

Plant Exchange

A Bountiful Community Garden Harvest

Share tips from your outdoor or indoor plant experience, give us a tour of your plant site, or tell us 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. Blog: www.brendajohnsonplantexchange.wordpress.com.

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

At the Yankton community gardens this morning in early August, you find many gardeners of diverse backgrounds and ages tending plots in the warm sun. Air is peaceful. Soil in freshly weeded plots smells productive. Not all gardens lay in traditional rows; some are in beds and one diagonal. Many kinds of produce show the array of gardeners' tastes. Some accent plots with flower or banners. You see little bare ground; young plants have replaced early crop harvest. These gardeners are willing to share about gardening here.

Yankton Community Gardeners Snapshot

Clair Sudbeck of Yankton is loading produce in his truck by his two plots at the community gardens. He's gardened here four or five years and likes a plot near the common water tap.

"We planted one plot just in potatoes," Sudbeck says. "Red Norland," Yukon Gold", and red Pontiac. We plant potatoes every year. Norlands are early ones. I come out here when plants are in bloom and dig down beside the plants and take little potatoes. Plants keep producing. My wife cooks the little ones whole." He shows a pile of new potatoes.

"We eat Norlands with the skin on. Pontiacs are supposed to be better keepers. We don't dig them until near frost. We don't have a cool dry root cellar but last year they lasted until about January for us. Yukon Gold' is good for mashing."

He uses a potato fork to dig the Norland potatoes because of less damage to the skins. Soil is black and crumbles as he works. From one plant he gets four large potatoes and several small ones.

"We have three children in Sioux Falls so we take them some, as well as cucumber pickles and beans."

Sudbeck's other plot had onions, radishes, and spinach earlier and now cucumber vines fill the space. They also grow climbing string beans, bush beans, and carrots.

"Bush beans are producing like crazy," he says.

"My wife takes the lower branches off." Tomatoes have been a problem with some kind of disease he calls blight.

"We go by the old fashioned way of planting and hope to harvest," he says. Sudbeck's were born and raised on the farm in Nebraska. He says they had large gardens back then. He flood irrigates to avoid soil splash up on the leaves from overhead watering, a technique from those days.

"We live in town. Lots are not big enough to have a garden like this. (Community gardens) work well for us. We enjoy coming here and doing this. We work to keep it weed free. We get a lot of food out of these plots. Over and above we share with neighbors. A buddy of mine, I'll take and share these cucumbers so he can pick what he wants," he says.

Susan Bitsos has a plot near the entrance of the community gardens and is gardening her second year here. Her zucchini plants have died.

"It's a bug that attacks zucchini roots," Bitsos says. "Everything else has done well so I can't complain. Peppers, cucumbers, and squash are OK. I have a small garden at home too so be-



PHOTO BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Peter Leibfarth's tomatoes are ripening while many gardeners fought disease and late maturing tomatoes this season. He enjoys being outside and leaves his cell phone in his car.

tween them it should be OK. Only problem is getting time to come out here." She's been busy with vacation and Bible School.

Her plot is recently weeded and mulched with grass clippings from home. A two-foot fence surrounds the plot so vines will stay within the plot. Her tomatoes are dark green and tall in their cages. Her peppers are maturing.

"I work at Shur-Co and a lady from Tyndall who works there has a greenhouse in Tyndall. I get some flowers and vegetables from her and the plants are good to start from."

Her cucumbers are producing well and she thinks some varieties are better. "Cucumbers came from Yankton Nurseries and I'll get more next year." She plans to can some for pickles.

Peter Leibfarth of Yankton leaves the phone in the car when he works his plot at the community gardens.

"It's fun. Gets me away from work. This is a hobby by me. Nice to be outside. I don't know that much about gardening. You can see the plot is a little overcrowded. I put too much in," he says. Leibfarth's wife

tends the plot in the evenings and he the mornings, such as today. This is their second year at the gardens. Last year they had a plot next to the grove of trees, but this year, they are positioned a row further into the gardens.

