

## Plant Exchange

## Color Your Landscape

Share tips from your outdoor or indoor plant experience, give us a tour of your plant site, or just let us know what you enjoy most about the plants and people who grow them. Contact 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

## GARDENING HOBBY GOES WITH YOU

We are all a bit of who we were, sometimes in another place, plus who we are here and now. Debbie Roberts was an accomplished container gardener in Leadville Colorado. She learned to bring on the bold splash of color the moment the season started because in high elevation the season is short. Color in containers works well for her here too. She can change colors as the season evolves, and move the focal point in her yard, all with containers. A native of Parkston, South Dakota, she also has the thrifty gardener's eye for building on what works well in given conditions in her yard.

Front entrance area of her home illustrates her gardening skills. "It might be overdone," she said. "I had to move pots around so the mailman could get to the box. I had to move some pots so they get more sun. We used to get more shade but we lost a huge [hackberry] branch. Last year we lost a pine."

It's mid-growing season. We're at the Roberts' front door porch on her two-story original Victorian era "Italianate" home that gets morning sun. Mature trees shade the front yard. Refurbished front flowerbeds, a large triangle shaped bed of freshly weeded lily of the valley and containers on the landing and steps widen the view of the front entrance.

She points to vine foliage on a trellis in a large pot that a local friend gave her. "She started the passion plant for me. I cut it way back before I brought it out this summer. It had the root base so it really took off. Flowers will be purple and white and don't last long. My brother has one too."

A large container displays black heart-shaped leaves and petunias with black centered petals. "I bought plants from every nursery and greenhouse in Yankton," she said. A pot of German ivy with waxy leaves is nearby.

"Lilies of the valley were already here," she said. My husband [Jay] and I put border around them because they grow into the lawn. I seldom weed them because they are so dense that other plants don't grow." She thinned them last summer and shared transplants with a neighbor.

"First two summers we were here were so hot. When I go out, I stay out for

most of the day rather than go back and forth," Roberts said. They have replaced topsoil in flowerbeds and edging for front flowerbeds and north side yard flowerbeds.

All the plant borders are made of brick. One brick is positioned on its side to hold in wood mulch. The other brick that is positioned in front of it, is trenched flush with soil for ease in mowing. Continuous brick color and repeating shape adds continuity to beds. North side yard foundation beds grow hostas, red twig dogwood for winter interest, dainty pink begonias and red fountain grass. A weeping Japanese maple adds form and height.

"We wrapped the trunk with burlap for winter and the tree came back," Roberts said. "Stan Hoffart, landscaper and former Yankton city forester told us about the Japanese maple growing behind the fountain at 4th St. and Broadway in Yankton without extra care."

An island garden in their expansive side yard lawn is a visual buffer to their back yard. Roberts turn it from eyesore to bed of roses when they took out old climbing roses, reshaped the borders, added a cement fountain



**TOP:** Debbie and Jay Roberts found and used reclaimed brick with pavers for their social backyard space. Garage windows and arrangement of vibrant multi-color plants along the garage wall convey a cottage appearance to the outdoor area. Perennials in the foreground give the illusion of space boundary. **ABOVE:** Yellow straw flowers, ornamental grass, and yellow lime coleus is one of Debbie Roberts' favorite containers. Magazine idea in hand, she found plants that conveyed the look she wanted. Part of the fun is in the looking for plants at local nurseries and greenhouses. **RIGHT:** Irish moss container makes a nest for ceramic birds in their backyard outdoor space. (Photos: Brenda K. Johnson)

from another part of the yard, and established hybrid tea roses.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

As in most yard projects, loose ends are not as tidy and complete as on TV yard makeover shows. Roberts mentions kitchen plans that might interfere with backyard renovation. "We weren't going to do anything to the backyard because we wanted to extend our kitchen. [The backyard] was such an eyesore last year. We decided to do something we could take apart and put somewhere else."

She clustered containers to display plants and hide the future backyard renovation area. "I went crazy with succulents," she said. These include various succulents, ice plants, orange and yellow kalanchoe, and spikes. "They're in such big pots, I can't move them. Our ultimate plan is to add on the garage with a little greenhouse to winter the succulents. That's not going to happen so I'll take in what I can and hope for the best. I did overwinter 'cabbage rose' succulents in a clay container. Maybe I'll transplant some specimens into smaller pots too."

