

Plant Exchange

A Journey Of Starting Over

Larsons Work To Recover From 2011 Flood

Share tips from your plant experience, give us a tour of your plant site, or send your questions related to outdoor or indoor plants to news@yankton.net Attn: Brenda Johnson or write to P&D, 319 Walnut St, Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson.

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

Q: Since the 2011 flood, how have you established your new yard and revitalized green spaces at Larson's Landing along the Missouri River?

A: Before the 2011 flood, Linda and Doug Larson's modular home faced the Missouri River near their Larson's Landing marina west of Yankton. Displaced by the flood for months, they now live in a modular home away from the flood plain at the landing and share a grove of giant cottonwood trees with neighbors.

We stand in their west facing front yard that welcomes residents on a hot sunny day in August. "We brought in topsoil," Linda said. "We decided we were too old to wait for grass to come up so we had the front and back yard sodded from Hartington Turf."

Full sun front yard foundation beds include golden elder that they had grown previous years with success at other sites around the landing, blue pincushion, black-eyed Susans, deep pink coneflowers, lavender, and liatris. Groundcover for her flowerbeds is lime-colored 'Angelina' sedum. This sedum is also found in other colors.

"We pick up the 'Angelina' in another bed and just throw it here. Eventually it fills in," she said. Most of the bed is covered in the lime green living mulch after a few months. Ground cover can add another color to the bed while shading the soil and resisting weed growth.

"We re-used the front porch from our old house and added boards and repainted it." Looking at the new/old porch she said, "It's nice to change, but it's nice for some things to be the same."

NEW BEGINNINGS BACKYARD

In their horseshoe-shaped backyard, Larsons' share a grove of tall mature cottonwood and Eastern red cedar trees that had been undeveloped. Cleared of scrub underbrush, each neighbor along their back and side yards incorporated the trees into their own landscape setting. The area for all appears larger as a commons with boundaries. Larsons' three-foot split rail fence backed with coated chicken wire is adequate for their two Shih Tzu family dogs.

"This area will be my vegetable garden next year," she said. "Maybe the rabbits will leave it alone."

She points to young vines for red and white grapes. "This was my gate at the old house." The gate will support the vines. Nearby is a yellow children's playhouse. "It was formerly full of water."

"Now I like my backyard," she said. In the light shade of cottonwood and a stately mulberry tree is a Koi pond and patio seating.

"Laura Gollnick from Naturescapes and Tropical Creations of Yankton built the pond and waterfall. She did a good job of setting it under the trees here." Larsons enjoy the sound of water when seated on the nearby patio or their back deck.

"The big Koi are original fish that Laura took out of the pond before the flood and saved them for me. They came home a year later," Linda said.

She looks at areas around the pond where she intends to add plants and décor. "I found this metal alligator at Lily Crest. It



ABOVE: Koi pond has pre-flood fish as well as new Kois, thanks to skills of Laura Gollnick and Naturescapes. Dappled shade, waterfall on fieldstones, and birds' songs make the new pond a place that the Larsons enjoy. RIGHT: While this Yankton evergreen Austrian pine appears to be healthy, all its needles are tan along with the rest of the needles in the foot diameter tree, due to Pine Wilt. Pines can get other diseases, so identifying the disease is important before taking action. (Photos: Brenda K. Johnson)

wants to eat the fish."

Near the pond, a sunny herb garden features rosemary, basil, thyme, oregano, and Italian parsley. "I cut them and hang them in the garage upside down." They use the dried herbs in cooking. Coreopsis adds color and spiderwort provides ground cover.

As we stand in the shade, Linda remarks that they have lost a hundred trees so far, mostly cottonwoods, from the flood. "I love this yard. We're happy with our house. You need to appreciate what you've got. It makes you humble," she said.

PLANT MANAGEMENT AROUND THE LANDING

We tour Larson's Landing in Linda's four-wheeler. "We moved plants from my old yard to this (landing) entrance area." Timed irrigation watering has replaced hose watering for their green spaces around the landing, a real time-saver for Larsons.

We pass hardy plants with a wooden fence backdrop. Out of sight behind the fence is the community compost pile of leaves and grass clippings. "We've had this compost pile about four years. It's about four feet deep and the compost smells like soil." Residents can throw their clippings there. Compost can be used for flowerbeds and vegetable gardens. "We hope to replenish this area in the future."

Near the compost pile are plant staging areas for the five large landing flowerbeds and entrance areas. She calls the irrigated staging areas "farms" as they grow plants at the farms to transplant into flowerbeds as needed.