"Grove row of gardens get more shade than you think," he says. "Tomatoes do better here, than last year (with) late afternoon shade."

Green beans, squash and cucumbers, and zucchini appear to be bearing well. He harvests cucumbers because his wife doesn't like the prickly vines.

"I can beans. I make a spicy pickle green beans," he says. "Tomatoes are ripening. Some people have had tomato blight. I cut the lower dead (tomato) branches off. When you buy the plants, I hear you can get blight-resistant plants."

"I gardened a bit before," he says. "We live in



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Susan Bitsos finds varieties like this cucumber that grow well for her at the community gardens and she plans to select them again next season.

a condo now, so it's a nice option."

"It's a great thing the city does this. It seems to grow a bit. There has to be a desire for it to grow. (Community garden area) is well taken care of," Leibfarth says. "I'm glad they do it."

Jennifer Akers of Yankton has a plot on the west side of the garden with a grove of mature trees nearby. This is her first garden in fifteen years, and she's twice that age now. Her plot is recently weeded and her row of tomato

plants stand tall in square steel tomato cages with lock ties, thanks to a friend. Her tomato plants appear to be lush green except one.

"I work in an elevator and one person at work said to use Epsom salts, milk, and Listerine," she says. "I'm surprised the plant is still living. Did it help? I took off the diseased limbs too."

"I caught a bird eating my red tomato. I lost about twenty, so I want some for myself." She and neighbors sprinkled granular mixture around plants to discourage birds and ground squirrels or other animals. It has a distinct chemical odor.

"Ground critters watch to see when you're done working here and cross over (from tall grass in the tree grove)," she says.

"I've had to learn that you don't water your garden at night. If you do, it may grow this green (algae-like) film. I asked a guy at work. He said the trees block the sun at evening. I'm learning as I go."

"Beans are going great," she says. "Last time I picked I had eight pounds of them. They're so much better than store bought. Yellow beans I don't find as often."

Akers is making a collection of photographs of her garden produce. She found a corn plant with red silk and red pollen heads on the tassels from sweet corn she is growing.

"I brought my daughter here and later showed her (produce) and she said, 'That came from our plants?' I've got pictures all the way."

November Plant Tips

Jan Byrkeland is Hy-Vee Floral Shoppe (665-0662) designer and manager. Byrkeland has tips as you adjust houseplants that have been outdoors, to the indoors for the winter.

- When outdoor temperatures regularly dip below 60 degrees F, it's time to take a hard look for the healthiest ones to bring indoors. By now, you may have moved some plants into the garage for temporary holding area.

- Before moving them indoors, check for unwanted bugs. One way to do this is to submerge the pot soil in a tub of water for about 15 minutes. This is not long enough to cut off oxygen to the roots, but it will release some unwanted bugs. Another way to reduce unwanted bugs is to scrape off about an inch of potting soil. Some bugs lay eggs in soil surface and you prefer they not hatch indoors.

- Plants grow best when they have enough indoor light. Often indoor light is much less than outdoors so moving plants in steps to the lower light allows plants to adjust. Yellowing and dropping of leaves shows plant struggle.

- Over-watering is common indoors. Pots don't dry out as quickly as outdoors. Also plants grow more slowly indoors, so they require less water than outdoors. Touch soil surface to see if it is dry before watering.

"I love doing this," Akers says. "I don't know why it took me so long. Probably because I needed to get established here first." She has lived in other states and tried gardening there. "I hope to get two plots next year. The rain we had helped a lot. I appreciate having somewhere to go like this."

Ron Hunhoff has two community garden plots and is tilling a friend's plot when he stops to chat. We can see zucchini, cucumbers, beans, potatoes, onions, spaghetti squash that his wife likes, and tomatoes.

"Tomatoes are slow this year. I water from the bottom, not overhead. Tomato plants were from a friend of my wife so I have no idea what (varieties) I have here. Three red tomatoes and three yellow. The yellow are supposed to be less acid; I don't know," he says. "It's early and they aren't ripe yet."

