with the bigger bulbs," he says. After the killing frost, he digs the corms, cuts the tops, and lets them dry down a bit. He tosses them in the bucket with a little soil in an earthen pit below the shop floor. These corms don't freeze in winter.

In spring, he separates them by size. He starts the smallest corms in a dry garden of sand and gumbo nursery by his car lot. He digs a trench row in the sand and clay soil and with a bowling action, tosses them into the trench and covers them with soil. It's up to them to grow.

Larger corms are in another garden plot by his car lot along with other garden produce. The bigger the corms, the deeper he plants them in the trench row.

"It's like putting in telephone poles," he says. "You have to plant them deeper for how tall they are." It keeps them sturdy and less likely to fall over. Digging them out by hand in the fall isn't easy either. His shovel has to go deep to avoid slicing the corms.

"A lady in Omaha grows and sells glads with fringed edges and double flowers." He asked if she digs her corms. "Heavens, no," she told me. "I buy new ones every year. I get 500 of them."

At his home Tony has amended his soil for years with grass clippings and leaves. He puts the organic matter in a backyard trench and covers it with soil. He spreads and tills the compost under in his garden each spring. Soil there is much more workable now, he says. His glads don't require much additional fertilizer because of his amended soil.

He plants the trench rows of his largest mature corms five inches deep for blooming gladioli in his backyard.

"Glads need plenty of sun," he says. He supplements the moisture for them at home. During the 2012 drought they didn't bloom. This year he has 150 corms in the ground.

Donna added more about Tony's history with diligent and long standing care of gladioli.

"We had started to date," Donna says. "He cut a bunch of the gladioli and brought them down to Hartington to me. I just got glads all the time. My sisters, who were older, said 'How come you get fresh flowers?' That's what caught his eye." (Glad corms are not harmed when flowers are harvested.)

"He does take care of them," she says. "If we hadn't lost them in the fire."

"But we built them back up. I make big bouquets and we take some good ones to the car auction. The girls love them. Often they are one color. Most of the time I add baby's breath."

Gladioli flower spikes often mature late July. If they bloom in time this summer, Tony and Donna plan to enter some spike flower blooms in the Town & Country Flower and Vegetable Show.



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

One way to add drought tolerant plants to a xeriscape is by growing them in planters. Supplement water is limited to the container in which the plant grows. In this planter, foliage is more prominent than blooms. Notice the attention to variety in plant shapes and texture over muted color.

Beginning Lessons For A Xeriscape

BY MARY ANN KING

Master Gardener

As water has become a precious commodity, gardeners interested in conservation are turning to xeriscapes. This is the art of landscaping using plants that require little water. Native and drought-tolerant plants such as cacti and native grasses are examples. Environmentally friendly, the benefit of xeriscaping saves the gardener cost, energy and time. Success will require some planning but the rewards are significant and long term.

Planting in the cracks and crevices found in retaining walls or natural overcroppings of rocks can create a beautiful garden. A walking path or spaces between pavers can also be a planting opportunity to create an interesting horticultural tapestry. Drought tolerant plants for low maintenance hardscapes can also be easy obtained.

Succulent plants are one of many great choices for rock gardens, and will be the focus of information for this article. Succulents thrive with lots of light but can burn in strong summer sun. Bright morning sun with partial shade in the afternoon is ideal.

Arid and sandy soil conditions are ideal for succulents. While these plants are not fussy, the plant roots do not like to sit in water. Check for drainage by pouring water into the location. If the soil does not drain well, amend by adding sand to heavy soil.

While succulents are low-water plants, they are not no-water plants! The rule of thumb is allowing the soil to go nearly dry before watering. If plants are not getting rain, watering once or twice a week is acceptable. Cacti in general cannot tolerate

overwatering. When choosing plants at the nursery, be sure all have similar growth needs: sun exposure, water requirements, zone tolerance and soil conditions.

The hardest part of growing succulents is deciding which ones to try! On a recent trip to Yankton Nurseries, plant expert and owner Jay Gurney gave me a fascinating tour. His garden center offers an amazing assortment of plants in every size, color, variety and texture.