Flowerbeds here by the river are in sandy soil and full sun. With the drought and busy summer days, their new irrigation system with timers helps them establish new plants that require extra water around the landing. "We helped set up the system and cleaned the timers so we can more easily fix it," she said.

Linda, a trained master gardener, chooses hardy perennials and some native plants for the flowerbeds. Blanket flower, yarrow, coneflowers,

ornamental grasses, lavender, and sedums with 'Angelina' as ground cover are examples.

"We're somewhat starting over with the plantings now that the irrigation is working. We had to drag hoses before. 'Stella D'oro' daylilies need a better location than here." (Challenge is noted when these daylilies do not flourish.) No doubt the absence of some trees and their shade affects what plants will thrive in refurbished beds. She amends the soil. "I put mushroom compost around the plants each fall," she said.

Between October 2011 and now, much of their time has been devoted to cleaning, renovating, and repurposing buildings such as the landing storm shelter, multiuse community center/laundry/library/community kitchen. They upgraded the landing marina. Nathan Johnson reported their efforts in the *Press & Dakotan*, Aug. 25, 2012.

On the four-wheeler, we pass by a row of 30-year-old cottonwood trees that are under watch for viability. "You can see high water marks on trees that are almost out of standing reach," she said. This season's drought adds to tree stress. A large upturned tree root remains in a display bed near their new home. "Sandbags were seven feet tall and ten feet wide over there," she said. "When the water went down, here was the tree root. It has a story to tell."

To the sound of a skid loader backing and hammers pounding, the two employees, two young workers, and Doug and Linda will soon end their season. They have reorganized the mobile homes away from the flood plain. They have found other areas and have increased their recreational vehicle spaces at the landing from 62 to 91.

"We've done all this with the help of friends, campers, and others all along the way. For nine weeks (last year) I didn't know where my stuff was, in different places. But my new backyard is nicer. Birds like it a lot. Thanks to flood insurance, I have a new home. We're grateful to so many who helped us during the flood and we didn't know many of them," she said.



Q: What About Pine Wilt?

A: Last month Nathan Johnson reported in the *Press & Dakotan* that Lewis & Clark Recreation Area west of Yankton needed to remove a hundred Austrian pines along hilltops due to Pine Wilt. Pine Wilt has been a problem in Kansas and Nebraska for Scotch, Austrian, jack and mugho pines. These trees, exotic to South Dakota, are susceptible to Pine Wilt, according to John Ball, South Dakota State University Extension Forester. Ball says that the Ponderosa native pine is unaffected by the nematode, fungus and/or possibly bacteria, and sawyer beetle that together cause Pine Wilt and kill the tree. These organisms and the disease have been present in the region for years but the additional stresses of heat and drought favor outbreaks in a specific site.

Needles turn gray green and then tan in some or all of the branches of the tree. Trees older than ten years seem to be more affected, according to Ball. The pinewood nematode feeds on water conducting passages of the tree. A Ceratocystis fungus is brought to the tree by beetles. Nematodes feed on the fungus and grow and reproduce more rapidly. Pine sawyer beetles move tiny nematodes from tree to tree in a site. The beetle larva hatches in the tree, feeds under the bark, and the adult sawyer beetle flies to infect nearby trees

with nematodes in its breathing tubes.

To confirm presence of this disease before taking action (since there are other pine diseases) one diagnostic lab in the region that accepts samples is at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Call Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic for information at (402) 472-2559.

Once Pine Wilt is confirmed, Ball recommends the removal and destruction of the infected tree in fall or winter, or at least before the sawyer beetles emerge in spring, about April. Infected wood is not suitable for firewood due to spread of the disease. An expensive pesticide tree injection is available to prevent infection for high-value trees. For more background on Pine Wilt, Google "Pine Wilt in Nebraska" and see Dr. Ball's Pest Update for Jan. 9:

<http://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/tree-pest-alerts/>

February Plant Tips

Audrea Hecht of Pied Piper Flower Shop, Broadway and 15th St in Yankton shares plant care tips for winter. "With all of us indoors more, we need to give our plants a little TLC to help them through the long Midwest winter," Hecht said. "Hope these helps keep things green this winter!"

- Have plants in your home! They help clean the air and they make you feel better.

- Keep your plants away from hot or cold drafts such as a register vent or to a door that leads to the outside.

- Give your plant as much light as possible. Southern exposure is good this time of year.

- Resist transplanting this time of year due to shortened day lengths. If you must transplant don't go bigger than 2" in pot size from the previous pot and use GOOD SOIL.

- Watch your watering and fertilizer. Most tropical plants like to be moderately moist. When you put your finger in the soil the top inch should feel dry to the touch before you water it. Only use a water-soluble fertilizer and use only once a month. How much water you give your plants will vary in the winter as most of our homes tend to be a bit dry, so you may need to water a LITTLE more.