Hunhoff has missing beets. "Beets were nice and someone pulled them all. They cut off the

tops and left them." He replanted and they've been taken twice. "I don't care so much about zucchini that will come back in a couple of days. These, when they're gone, they're gone."

"This is my third year at the community gardens and I haven't had stealing that I know of. This is the year I noticed it. Been in the same spot," he says.

"I'm worried about thieves. I have yellow squash among the potatoes. I covered them with grass."

"So many drive through the gardens to look at them. Gardens are beautiful. My wife has a girlfriend who drives through here at least once a week to see the progression."

He motions to other plots. "It brings the farmer out in some of these who were born on the farm. I do enjoy being here. My wife is from the farm too. We've had perfect rain."

"(Healthy Yankton) does a good job here," Hunhoff says. "In spring they get it ready. A lot of work goes into laying out the plots."

See next Friday's Homestyle Section for South Dakota Master Gardeners responses to "What Are

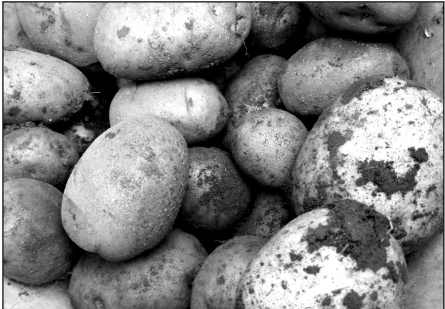


PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Community gardener Clair Sudbeck's potatoes couldn't be fresher from the garden. He grows several varieties for his family and friends.



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Jennifer Akers decided to take up gardening again. Her yellow wax beans are great producers. She likes them for the taste and even better because they're not as available fresh in the grocery store. She documented her garden season in photos.

Community Garden Organizers

Healthy Yankton institutional representatives and other volunteers have completed their sixth season of Yankton community garden management with the help of Yankton Parks & Recreation.

Problem solving made it happen. Healthy Yankton member Sister Julie Peak of Sacred Heart Monastery shared her perspective.

"We have 219 plots. That's a huge garden," Sister Julie said. "Success of our gardens defined the changes. We are blessed with that." Now plastic pipe marks plots because the wooden markers had broken with use. No more string perimeters for plots because string is a nuisance for city mowers who maintained garden boundaries.

"When we got into the gardens is defined by Nature," she said. "Mark Hunhoff of Mark's Machinery tills the soil. He checks soil conditions for when to till. Then we mark the plots. Opening of the gardens has to be after the last spring frost because of unprotected water pipes. Same thing goes for when the gardens close before first frost."

Cost of water for the season helped determine cost of plot rental. Community gardeners used nearby water taps installed by the city to irrigate their plants. Water fountains supply drinking water for gardeners as they worked.

"Our intent is not to make a profit or lose money," Sister Julie said. "If we end up with a little extra, we put it into the garden infrastructure."

"In May we thought our big challenge would be drought. In June it started raining. We had four inches in one weekend," she said.

Healthy Yankton members considered options concerning small animal pests such as ground squirrels and rabbits that raided garden plots.

"We're always looking for solutions," she said. "It's city park land so you can't go at it as aggressively as you could at your

own house."

Challenge of the season for Healthy Yankton organizers and community gardeners was thievery.

"We had more complaints than we've ever had," she said. Healthy Yankton had "Registered Gardeners Only" signs installed. However, onlookers interested in community garden progress as curiosity continued to drive through to look at plots. It appeared that produce disappeared at night.

"We heard of more gardens plundered," she said. "It wasn't just a ripe tomato here and there. License plate information was taken late one night. Then complaints stopped. It disappointed me personally to have our gardeners work hard and have their onions and peppers stolen. City police patrolled after sunset."