Jay has been growing succulents for many years and is a wonderful source of information. He emphasized that overwatering succulents leads to root rot and diseases: "if the plant is wet, do not water!"

Succulent roots also prefer to be root bound, so frequent transplanting is not recommended. Those small cracks and crevices are ideal locations for these plants. Most succulents are slow growing, but once established will provide years of interest and remain low maintenance.

Succulent plants adapt well to container gardening, too. If you do not have a garden location, add interest to the patio or terrace with a potted garden. Container gardens can be moved indoors during the winter months for added interest all year long. I saw some beautiful hanging potted containers in Jay Gurney's greenhouse that were ancient.

Encouraged and excited by the wide variety of plant material available to this gardener, I will continue to embrace Xeriscape ideology.

AUGUST PLANT TIPS

Horticulturist Joe Hoffman is nationally recognized for his inmate horticulture program at Yankton Federal Prison Camp. Locally he is recognized for his crew's

care of trees and flowers the public can see in drive by of the federal prison. His student inmates create, plant and maintain the Observatory Hill Display Garden along Douglas Avenue. Thanks to his cooperation with local organizations and agencies, several civic projects help beautify Yankton. Thanks to Hoffman for sharing plant tips.

- Now is the best time to repair your lawn from the ravages of summer. Plan your turf renovation for the very end of August or the first week of September.

Mow the turf short, power rake and overseed with the new bluegrass varieties to make a great lawn next year. Then September will be a great time to put fertilizer on turf areas. Plan to spray your lawn areas about the second week of September to control dandelion and other broad leaf weeds next year.

- There is still time to plant radish, turnips some cabbages and spinach for fall crops.

- Empty areas of the vegetable garden can be sown to a cover crop of annual rye to help improve organic matter content for a very small investment.

- Annual flowers like geranium, petunia, dianthus, salvia and verbenas will respond well to cooler days and nights coming soon. Prune them back and give a little fertilizer and they will reward you with color till freeze up! Re-edging your flowerbeds this fall can save valuable spring planting time.

- Consider not pruning trees and shrubs at this time because it may encourage late growth that will not live through the winter. You can always prune out dead wood but save cutting out green or living wood until late fall or winter!

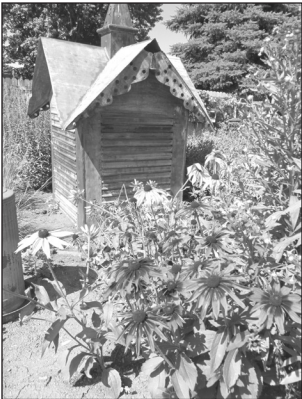


PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Diane's Backyard Garden (605-254-2949) in Beresford is a place to find perennials you like and see their growing habit in her plant beds. This barn roothat decorates her perennial display garden is complemented by orange and yellow Rudbeckias. Cupola was a gift from a former music student's parents. Hofer opened the gardens upon retirement as a music teacher. She plans an early September perennial bare root dig for gardener delight. See Facebook for details at "Diane's Backyard Garden."



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Lettuce germinates and grows to baby leaf stage in about three weeks. The wait is a small commitment for fresh homegrown lettuce.

What Can I Grow Now?

Is it too late to exercise my inner gardener instincts for this summer? Is it too late to plant? Homegrown lettuce in a container outdoors may be an option.

Find a container and add fresh potting soil. Lettuce seed package shows light requirements for a little sun and light shade. Once planted according to package directions, water the soil and later check beneath the soil surface and water when dry.

One of the advantages of growing lettuce in a container is that it can be placed on the deck by the reading chair. Find a shade/sun spot for the planter. Seeing the seeds germinate and produce leaves is part of the anticipation of fresh salad for modest commitment.

If this works and we get to pinch leaves for first harvest, part of the benefit of growing simple plants such as lettuce, is that it shows we can.

Hybrid Zuchinni Plant



SUBMITTED BY LORAN TRAMP
4 foot high, 12 foot across and 45 foot around.

Got News?

Thank you!

Thank you to all who sent cards and gave personal congrats on our 35th wedding anniversary. A special thank you to Randy Dockendorf for the very nice anniversary article and photo he wrote and took.

James & Martha Pajl

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