Roberts overwinters some container plants in her kitchen. A spot that seems to work for large pots of daylilies, and other plants is the indoor stairway to their exit cellar door, possibly because some warm air leakage. "We had no patio or space to be outside," she said. "We were outdoors so much in the summer in Colorado that at first it was hard to be here."

"We found printed brick in various places in the yard under the grass," she said. "Was there



a brick foundry in Yankton?" Jay dug up brick and used a wire brush to clean them up. They laid pavers and authentic brick for their outdoor living area. Before, a modest cement walkway led from the house to the garage. Now pavers flank both sides of the sidewalk and form a triangular space with room for a table and chairs and a conversation area in their backyard.

A small garage at the back edge of the yard blocks sun from the west on hot summer afternoons and provides welcome shade for the patio. Style of windows in the garage and abundant arrangement of flower containers along the wall convey a cottage backdrop across the back yard. "I thought I might get a friend of mine who paints to do a mountain mural. When it's so hot I could look at it," she said. Blue fescue and heather are reminiscent of mountain plants in pots by the garage.

"We found an old soapstone sink in our unfinished basement and put it on a base," Roberts said. They placed it by the garage wall and filled it with pots of bold colored flowering annuals.

Multi colors are so vibrant in her outdoor space. "I like color," she said. "My career was as a mortician. I owned my own funeral home in Leadville. I think I like color because so much of my life was dark and subdued. Bold colors go together. Bright colors are my predominant theme, although I have a [fuzzy gray] licorice plant paired with pink double impatiens [along the north side of house. It's what you want to combine."

We sit in the shade in the outdoor area with containers of

plants all around. "My favorite planter has straw flowers in front and ornamental grass, ivy and coleus. I copied it from a magazine," she said. "You might not find exactly what they have but you fill in with something. It wasn't that ivy or that ornamental grass, but it's fun to look, leading up to planting." As she talks the grass moves in the breeze. "In an open yard you can see the sky and all around."

## SIBLING BONDS

"My brother and I both enjoy plants," Roberts said. "Since moving here we're closer by and feed off each other that way. My brother, sister-in-law and I went to a Brands' greenhouse half price punch card sale this summer. She put on Facebook, 'It was like following two addicts around.' It was at the end of planting and we still couldn't resist the good buys. That's part of the fun. My brother is knowledgeable and I can ask him what would go here. Sometimes I don't follow his advice—such as planting the banana tree in a sunnier spot to begin with."

"It never happened before that I could see perennials come back because of where I lived before," she said. "Humidity and heat is so good for plants here. You can see growth. As we have made improvements, we've been encouraged by comments from neighbors."

Roberts notices the wren's song in the lilac nearby. "That's something we don't have in the mountains. We've become bird watchers here. My husband put a heater in the bird bath last winter and we look out the kitchen window in the morning."

## January Plant Tips

Lisa Kortan, Urban Forester for City of Yankton, selected and managed hundreds of annuals and perennials in Yankton park flowerbeds and green spaces last growing season. She shares comments about some of her hardy season standouts.

- I tried New Guinea Sun Impatiens in sun and shade. One spot was the entrance sign area of Riverside Park near the Territorial Capitol Replica parking lot. They did wonderfully. I will try reds and purples next year. They were never out of color all season into November.

- Burgundy trailing verbena was in many pots around the city. I will try other colors next season.

- Trailing petunia in Westside Park was a standout.

- Because of the activity of summer music, Riverboat Days, and weddings there, we added pots with geraniums, trailing verbena, and a spike.

- For perennials, along West 4th Street, the concerns are winter salt buildup and need for drought tolerant plants. Yellow yarrow did very well.

- Along Douglas Avenue, purple fountain grass gave the height and "Pink Dawn" wave petunias looked beautiful. We got them from Fensel's Greenhouse in Freeman.