If hunger was a motive for stealing produce, other options were available locally. Liz Lynch works at the Contact Center in Yankton that serves clients and others in need. The Contact Center is one of several sites that received abundant harvest produce for distribution to the public this season. She said that as well as individual gardeners' extra harvest, that the Yankton Trustee Prison Unit also shared their produce generously.

"We put tables in the hallway," Lynch said. "Lots of people responded with vegetables and

even apples and pears. People in need or those just stopping by while in the county building found fresh produce."

LIMITED ABILITY RAISED BEDS AVAILABLE

Hy-Vee of Des Moines, Iowa awarded a One Step Community Garden Grant to Healthy Yankton member Angie O'Connor of Avera Wellness Center for some of the cost of materials to install two limited ability access raised beds at the community gardens.

Healthy Yankton members discussed height of the beds and space needed for wheel chairs and walkers to work at the raised beds with Avera Occupational Therapy.

Cindy Nelson, also a Healthy Yankton member, led the installation of the beds. Due to rains, concrete access pads were installed later in the season, and the raised beds will be ready for next season.

Citizens have inquired with Healthy Yankton members about limited ability raised beds for gardening in past seasons.

"For next season (the raised beds) will be available for those with physical limitations such as wheel chair or walker," Sister Julie said. "If we have more applications than beds we'll use a lottery. We've had one or two people each year say they wished we had this alternative. While we have two raised beds so far, we can expand to four or five if the demand is there."

ORCHARD FRUITS FOR ALL

Each season improvements have been made at the city land where the community gardens and dog park visitors share a parking lot. A fruit tree orchard adjacent to them is now bearing fruits.

"Fruit not sprayed," according to Lisa Kortan, Yankton Parks & Recreation. "This community orchard is available to all as they are out for a walk on the trails or walk their dog or garden. We try to add a couple of trees per year." Apple, pear, cherry, and peach trees are planted there.

FUTURE AT COMMUNITY GARDENS

About January, a Healthy Yankton representative will contact returning gardeners. Some plots will be available to new community gardeners. Healthy Yankton members intend to submit a newspaper notice in early March for new gardeners, according to Sister Julie.

"We've had other communities that start a community garden come and ask us 'How are you doing this?' We think it's due to phenomenal support from Yankton as a whole. Community gardens here) are really a success of the entire city. There's really a lot of support," Sister Julie said.

Members of Healthy Yankton include Lois Halbur, Laura Larson,



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Hy-Vee of Des Moines, Iowa awarded a grant to Healthy Yankton member Angie O'Connor of Avera Wellness Center for some of the materials to install two limited ability access raised beds at the community gardens near other garden plots. Healthy Yankton members plan to respond with more raised beds if requests show need.

Cindy Nelson, Angie O'Connor, Brit-tany Orr, Sister Julie Peak, and Susan Thorson. Members want to thank institutions that give release time for their members: Avera Wellness Center, City of Yankton, Mount Marty College, and Sacred Heart Monastery.

Healthy Yankton members want to thank others that have helped at the community gardens. These include Mark Hunhoff of Mark's Machinery, Missouri Valley Master Gardeners, other community

gardeners, and Healthy Yankton family members.

City of Yankton services the community gardens area by mowing, parking lot maintenance, garden waste and trash removal, adding plot signs, maintaining water taps and fountains, and managing orchard trees.

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Thanksgiving Day Deadlines

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be closed Thursday, November 27, for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The following deadlines will apply:

Friday, November 28 newspaper – Monday, November 24, 5 p.m.

Out On The Town – Wednesday, November 26, 5 p.m.

Saturday, November 29 and Monday, December 1 newspapers – Tuesday, November 25, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, December 2 newspaper – Wednesday, November 26, 3 p.m.

There will be no newspaper on Thursday, November 27 2014.

YANKTON DAILY
PRESS&DAKOTAN



AM 1450

MORNING COFFEE

WEEKDAYS MONDAY-FRIDAY

Friday, November 7

7:40 am YSD Vets Day

Todd Dvoracek, Carey Mitzel

8:20 am Yankton Area Arts

Julie Amsberry