

# Plant Exchange: A Yard Neighbors Admire

**BY BRENDA K JOHNSON**  
P&D Correspondent

*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](mailto:news@yankton.net). Attn: Brenda Johnson or write to P&D, 319 Walnut St, Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson.*

A neighbor who appreciates a yard along her walking path recommended the next featured gardeners. Thanks to all who share their experiences for our benefit.

**Q:** Who lives in that pretty yard?

**A:** Marv and Marilyn Ekeren of Yankton are neighbors who increase your property value by living next door. They began personalizing their yard when they moved from Gayville seven years ago. Their corner lot can be seen from two streets. Without border fences, their back and side yard also display two adjacent neighbors. Their flowers bloom, from spring Korean lilacs to fall asters and ornamental grasses.

Marilyn likes color, and Marv keeps plants tended. That is only part of their story. In the heat of summer, when many yards look spent or overgrown, their shrubs are trimmed, flowers dead-headed, colors dance through flowerbeds, and specimen perennials still have space around them to grow freely.

"We spend a lot of time out in the yard," Marv said. "It makes a house a home. We were both born and raised on farms. I've always had a garden."

Now he welcomes vegetables from others. "After six back surgeries, it's hard to pull weeds and hoe, so my brother brings us fresh produce."

We stand on their spacious lawn. "We get John List's Lawn Service to fertilize

and spray the yard now. It takes lots of water in the heat of summer." The dark green lawn is a backdrop to a flowerbed backed with timbers, extending most of the yard in front of their home.

Marilyn checks perennials in bloom that she recently installed. "I enjoy looking at pretty colors. These mums were from Mother. They were beside her house. We've dug out some of the daises." The bed has fuchsia dianthus, bold black-eyed Susans, coneflowers, and daylilies. She has added them to other foundation beds, repeating colors.

Rabbits can be a problem, according to Marv. "We use some spray that smells like road kill."

Winter cleanup held a surprise this year. "When our granddaughter visited earlier," Marilyn said, "we had a half whiskey barrel plant container with seven baby rabbits. The whole nest was lined with fur. (Our granddaughter) kept checking them."

"We hauled (the rabbits) out to the country later," Marv said.

Two landscape problems in the yard have become part of their side yard interest. "Mature evergreens needed to come down," Marv said. Now a berm, ornamental grasses and perennials open the yard near the front corner. With lowered plant height here, other parts of the yard show up more.

"We liked the berm idea," Marv said. In place of the second evergreen is now a Korean lilac tree standard with a flowerbed below. "The tulips bloomed this spring. Jay Gurney at Yankton Nurseries suggested that I wait to cut leaves off until after they finished blooming and were dead, so they would come back next year. We added rust daylilies that come up after the tulips in this bed."

Bold color is repeated with Marilyn's containers around the yard. The pots



Marv and Marilyn Ekeren's front flowerbed has perennial flowers from spring to fall. Red, fuchsia and yellow are repeated in other beds.

are about 15 inches or so in diameter. "The (container) bottom is filled with aluminum pop cans; easier to lift and requires less Miracle-Gro soil." She plants her own containers but has a special one.

"This one came from Diane's Greenhouse. It has bloomed since Mother's

Day." The container is on their deck and also in view from their kitchen. We water it every day and even twice in very hot weather."

Plants and ornaments by the front entrance reinforce the attention to care that the rest of the yard receives. "That's a Blushing Bride hydrangea,"

Marilyn said. Water pours from a frog fountain. Near the entrance is shade on a hot day, the sound of trickling water and precise detail of three of Marv's finely sheared shrubs.

"You'll have to drive by over the holidays," Marv said. "We like Halloween and Christmas lights."

## When Is The Right Time To Plant?

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When to plant is a question for gardeners, as we consider the results of this season. Find what happens with different planting times for Jay Gurney, whose profession is timing poinsettias for the holidays and transplants ready for the growing season.

**Q:** When is the best time to plant my vegetable garden?

**A:** Jay Gurney, owner and nurseryman of Yankton Nurseries, LLC, was active in the greenhouse, on the tractor, and visiting with customers during the planting season. When he took time to plant his home garden, he considered that his best time to plant.

"Most years I start a home garden in early June," Gurney said. "Now I plant potatoes earlier than that. Then later in June I can plant another garden; some plants do fine for a fall crop."

Gurney often heard customers exclaim disappointment when they didn't find time to plant in early May. They spoke as if they had missed the season altogether.



By early August, Jay Gurney's three home gardens, planted a month apart, had tomatoes in harvest in the May garden. Only disease-resistant tomatoes were planted early.

chard, and Brussel sprouts."

Some peppers have mature fruit.

"This garden hasn't had to be watered until now. Same for other gardens with rain."

"I have harvested some fingerling potatoes. They barely have skins. Blue potatoes are growing well. The potato plants are weedy, so in a month or so, after the tops are dead I will mow off the tops, flush to the ground and then harvest them and put them in a root cellar."

"Peppers and eggplants are growing well, but have lots of insect pressure at this time."

"Maharishi peppers have a little heat, but are mostly spicy, like Cajon Belles with a different taste. These are All American Selection peppers. I like to try them in my garden first before putting them for sale."

"One of the favorites is Blushing Beauty. It's a thick-walled All American Selection. The vegetables that are selected for this designation have been grown under many conditions. Another favorite pepper is the Super long cyan peppers which are used for making stringers of peppers."

June-planted garden had no irrigation after planting in June or July, up to the early August interview. Commonly, extra watering would have been necessary for a June garden.