- If leaves have brown tips, raise the humidity in your home. Most tropical plants like 30% - 50% air humidity.

- Terrariums are the hottest thing right now. Whether you want to raise herbs or small tropical plants, it's like having your own mini garden in a glass. You can use any clear glass container large enough to hold plants or a special enclosed container just for terrariums, either way it's a fun way to bring some spring green into your house this winter. Stop by and see us for great ideas and supplies.

Plant Exchange: Blog With Us!

This blog is an interactive site for people of our USDA Zone 4-5a region to exchange ideas about plants. Want to read some past Plant Exchange features you missed? Want to share a comment about plants?

- How does a Yankton couple solve backyard hillside landscape issues with persistence, skills, and belay for safety?

- What differences has the drought made so far in Yankton parks and green spaces? What annuals withstood heat and drought the best?

- What are gardener tips from Yankton community garden plots?
- Want tips for houseplant care in winter?

- Want to see and read about what's growing and blooming around the United States and elsewhere? "Garden Bloggers Bloom Day" link will show you selections from January 15, 2013.

- How does a floral designer show her interpretation of photography art?

- What is an easy way to grow plants from cuttings? Local gardener shows you how. Check us out at the web address: brendakjohnsonplantexchange.wordpress.com

Dibbles & Bits

- Encouraging vines to grow to maturity within the growing season can be a problem in this region. Evelyn Schindler of Yankton has a 'Bat Wing' and another passion vine growing on arch trellises. She takes cuttings and overwinters these out-of-zone vines in pots indoors. "I keep them cut back over the winter so the vines don't get entwined in everything. They are slow starters. Once vines begin new growth and adjust to outdoors, they mature and bloom within the season. In spring, the vines and other plants growing from cuttings in pots, adjust to outdoors for a few weeks in her shaded backyard. "This place is a disaster area with plants everywhere here in the yard. It's hard keeping the plants in little pots watered." For the vine trellis, Schindlers bent and tied 20-foot rebar to steel fence posts, forming the desired arch. A series of rebar vine supports add height interest as they arch across the back of



PHOTO BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON

Passion vine is a plant that Evelyn Schindler of Yankton roots and regrows overwinter so that the plant is ready to set out in spring in time to bloom in summer in her yard.

the yard. "The rebar itself doesn't have much for a vine to climb on, so I started leaving the dead vine on the rebar and then tying the new vine into the old vine with string. Birds thought I left nesting string for them, so they took some too."

- Master Gardener Training 2013 will be offered by South Dakota State University Extension staff with Yankton as a regional site for three hands-on learning days in May. This year,

online learning will be combined with the three sessions at the Yankton County Extension Office on Whiting Drive. Topics include care and selection of trees and shrubs, lawn care, vegetable and flower gardening and more. Application and fee deadline March 27th. Details on website: <http://www.sdstate.edu/sdces/resources/lawn/master-gardeners/>

Information contact: Mary Roduner, MG Coordinator

at (605) 394-1722.

- Rabbit damage now? Missing bark above the snowline on hedge or shelter belt plants is likely due to rabbits, according to SDSU Extension Forestry Specialist John Ball, while below snowline may be voles or mice. He looks for twigs cut at a 45-degree angle and droppings for further proof of rabbit activity. Dr. Ball suggests repellents that mimic predator urine or repellents that leave an irritating taste like hot peppers as ones to try now. Later when possible, removing brush or hiding places around plants eliminates habitat. Viable plants may be fenced with chicken wire close to the ground and well above snow line. Pest Update <http://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/tree-pest-alerts/>

- Interested in starting an herb garden? A video by Andy Krieger shows the basics of growing herbs in the Midwest. Rosemary, indoors and out, and other edible herbs are featured along with curiosities such as lovage. On the website My Garden Insider are others topics for gardeners. <http://www.mygardeninsider.com/show-me-how/herb-gardening-video>

- LUNCH & LEARN - Common Spine Problems

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, Noon-1:00PM
Minerva's, 1607 E. Hwy. 50, Yankton, SD

Do You Have any of These Symptoms?

1. Hand numbness & tingling.
2. Shoulder/ shoulder blade pain or pain between the shoulder blades.
3. Arm pain & numbness
4. Hip & radiating leg pain
5. Leg pain, numbness & tingling.



Dr. Kent Patrick
Spine Surgeon

Come to our Lunch & Learn on Feb. 7th to get information on the causes & treatment for these common spine symptoms.



YANKTON SPINE
Kent M. Patrick, M.D.

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