

HOME GARDEN

PLANT EXCHANGE:

Flowerbed In Cattle Yard — No Fertilizer

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON

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

Q: What has a seasoned gardener learned about growing plants in this region?

A: "We-a-t-h-e-r!" Nebraska native Mary Klimczyk said. "I hear Yankton has micro-climates of higher zones, but here four miles southwest of Yankton, I only buy perennials for Zone 3 or -30 degrees."

She has learned that the start date for the growing season is variable and conditions that dry soil are hard to predict.

"Last year we watered flowers and vegetables only once, but this year, we already watered in May," she said.

Klimczyk had not lived on the family farm for 40 years when she and her husband Al returned here due to the unexpected death of her brother. On the farm, her mother grew peonies, irises, bleeding hearts, and had a small garden. The home place nestled against Missouri River bluff, with cattle and lots of out-buildings close to the house.

Mary and Al spent their first year back converting the cattle yard into a large flower garden, planting trees, creating a vegetable garden and flowerbeds and taking down outbuildings no longer in use.

Not everything in gardening went smoothly.

"I didn't realize you have to dig up tulips every year at the end of the season," Klimczyk said. "I lost some beautiful ones from Holland that way. Now I dig up and dry the bulbs in the shade (after the tops are brown), store them in a cardboard box in a cool area and then plant them again in the fall."

Her years of gardening experience elsewhere allowed her to see this region in a new way. "I don't hesitate to move a plant if it's not doing well in the sun or shade," she said. "First-year perennials are growing roots, so I don't expect much from them the first year. But finding the right place for plants is not easy. I'm trying to establish lamb's ears, but haven't found the right spot yet."

She has heard others say the plant is even invasive in some yards.

Klimczyk received and now shares plants. Lois Anderson, Wilma Rahn and others gave her plants. She contributed many plants for her Town & Country Garden Club Spring plant sales.

"I used to wonder how some gardeners always had plants to sell or exchange with others," Klimczyk said. "I didn't have spare plants. Then I found out. I stopped deadheading (taking off spent flowers to encourage more blooms) toward the end of the season. Some plants, such as Mexican hats, purple cone flower, fire crackers, daisies or black-eyed Susans will then self-seed and grow new plants to share."

She also has plants to share with friends and for her Missouri Valley Master Gardeners' fall plant sales.

Klimczyk said irises are easy to grow and take little care.

"Irises, you barely even plant them," she said. "You spade the soil and then barely cover the rhizome. Allow a few inches between them for them to multiply. Irises have little disease. Grasshoppers sometimes eat leaves but deer leave them alone. Irises grow from the center outward. After about three to four years, you need to dig up rhizomes because they crowd and the center dies."

Klimczyk didn't take time or spend money for much soil amendment.

"If a plant grows well, soil doesn't need more additives. Leaves make great mulch and encourage earth worms," she said.

In the fall, she piled leaves onto plants that need cover and then trimmed dead flower parts in spring.

She liked poppies that add bold color in late spring or early summer.

"Poppies don't transplant well, but do re-seed themselves," Klimczyk said. "The whole plant dies back in July, but roots are still viable for next year."

She has grown plants for profit and for children, and has been a familiar vendor at the Yankton Third Street Farmer's Market. She grew gourds, dries and paints them, and makes wren houses. Each fall, she has donated 3,000 pumpkins to Sertoma



(Above) Mary Klimczyk's former cattle yard is now a long-season flowerbed. Cannas and lilies follow the irises and poppies. (Below, left) One of the Klimczyks' sons has inherited joy of gardening and shared this iris with his parents. (Below, right) Klimczyk points out that this clump of irises need digging up and dividing. "See the dead area in the middle?" she asked.

PHOTOS: BRENDA K. JOHNSON



Club so that all children of Yankton have one for Halloween. "If I had it to do over again, I'd just plant daylilies and other members of the lily family," Klimczyk said. "No pests eat them, they're easy to transplant, flowers are long lasting and leaves are beautiful. There are so many varieties. Oh, I'd also plant cannas, because they are Al's

favorite, along with hostas, and Al's my right hand."

Q: Finding perennials that deliver color, have low care and water needs, AND grow well in our region, is not easy. What are some options blooming now?

A: Plants that can grow along streets may have poor soil with



snow salt, compaction and trampling besides regional weather conditions. These may be found along West Fourth Street in Yankton.

"Variegated loosestrife is a very hardy plant that grows in wet or dry soils," said Stan Hoffart, urban forestry specialist for the City of Yankton.

Loosestrife is an escaped ornamental on the Great Plains with flowers in a cymule or stalk-like arrangement. It has been planted for its source of honey for bees.