"Big Beef" tomatoes are maturing. Vines all looked green. "I expect less disease on these vines planted in June than if they were planted in May."

Melons were filling out well and a few early watermelons were ripe, with a late August maturity expected.

"Yellow Baby" seedless with yellow flesh are alternated at planting with 'Sugar Baby' red watermelons. Alternating kinds of watermelons help to keep track of vines and for pollination," Gurney said. "Melon plants are grown in the greenhouse before transplanting."

"Sangria' and 'Sweet Favorite'

watermelons mature within 80 days. While these were dry-farmed, irrigation does seem to increase yields."

July-planted garden was in bloom or had developing fruit. Irrigation was necessary for their development.

"Celebrity, Manitoba, and Pineapple heirloom tomatoes are planted here. Manitoba plants defoliated and then the tomatoes sun scalded. We also grow tomatillos, a husk tomato or ground cherry, for salsa."

"For eggplant, long Japanese, and black beauty are doing well. Flea beetles that also attach potatoes and beans earlier in the season have been less a problem on these plants."

"Rabbits have eaten some broccoli and cabbage plants."

**MID-SEPTEMBER GARDEN NOTES**

Gurney expected harvest to have continued and be in full swing from the June and July gardens by the interview on September 16th. Hail on August 18th (Gurney called it a "40 year event") pummeled his gardens. "But it's all around here. Just listen." Sounds of hammers on siding, window frames, and roofing were everywhere.

Gurney had considered ending the three garden trials with the hailstorm. "Production now down 98%," he said. But he didn't tear out his gardens right away. After a month had passed, he found the

reasons why.

May-planted garden had a few surprises. Cool season Brussel sprouts and broccoli, although damaged, were showing signs of new growth, as might be expected in the fall. "Cabbages were destroyed by hail," Gurney said.

"Peppers in the this garden, the most mature bell, green long and hot peppers, survived the hail and came back better than the June or July gardens. It hurt production, but the plants are blooming again."

"Not a single tomato survived. Peppers are perennials, so the more mature plants are woodier and more hardy."

"Chard is coming back and popcorn may be harvestable with some loss."

June-planted garden also had a few surprises, considering the 98% loss expected. "Younger tomato plants fared better in this garden because some trees blocked the hail. The younger plants had more foliage that protected the fruit. Like in the May garden, the pepper plants fared OK. Hailed onions are finished." Although production was quite reduced, having closer to an average hard frost date helped a few plants recover.

July-planted garden had stripped cabbages, but they appeared to be recovering. "It depends on fall weather and length of season; the heads may produce and be under-sized."

"Tomatillo plants were stripped to the ground, yet the plants are now blooming. Result depends on fall weather."

"Eggplants were bearing when the hail hit. Like the tomatoes, they have flowers, but the odds are against fruit with season left."

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

"This year was no winner because of the hail in mid August. There was probably 90% vegetable production loss this year. It was Mother Nature at its worst. But the odds favor forty more years of better production."

"Whether you planted in May, June, or July, you got knocked out. Last year, if you planted in July, you had six more weeks of potential."

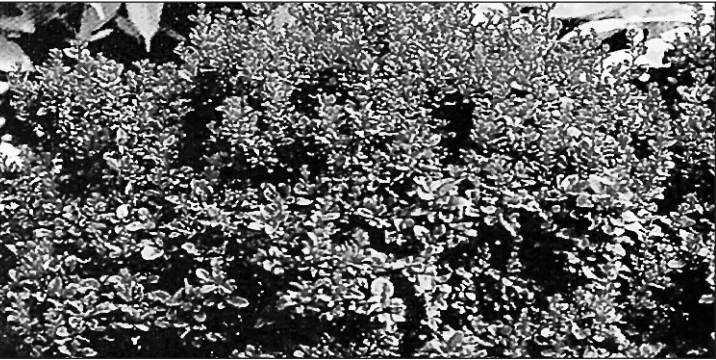
"I try to stagger planting the parts of the garden," Gurney said. "Because I'm busy at the start up of the season, I end up most years planting in early June. If the hail hadn't hit this year, all three gardens would have been successful."

## NOVEMBER PLANT TIPS

Audrea Hecht, manager and florist at Pied Piper Flower Shop (605) 665.7700, 15th St and Broadway Ave. in Yankton, wishes us green indoor plants this winter. "With all of us indoors more," Audrea said, "we need to give our plants a little TLC to help them through the long Midwest winter."

- Have plants in your home! They help clean the air and they make you feel better.
- Keep your plants away from drafts—hot or cold. Don't place your plants close to a register vent or close to a door that leads to the outside.
- Give your plant as much light as possible. South exposure is good this time of year.
- Resist transplanting this time of year due to the shortened days. 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.
- Have brown tips on the leaves? Raise the humidity in your home to help, most tropical plants like the air humidity about 30% - 50%.

## PLANTS DEER OR RABBITS SELDOM MUNCH




A reader, name withheld, lives in a country home in the Missouri River breaks by Lewis and Clark Lake near Yankton. While rabbits, raccoons and other animals can also damage plants, the reader finds peonies resistant to deer.

"Our fern peony has been in about five years and the bush peony about fifteen years, without deer damage," the reader said. A fern peony planted in a cemetery at Custer, South Dakota, has lasted more than seventy years, with deer pressure in that area."

"The red dwarf barberry has been in about fifteen years and has also proven to be deer resistant. It is drought tolerant and you can sheer barberry if you want."

Deer can be unpredictable. "Blue rug junipers are around the south and west side of our house. For nine years, they were fine. The deer consumed some of the plants the past two years and finished them off last winter," the reader said.



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