## Dibbles &amp; Bits

- Ornamental grasses remind us that we live on the Northern Plains at the juncture of tall and mid-grass prairies. Ornamental grasses add texture and motion to the landscape. Some ornamental grasses were trialed at the Chicago Botanic Garden for beauty and hardiness, although overwintering performance in our region and re-seeding concerns were not tested. These are among the standouts: green bladed 'Stripe It Rich' Japanese forest grass, red blue 'Carousel' little bluestem, 'Red Head' fountain grass, tall 'Cordodoba' purple moor grass, sturdy stemmed 'Indian Warrior' big bluestem, and fine seed head 'Northwind' switchgrass. See December 2013 Fine Gardening magazine for full listing of trial results.

- Forcing bulbs indoors is a way to enjoy flowers up close in winter. Try to find bulbs that have been stored at proper temperatures and are not already sprouting. (Next year store bulbs in your refrigerator until you plant.) Cover bulb with potting soil in container with tip up. Place pot in the refrigerator and bring out when you see growth. Water a little and place in sunny spot. For more details see December 2013 Fine Gardening magazine.

- Consider a plan to plant bulbs next time on your feet instead of your knees. For a natural drift of daffodils, a bed with several kinds of bulbs, or a mass effect in an area where you need to visualize the bulbs in the setting before you plant, first prepare the bed for easy planting. Add some compost and use a tiller or shovel to loosen the soil in the bed. Mark sections in the bed with so you can stand back and see how the bulbs might look. Place bulbs upright in the sections and add potting soil or topsoil over the top of the bulbs to the depth required for each kind of bulb. See more details in October 2013 Martha Stewart Living magazine, which is available at the Yankton Community Library.

- Would winter color enhance your yard? Now is a great time to take a long look at areas that might benefit from natural color for next winter. Some oak trees show rust brown leaves all winter before releasing them in spring. Evergreen trees contrast well with the trunks of birch or aspen and snow. Planting a stand of trees has somewhat the affect of mass flowers—multiple similar repeated colors and shapes. Shrubs may also provide color with remaining berries and twigs of color. More details in November/December Northern Gardener magazine. For information on USDA Zone 4b or 5a trees or shrubs that you might like to plant, consider the Arbor Day Foundation website: <http://www2.arborday.org/Shopping/Trees/PopularTrees.cfm?zone=5>

## 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 or share a comment about plants?

- \* Want to make a hypertufa plant container out of easy-to-find materials? A local gardener gives you tips.

- \* How does a family plan for landscape improvements turn into a memorable summer on the rock?

- \* What are some local plants used by historical Native Americans and settlers?

- \* What were landscape challenges and rewards experienced by Yankton Federal Prison Camp horticulturist this past season?

- \* Want to see what's blooming here and in Nova Scotia or New Zealand now? See "Garden Bloggers Bloom Day" on January 15th link.

- Check our blog at: [www.brendakjohnson-plantexchange.wordpress.com](http://www.brendakjohnson-plantexchange.wordpress.com)

## MEETINGS

## GET UP &amp; GO

The Get Up & Go 4-H Club met on Dec. 1, 2013, at the Ice Skating Rink in Yankton. Since Great Bear wasn't open for season yet, our club decided to go ice skating for our Christmas party. Our club ice skated from 1:30-3:30 p.m., and at 4:30 p.m. we met and ate at Pizza Ranch. We had a total of 7 members and 2 adults participate in the ice skating and a total of 8 members and 7 adults eat at Pizza Ranch. Our next meeting is NOT on Jan 12 — It is on Jan 5, 2014, at 1:30 p.m in the Irene Legion Hall.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## MMC's Tice Earns Doctor Of Musical Arts Degree

Mount Marty College's Assistant Professor of Music, Kenneth Tice, recently completed his doctoral study at the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati in Cincinnati, Ohio for his doctor of musical arts degree.

For the past year Dr. Tice has been an instructor and the choir director for the multiple choirs at MMC. He is also the founder and director of the Mount Marty Choral Union, and music director for the college musicals with the theater department. Dr. Tice joined MMC as a faculty

member within the Mount Marty College music program in Yankton, South Dakota in 2012.

Tice completed his doctoral exams and his lecture recital in the spring of 2013. His DMA document, "An Analytical, Rehearsal, and Performance Guide to Ad majorem Dei gloriam by Benjamin Britten," was completed in the summer of 2013. The degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) was conferred in August and Tice participated in a hooding ceremony on December 13th in Cincinnati, OH.