"Wine cups tend to come back each year and also re-seeds itself," Hoffart said.

It is a low-growing plant with fuchsia blooms cover the bed, deterring weeds.

Flat-topped corymb flower heads are distinctive of yarrow. The native forb is common to the Great Plains and can be dried for fall flower arrangements.

During the Civil War, the plant was used to treat bleeding wounds, according to "Weeds of the Great Plains" by James Stubbendieck, et al, which can be found at the Yankton

Community Library.

Catmint or catnip grows by taproot on the Great Plains as an introduced plant from Europe that escaped cultivation. Oil from the plant affects the cat's brain somewhat like THC may affect humans.

"Missouri Primrose has done well in some areas and in others, not so well," Hoffart said. "I think it needs good drainage but will tolerate drought. It is a perennial with a long bloom season."

Medium-height purple salvia flanks the yellow primrose. Color combinations like these are prominent along the street and change from week to week in the growing season.

For views of other plant color combinations, see www.PlantSelect.org, and look at the "Design Gallery."

Of Interest to Plant Enthusiasts

• Flower Vegetable Show, sponsored by Yankton Town & Country Garden Club, will be held Saturday, July 31. Everyone is invited to submit an entry. Entries accepted 10 a.m.-noon.

Judging will take place from noon-1 p.m. Open for viewing from 1-4 p.m. at the Yankton Community Library Meeting Room. No fee for entries or for viewing. Guidelines for entering will be available at the library or the GAR Hall.

• Yankton Area Garden/Yard Tour, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Saturday, July 10, sponsored by Missouri Valley Master Gardeners. Six hosted garden sites with lunch included for \$10. Tickets at the first tour site, 400 E. 6th St. Included on the tour are shade/sun yards, landscaping with native trees and evergreens, vegetable gardens, plants to attract birds, yard ornaments, transforming cattle yards to gardens, annuals, shrubs and perennials for our area, container planters, homeowner solutions to landscape problems and city and country settings.

• "Mid-Season Canopy Management in the Vineyard" tour and workshop, sponsored by Yankton County Extension Service on Saturday July 10 at Lewis & Clark Vineyards, 31060 435 Ave., Yankton. Presenters will be Dr. Ann Fennell Horticulture SDSU and Greg Stach owner. Pat Garrity: "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" marketing program. Registration is at 8:30 a.m. Cost is \$15, including lunch, with a field demonstration at 9 a.m. For more information, call (605) 665-3387.

• Yankton County Extension Service horticulture online newsletter "Garden Corner" is available at: <http://yanktonhorticulture.webs.com>. The June issue includes information on watering and tomato late blight among other topics.

Nursery Notes

July can be a time for yard projects.

"While bare root planting is over now, trees, shrubs, and other perennials in containers can be planted all the way to September as long as it's watered well," said Jay Gurney of Yankton Nurseries. "Once planted, try not to disturb roots as they are branching out."

Whenever you have planted a tree in the growing season, watering is important.

"Some water plants with the clasp sprayer, the kind you clean a sidewalk," Gurney said.

"Pressure or mist spray is hard for determining the amount of water you're putting on soil."

Gurney suggests you consider removing the sprayer head and use thumb or bent hose to control water flow.

"The goal is to soak the soil so that it is damp about a foot down, around the plant so that watering will last about a week," he said. "Usually in July, overwatering isn't a problem. One way is to turn hose on to drip once every second in the area of the tree roots and continue this for about 12 hours."

"If you trim the first flush of blooms off roses, daylilies, and May Night salvia, and do it again later, you get more flowers," he said.

July is the time to keep weeds out of the garden.

"Weeding now means less seed forming for next year's weeds, and it slows down weeding for rest of the summer," Gurney said. "Now's the time to throw down the hoe and go boating."

JULY GARDEN TIPS

Kory Mensch, owner of Mensch Greenhouse, Inc. in Avon and supplier to Brandts on Eighth Street in Yankton, suggests these hints:

- Most garden vegetables do not need to be watered during an average summer. Try not to water your vegetable garden at all. If you have started to water it you may need to continue this season, but next year give the roots a chance to do their job. Everything will taste better, too.
- Water hanging baskets and planters thoroughly, and fertilize weekly for best performance. Slow-release fertilizer disappears quickly in the heat with frequent watering.
- Water your ground beds less often and water deep, making the roots do some work. Fertilizer can also be used less often in good topsoil.
- If you spend the time and money to pretty-up your surroundings, it takes very little time and hardly a cent to keep them looking good and healthy by removing spent blooms.
- Vegetable gardens have the best return on investment in the world. With \$20 and a little tending, it reaps more than \$200 worth of groceries in a short amount of time.

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